

OF TERRAINS AND TERROIRS

Massimo Ferragamo, scion of the famous Italian designer, introduces the Brunello di Montalcino from the Castiglion del Bosco winery to Singapore. **BY JAMIE NONIS**

He has one of the most famous surnames in the world of fashion and luxury, but today, Massimo Ferragamo is in town to talk about his wines. The youngest scion of Italian designer Salvatore Ferragamo wants to introduce to the Singapore market wines from Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany.

In 2004, Ferragamo acquired the historical estate that dates back to 1100 and rejuvenated its 62ha grounds by restoring both the architectural facets of its medieval structure and the site's winemaking capabilities with a new 3,000-hectolitre cellar. He and his wife Chiara then added to the property a five-star luxury resort, currently managed by the Rosewood Hotels & Resorts Group, as well as the only private golf club in Italy.

"I arrived at Castiglion del Bosco one cool, sunny morning in March. I wasn't looking for a winery or big estate. I was so incredibly moved by the limitless views and the scenery that can only be found in the Val d'Orcia. I had no idea that such a beautiful corner of Tuscany still existed. Faced with such beauty, I felt a strong sense of responsibility to protect it. It was love at first sight," Ferragamo recalls.

The Val d'Orcia region boasts a landscape of endless rolling hills covered with fields of grain or sunflowers. It is a Unesco World Heritage Site that is also known for the wines of Brunello di Montalcino. The Italian reds produced in the vineyards around the town of Montalcino in the Tuscan wine region were awarded the first Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garanzia designation in 1980 and today, they are one of Italy's best-known and most expensive wines.

Art of winemaking

Originally from Tuscany, Ferragamo has lived in New York for the past 35 years and still holds his position as chairman of the family business in the US. But wine is his passion. "It's similar in that it's in the same [luxury] arena. But in the fashion business, you have to think of new things every six months, while [with wine], you have to think 20 years back and 10 forward," says Ferragamo. "In Castiglion del Bosco, we have to keep the wine in the cellar for five years before we can release it. So, it is a completely different state of mind. But it's great because it's a product from the land, and a product from the land is something you have a lot of pride in."

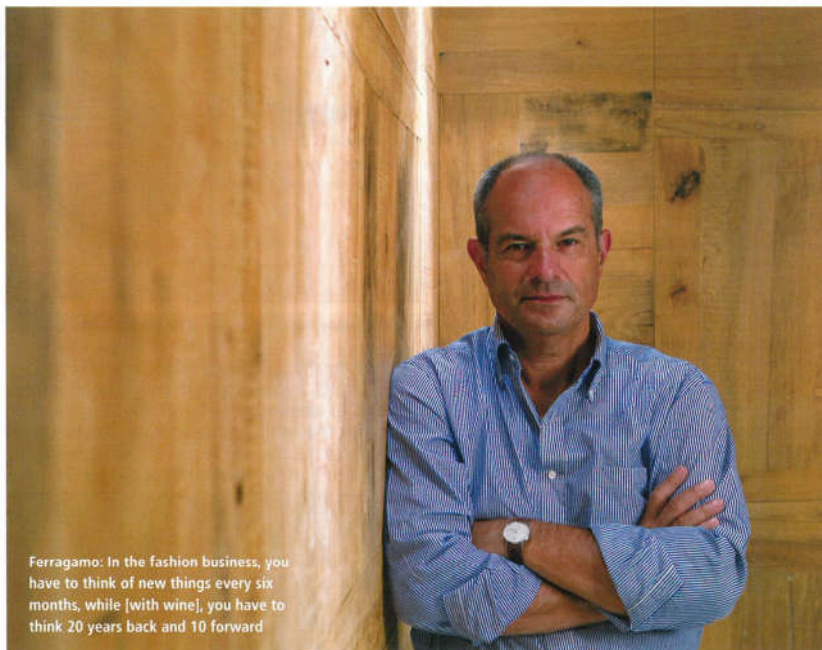
When Ferragamo first arrived at the estate, there were five people working in the fields. Today, he employs a staff of 220. "And behind these 220 people, there are 220 families," he says, adding that this human aspect is the achievement he is most proud of in the venture.

Winemaking, explains Ferragamo, is an art. "It is a little bit like luxury products — the work that goes into a \$3 bottle of wine is not what goes into a \$50 bottle of wine. The latter requires so much more tender loving care; there's so much more that we do in the fields, cellar, everything."

When it comes to Italian wines, there's a lot more education required, he says. "Italian wines [were introduced] later in this part of the world. French, South American and Australian wines have had a bit of a head start here and [are more visible]. So, we need to show how great Italian wines are, and also how great they are in relation to their price. Italian wines are the best value out there."

Eyeing exponential growth in Asia

We are with Ferragamo at a private wine pairing luncheon for the media at 28Wilkie. The set-up and décor at the establishment are exquisite, befitting the



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\$1,455 price tag of each bottle of The Zodiac Limited Edition: DOG we are about to taste.

Celebrated as one of the finest expressions of the Montalcino terroir, the Zodiac collection was launched in 2013 as a nod to Asia. Renowned Chinese artists are commissioned to produce an exclusive design for the label of each limited-edition series, inspired by the Chinese zodiac. The DOG edition, ready for the Lunar New Year in February, comes in an extremely limited quantity of just 488 bottles. The label is designed by artist Li Fu Yuan.



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"Ten years from now, my guess is that the appreciation for wine is going to increase exponentially in Asia excluding Japan, whereas the more established markets will grow at a slower pace," Ferragamo observes. "We have a lot of faith [in Asia] and we think it's going to be one of the most important markets. That's why we are investing in this market for the long term. The plan is to continue to promote and increase our presence here more than in any other market, because it's going to be one of the most rewarding markets."

When asked for his views on Made-in-China wines, Ferragamo says: "I have only tasted two, and I have mixed feelings about them. But I truly think that, say, 10 years down the road, there are going to be some great wines coming out of China. I know that some French people and companies are investing in vineyards in China. This is something I'm not going to do, but there has got to be an area in China that has good climatic conditions like in South America, South Africa, Europe and the most established [wine-producing] countries, which will be able to come up with something [similar]. The two most important ingredients are the terrain and the climate. And you have to teach people and that takes time. If [these are in place], there's no reason why China can't have some good wines." ■

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Jamie Nonis is a lifestyle journalist with an appreciation for all things beautiful

Vineyards of Montalcino and Riparbella

Located northwest of Montalcino, an Italian town in Tuscany famous for its Brunello di Montalcino wine, Castiglion del Bosco sits on land ideal for growing Sangiovese grapes, from which all its wines are exclusively made. The grounds' rocky, nutrient-poor soils are perfect for yielding wines of superb structure and complexity.

The estate's 2,000ha are largely occupied by dense woods of holm, oak and beech, as well as meadows and organically farmed crops. There are two distinct growing sections, each differing in soil and weather conditions: the 20ha Gauggiolo vineyard and the 42ha Capanna.

"Sangiovese grapes are very tough. They grow well in very few places and Tuscany is one of them. The high altitude and minerals [in the soil] make our wines unique," says Massimo Ferragamo, youngest son of Salvatore Ferragamo.

The company also owns a 10ha vineyard called Prima Pietra in Riparbella, close to the Bolgheri wine area on the Tuscan coast. The vines face the Tyrrhenian Sea at about 450m above sea level in an almost pristine environment, enjoying abundant sun and ventilation, while the iron-rich, rocky soils ensure the wine varieties flourish in this terroir.