

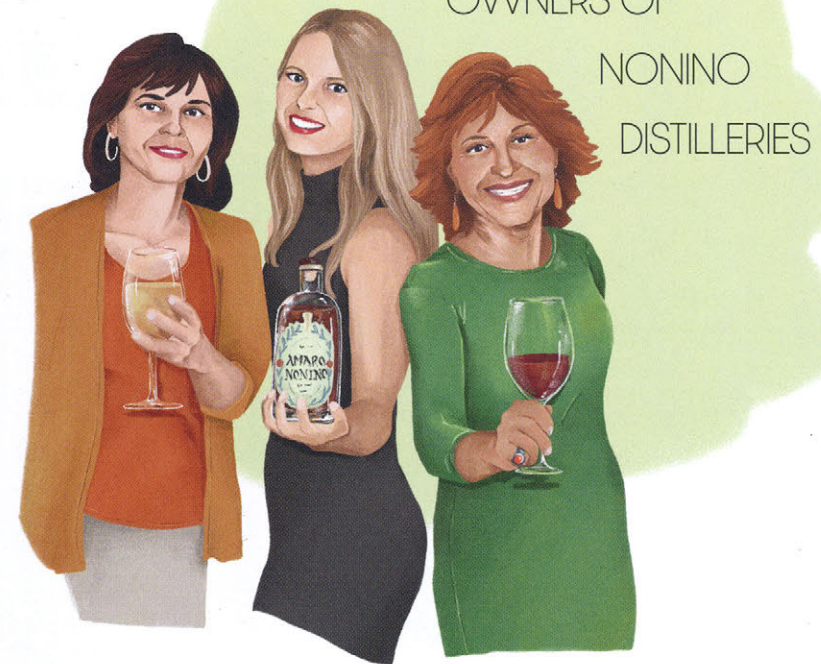
WITH
45 ORIGINAL
RECIPES

MAKERS, SHAKERS,
and TRAILBLAZERS in the
WORLD of COCKTAILS

SPIRITED WOMEN

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& OLIVIA MCGIFF





The Nonino family has been in the distilling business since 1897. In the small region of Friuli, Italy, they've made groundbreaking contributions to the spirits industry over six generations, including revolutionizing the way grappa is made and creating an amaro that is now essential in the craft cocktail world. What's perhaps more remarkable is that women in the Nonino family have been in charge of the company since 1940, a time when Italian women didn't yet have the right to vote. Today, three generations of Nonino women are continuing their family legacy and taking the distillery to new heights. They are

boisterous and vibrant, overflowing with passion and love for each other and what they do.

Let's start with some brief family history: Antonio Nonino, the third generation of Noninos, married Silvia in 1928, and they made grappa and a variety of liqueurs. When Antonio died in World War II, Silvia took over the company, becoming Italy's first female master distiller. Silvia and Antonio's son, Benito, married Giannola in 1962 and together, the couple set out to change the method of making grappa throughout the country. Giannola and Benito had three daughters, Cristina, Elisabetta, and Antonella, who continued to grow

THE NONINO WOMEN

the Nonino legacy. Cristina's daughter Francesca is the sixth generation of "this crazy family of distillers" (as she calls them), and is now introducing grappa to a whole new demographic. Brava!

