



## We Ask Francesca Nonino What's New in Grappa

By Victoria Cece

There are few distilleries with a history ahead of its time like Nonino.

The grappa distillery has long been female-led since Silvia Milocco Nonino became Italy's first master distiller in the 1940s, shortly after she mightily began running the distillery following the death of her husband, the third-generation Antonio Nonino.

*"Silvia's story changed the course of our family history at a time when women in Italy were expected to stay home, not run distilleries," says Francesca Nonino, 6th generation grappa producer and admired grappa influencer.*



Flash-forward over 80 years later, and this historic grappa distillery continues to be as innovative as ever with the Nonino ladies behind it all. We ask Francesca to fill us in on her family's amazing story and this timeless spirit.

Can you share a bit about your journey in the spirits industry. How has being a woman influenced your approach and vision for Nonino?

Growing up in a female-led distillery, in an industry that is often male-dominated, felt completely natural to me. Seeing women in leadership roles was my norm, and that's been one of my greatest blessings—being raised with the belief that talent, creativity, and hard work, regardless of gender, were what truly mattered. This upbringing shaped my vision for Nonino, where I focus on allowing creativity and innovation to thrive, just as it has for generations before me.

I've been deeply inspired by the powerful women in my family. My grandmother Giannola, alongside my

grandfather, created the first single-varietal Grappa, the Monovitigno® Nonino, revolutionizing the category. My mother Cristina distilled the first-ever pure ginger spirit. My aunt Antonella has educated bartenders worldwide on the versatility of Grappa in mixology, while my aunt Elisabetta successfully expanded our brand into the U.S. market, making Nonino a beloved name there.

As for my own journey, I've had the opportunity to bring a fresh perspective by modernizing our online communication strategy. My goal has been to make the world of Grappa and craft distillation more approachable and engaging for younger generations (*of legal drinking age, of course*). In doing so, I earned the title 'The Grappa Influencer,' a role I've grown to embrace with pride."



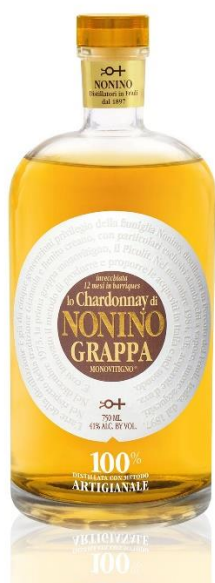
How has the legacy of your grandmother, Giannola Nonino inspired you to continue advocating for women in the spirits industry?

My grandmother, Giannola Nonino, was a tremendous inspiration, revolutionizing the world of Grappa alongside my grandfather, Benito. Together, they transformed Grappa from a 'poor man's drink' into a symbol of Italian excellence by creating the first single-varietal Grappa on December 1, 1973—the Monovitigno® Nonino.

What truly inspires me is the story behind this Grappa Revolution, which was made possible by the

cooperation of women. When winemakers refused to separate the pomace of the Picolit grape for distillation, my grandmother, undeterred, spoke directly to their wives, who agreed to help. This solidarity among women not only made the revolution possible but also laid the foundation for what our distillery stands for today.

This history constantly reminds me of the power of women working together. It's why I'm passionate about supporting and uplifting other women in the spirits industry, knowing firsthand the impact we can make when we unite.







How does Nonino support and encourage women's empowerment within the company and the industry?

At Nonino, women's empowerment is not just a principle—it's woven into the fabric of our company's history. From my great-grandmother Silvia, Italy's first female master distiller, to my grandmother Giannola, who revolutionized Grappa, to my mom Cristina and my aunts Antonella and Elisabetta, now in charge of the family company, women have always played key roles in shaping our brand. This legacy drives us to create an environment where women are supported and encouraged to lead, innovate, and share their ideas.

Within the company, we foster a culture of equality where talent and creativity are nurtured, regardless of gender. We actively mentor and promote women in leadership positions, ensuring they have the opportunities and resources to grow in their careers. Beyond our distillery, we advocate for women's visibility and leadership across the spirits industry, participating in initiatives that highlight the contributions of women, both past and present.



Ultimately, our goal is to inspire the next generation of women to see that there's a place for them in this industry and that they have the power to redefine it just as the women before them have. What advice would you give to young women looking to break into the spirits industry?

My advice to young women looking to break into the spirits industry is to embrace your passion, stand firm in your vision, and never underestimate the power of resilience. The spirits world has historically been male-dominated, but now, more than ever, it's a space where innovation, authenticity, and diverse perspectives are being celebrated.

As the sixth generation of a female-led distillery, I've learned that heritage and tradition are our foundation, but it's the courage to challenge the norms and bring fresh ideas that will move us forward. Don't be afraid to take up space, trust your instincts, and push the boundaries of what's possible. This industry thrives on craftsmanship, creativity, and authenticity—qualities that women naturally bring to the table.

Lastly, surround yourself with women mentors and remember that success is not just about what you achieve individually but also about lifting others along the way. The more we support each other, the more we shape this industry for future generations. Own your power, honor your journey, and let your spirit lead the way—pun intended!

How do you balance the traditional aspects of your family business with modern values of gender equality and diversity?

This question makes me smile because, in our family, gender equality and diversity are our tradition! My great-grandmother, Silvia Milocco Nonino, became Italy's first female master distiller after losing her husband during World War II. As a widow with two young children, she stepped into the distillery to support her family, drawing on her background as a talented cook. Her knowledge of ingredients helped her create exceptional products, including the original recipe for our L'Aperitivo Nonino BotanicalDrink.

Silvia's story changed the course of our family history at a time when women in Italy were expected to stay home, not run distilleries. My grandfather fell in love with my charismatic and visionary grandmother Giannola, and together, they revolutionized the world of Grappa. So, in balancing tradition with modern values, I feel we are simply continuing what has always been part of our legacy: championing women and embracing diverse talents.

What role do you think women play in shaping the future of the spirits industry. Where do you see it evolving over the next decade?

It's a wonderful time to see women's progress and to think to their future in the spirit industry. I have been quite fortunate to have been nurtured by a family with such incredible female role

models and I hope to only continue the tradition. Women often approach business with a keen sense of collaboration, empathy, and creativity—qualities that are invaluable in an industry rooted in craftsmanship and storytelling. Our ability to connect with diverse consumer tastes, understand emerging trends, and create products that resonate on a deeper level is changing how brands engage with their audience.

We're bringing a more inclusive vision of what spirits can be, one that honors tradition while embracing new flavors, techniques, and sustainability practices. In the next decade, I see the industry evolving to be more experimental, inclusive, and values-driven, with women at the forefront of that change. The blending of diverse backgrounds and problem-solving styles (*my grandmother asking winemakers wives to collect the first single varietal grappa pomace is an example of that!*) will lead to bolder innovations, whether it's in sustainable distilling methods, creative brand narratives, or unique flavor profiles that cater to a wider range of palates. This new wave of talent, with women as key players, will continue to break down barriers and re-imagine what success looks like in the spirits world.