

## Wine Enthusiast names Gianni Zonin recipient of the 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award

*In 1967, at the age of 29, Zonin, who also holds a law degree, became president of his family firm. Today, it is the largest private wine enterprise in Europe, producing 40 million bottles in 2012. Three-fourths of the production is exported, with the U.S. being a primary market.*



One of the most influential personalities in the Italian wine world, Gianni Zonin's wine career had humble beginnings.

Zonin began working as a cellar hand at the family's winery in 1957 after earning his diploma in enology.

"I did everything, from racking wines into different vats and barrels to loading trucks," he says.

Three months after joining, he started helping with winemaking and soon climbed the company ladder. He was also influential in opening up new markets in other parts of Italy and expanding sales and

production.

Although Casa Vinicola Zonin's roots stretch back to 1821, Zonin took the business to a new level when he became president. Besides expanding sales and production, Zonin made the crucial decision to start acquiring property outside of the family's home region of Veneto, purchasing Friuli's Tenuta Ca' Bolani in 1970.

As Domenico Zonin, Gianni's oldest son and a vice president of the company, says, "My father is credited as the first person in the wine industry to invest in another region. Today it doesn't seem like a big deal, but in 1970, Italian wine makers only focused on their own individual areas and wines, so this was really a radical decision for the time and showed courage and intuition."

Zonin went on to acquire property in Tuscany, including the stunning Castello d'Albola in Chianti Classico, as well as estates in Sicily, Piedmont and Puglia.

Today, the firm has two divisions, Zonin the brand and Gianni Zonin Estates, the latter counting nine estates in seven regions in Italy for a total of 4,942 acres under vine. All wine made from the Gianni Zonin Estates are made with estate grapes and under the supervision of the firm's in-house team of 32 agronomists and enologists, supported famed consultant Denis Dubordieu.



Recognizing the close connection between Italian wines and American consumers, Zonin has even expanded his vineyard holdings to this side of the Atlantic. In 1976, he purchased Thomas Jefferson's former estate in Virginia, Barboursville, where, among other varieties, he grows Barbera, Nebbiolo and Sangiovese.

Besides reflecting his pioneering spirit, Zonin's acquisitions demonstrate remarkable business acumen. Case in point: when he bought Barboursville and planted vines, there were no wineries in Virginia-now there are more than 250.

"Gianni Zonin has succeeded in an unparalleled number of achievements over the course of his lifetime," states Editor and Publisher Adam Strum. "From building Zonin into the largest wine business in Italy, to being the first to look beyond not only his own Italian region, but across the ocean for opportunities in China and America, he embodies what it truly means to be a wine industry pioneer. Gianni Zonin's courage and innovation have helped to make wine into the global industry it has become today."

"I'm very proud and honored to learn that I'm going to receive this prestigious award and to join the ranks of the celebrated names from around the world who have won before me," says Gianni Zonin.

"It's not just an honor for me, for my family and for those who work with us, but also for Italy. It's a confirmation of how well Italians are working in both viticulture and winemaking."

For the full profile on Lifetime Achievement Award winner Gianni Zonin, as well as in-depth looks at all 2013 award winners, see the Best of Year issue of *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*.

For a full list of the 2013 Wine Star nominees, go to [winemag.com](http://winemag.com).

Gianni Zonin will be presented the Wine Star Trophy for Lifetime Achievement at the Wine Star Awards dinner, to be held January 27, 2014, in New York City.

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