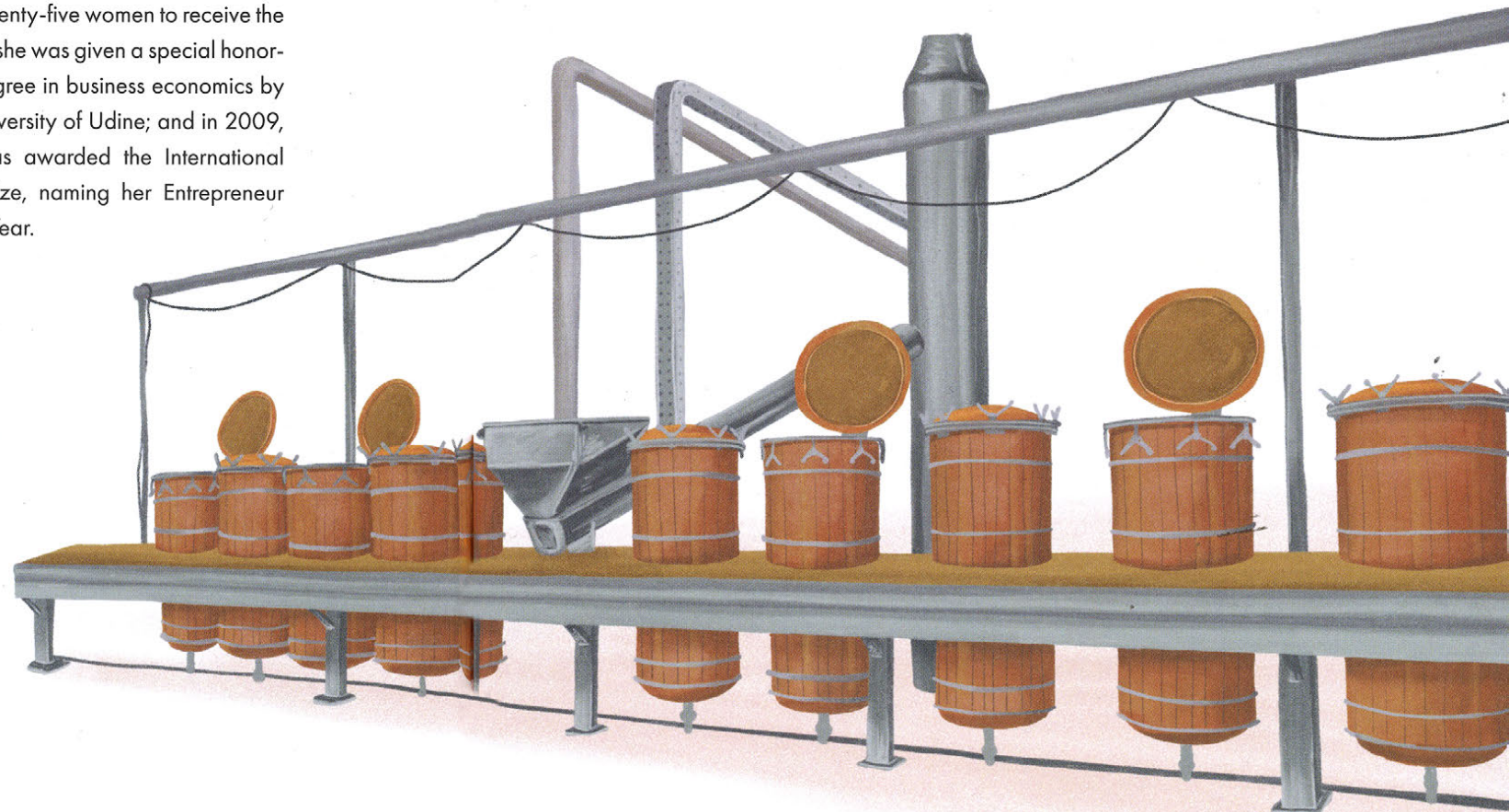
Grappa is an Italian grape-based brandy made by distilling pomace, the seeds, stalks, and stems that are left over after pressing grapes for wine-making. Italians have been distilling grappa for centuries, and it was long considered a peasant spirit, a regional drink of locals. The grappa industry has grown immensely, but while popular, grappa developed a reputation of being poor quality, given away to tourists at the end of a meal. And a lot of it is of poor quality, made with cheap, industrial ingredients (industrial distillers make around 80 percent of the grappa sold in Italy). When made honorably, grappa is a delicious representation of the beauty of Italy. Nonino is an artisanal distillery that makes and bottles all their own products, a rarity in the industry.

This grappa revolution started with Giannola and Benito, who transformed the perception of grappa from a ubiquitously mediocre, poor man's spirit into an exquisite product that is emblematic of Italy. "My grandma and grandpa worked to prove to people that grappa was not this fire water, but could be something beautiful and elegant," Francesca says. In 1973, Giannola and Benito started

distilling pomace from a single grape varietal, rather than a mix of winery leftovers, something that had never been done in the grappa industry. Giannola and Benito created the first single-varietal, premium grappa, and soon other producers began copying their methods. "We were able to transform grappa from what was considered the Cinderella of spirits into the queen of them," says Giannola. "It's magical!" Giannola has been rightly recognized for her work: In 1998, she was named a Cavaliere del Lavoro by the Italian president, recognizing her contributions to the world of business (she is also one of only twenty-five women to receive the prize); she was given a special honorary degree in business economics by the University of Udine; and in 2009, she was awarded the International Eva Prize, naming her Entrepreneur of the Year.

While Giannola and Benito focused on distilling grappa, their daughters turned their attention to the liqueurs, reviving their grandfather's original amaro recipe. Amaro is an herbaceous, bittersweet Italian liqueur, traditionally consumed as an after-dinner drink. In 1992, the sisters tweaked their grandfather's formula and developed Amaro Nonino Quintessentia. It's citrusy and herbal with notes of chocolate and is undoubtedly Nonino's best-selling product, now a staple in cocktail bars all over the world.

When you enter a family business that's been going for over a hundred years, you don't exactly apply for a specific job. "We don't have a CEO or board members," Elisabetta explains. "We have family members, and everybody needs to work." Cristina is in charge of Italy and Switzerland (she's not a fan of flying); Antonella is the liaison for Germany and Austria; Elisabetta takes care of North America; and matriarch Giannola oversees the whole operation. After working within various areas of the business, Francesca



exercised her grandchild privilege: "We have a saying in Italian, 'The parsley goes everywhere.' At a certain point I went to my family and said, 'Guys, I cannot be the parsley anymore, please give me a specific market.'" So Elisabetta whisked Francesca away to the United States on her next trip, and now they work together on North American sales.

In 2018, the Nonino women resurrected another family liqueur: Grandma Silvia's apéritif from 1940. The original apéritif was called Aperitivo Bianco, and Cristina studied the recipe for years, wanting to keep the natural essence of Silvia's recipe. She decided to incorporate gentian root and rhubarb for a slightly bitter note, resulting in L'Aperitivo Nonino. It's all-natural, made from eighteen different botanicals and distilled from the pomace of Fragolino grapes, a strawberry grape that tastes like wild berries. This apéritif is a liquid representation of the history of the Nonino women: The label symbolizes the four generations of women, all holding glasses as if they're drinking with you. When Giannola can't sleep, she makes herself a nightcap of L'Aperitivo Nonino, a couple of lemon slices, tonic water, and ice. "After that, I'm able to go to sleep happily," she says.

As a millennial, Francesca is also the distillery's web communications manager. She's built a robust online presence educating people about grappa. As "the grappa influencer," she feels it's important to share the story of the Nonino company and family with a wider audience. Francesca has goals of eventually becoming Nonino's master distiller. "The master distiller takes the soul or the essence of the raw material and puts it in the final glass," she says. "I think there isn't anything more beautiful than that." The Nonino distillery is arguably as strong and successful as it ever was. Nonino's grappas and liqueurs have won countless awards, as has the distillery itself, including being named "Best Distillery in the World" in 2019 by *Wine Enthusiast*.

The Nonino women are feisty and driven, and they are immensely proud of their generational heritage. Every family member is continuing the mission set by their ancestors, to share their story and passion. "When you do something with your name, the name of your family, you want to protect that," says Francesca. "To be able to do that means to never accept anything less than the best."

LE DONNE

There's perhaps nothing more Italian than enjoying an afternoon spritz, and this cocktail honoring the Nonino women fits the bill. The base of the drink is bittersweet L'Aperitivo Nonino, with notes of elderflower, rhubarb, and citrus. Amaro Nonino is a natural pairing, thanks to its bright herbaceousness, and gives the cocktail a bit of depth. Rose syrup brings a delicate floral quality (spray a bit of rose water over the top for extra rosiness), and, of course, both seltzer and Prosecco are employed for their ever-important bubbles. This is a delightfully refreshing and aromatic drink to enjoy with all the women in your life. *Saluti!*

Makes 1 drink

1 ¼ ounces L'Aperitivo Nonino

¾ ounce Amaro Nonino

½ ounce fresh lemon juice

¼ ounce Rose Syrup (recipe follows)

1 ounce seltzer

Prosecco, to top

1 lemon twist, for garnish

Rose water in an atomizer, for garnish

Combine the aperitivo, amaro, lemon juice, rose syrup, and seltzer in an ice-filled wineglass and stir gently. Top with the Prosecco, garnish with the lemon twist and a spritz of rose water, and serve.

ROSE SYRUP

Makes about 1 ½ cups

1 cup sugar

½ cup food-grade dried rosebuds

In a small saucepan, combine 1 cup water and the sugar and bring to a simmer over low heat, stirring until the sugar fully dissolves. Remove from the heat, then stir in the rosebuds and steep for 20 minutes. Fine strain into a nonreactive airtight container and let cool. Cover and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.