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# The Modern Prince

How Alessandrojacopo Boncompagni Ludovisi cultivates wine on the road to Rome

WRITER  
Allison Zurfluh

For a fashionable prince who rubs shoulders with Rome's well-heeled and illustrious, Piazza di Spagna is one of the most opulent places to live downtown. With the Spanish Steps and the newly restored Barcaccia Fountain to the south, a view from a northern penthouse is a paradise of open space and palm trees not far from the famous Via dei Condotti shopping thoroughfare. This is where Prince Alessandrojacopo Boncompagni Ludovisi and his spouse, the Countess Maria Carolina dei Conti Zucchini Metelli,

make their home. With rooms that speak to generations of royalty, underpinned by a sense of gentle refinement and sophistication, the space is a living museum.

Two Popes and various Cardinals belong to the family name, their stately portraits lining the walls of what feels like a small palace. A 16th century portrait of Pope Gregorio XIII, born Ugo Boncompagni, by Scipione Pulzone, hangs by the window opposite a later oil rendering of Pope Gregory XV, born Alessandro Ludovisi, by Guercino. Pope

Gregorio XIII is best known for commissioning the Gregorian calendar, which remains the internationally accepted civil calendar to this day. The family is not without its laurels. An original van Cleve depicts a woman holding a rosary, not far from a portrait of Johan, Count of Nassau-Siegen by van Dyck. The dining room walls read as a veritable family history, written by masters whose work is most often locked behind high-security doors in other parts of Europe. In the home of princes, however, they're just another part of the décor.



Prince Alessandrojacopo Boncompagni Ludovisi at his home in Piazza di Spagna  
(Credit: Allison Zurfluh)

“We need knew knights,  
but without swords.”

Dejan Stojanovic

Alessandrojacopo is a multi-layered sort of prince. Chic gentleman of the state with a penchant for contemporary art, he opened a gallery of contemporary art at Fontanella Borghese in 2007 - Gallerja Roma - where he invites selected artists to exhibit. He has been a Knight of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta for many years, and acted as councillor to Alberto Leoncini Bartoli - Ambassador to the Holy See - for more than half a decade. With the motto *Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum*, the oldest surviving chivalric order in the world sums up its mission to protect the Catholic Church and serve those in need, a task that falls comfortably in line with Prince Alessandrojacopo's altruistic nature.

The prince is perhaps best known for the family vineyards bordering the Via Appia Antica, an ancient road that connects the capital with Naples. If the penthouse on Piazza Spagna sits at the apex of Roman high society, Tenuta di Fiorano vineyards nestle gently among the waving grasses of a quiet Larian countryside ten kilometres out of town. Off the main highway and into a quiet





Among walls of fine art hangs a portrait of Pope Gregory XV (Alessandro Ludovisi) by Guernico. (Credit: Allison Zurfluh)

natural paradise, lush vegetation masks luxurious villas that have been home to some of Italy's favourite celebrities, such as Carlo Ponti and Sofia Loren, and Franco Zeffirelli. The rustic cobblestone highway that leads from the Catacombs of San Callisto and Sebastiano is a remaining masterpiece of Ancient Rome, making the bustling Eternal City feel light years away.

This is where the soft-spoken prince feels at home. The family Tenuta di Fiorano vineyard was founded in the 1940s by Prince Alberico Boncompagni Ludovisi (Alessandrojacopo's cousin) when he planted about three hectares of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot for his red wines, and Malvasia di Candia and Sémillon for his whites. He quickly became a legend in winemaking, but unexplainably uprooted nearly all his vineyards in 1998 in a dramatic exit from the art. Between 1999 and 2004, Alessandrojacopo, seized by a passion for the land and winegrowing, began the meticulous work of replanting the organic vineyard under the tutelage of Alberico, but this time

planting Grechetto and Viognier. He has been producing wine since 2002. Under the regal shadow of Castel Gandolfo to the south - the summer residence of the Pope - six hectares of grapes thrive on a 200-hectar property that boasts views as far as St. Peter's Basilica to the north. "Every year I restructure the vineyard," explains the prince, as we drive through golden fields dotted with red spring poppies, "while increasing the number of vines as we go in order to have a wider selection of grapes." Quality over quantity is

the way he likes to keep it.

What inspired him toward wine? "There is so much emotion behind a bottle, so much tradition," he says. "I have drawn heavily on the past, especially when working with Alberico, who taught and advised me on everything regarding the vineyard. It's really a passion to learn all the ins and outs of winemaking, and I was taught to love the work. During the 20 years I spent at Alberico's side, I got to know the people working with us, and I grew attached to them. Their years of labour are in every one of our bottles." »»»

“Great wine requires a mad man to grow the vine, a wise man to watch over it, a lucid poet to make it, and a lover to drink it.”

”

Salvador Dali





Tenuta di Fiorano on Via Appia Antica (Photo courtesy of Tenuta di Fiorano)

While Alessandrojacopo upholds tradition in the most Italian of ways, he also embraces new methods. "I am very present here at Fiorano, despite my work in Rome and elsewhere. This is 2016, and I want to learn new things, more modern ways of working." Does he feel a princely responsibility for the region? "I feel love for the region, the territory, for Tenuta di Fiorano where I have so many memories. It is important to work with locals. This vineyard is in Rome, in Lazio, which is such a wonderful and beautiful area, culturally and agriculturally. Our enologist, Lorenzo Constantini, is very present, very in gamba, and is always here - close to the wine. The contents of every bottle are the result of so many little details, so much care and selection." Tenuta di Fiorano's pride and joy - Fiorano Red - was given Quattro Viti AIS, and the Fiorano White was the recipient of Tre Bicchieri di Gambero Rosso on three separate years. The winery also produces Fioranello bi-

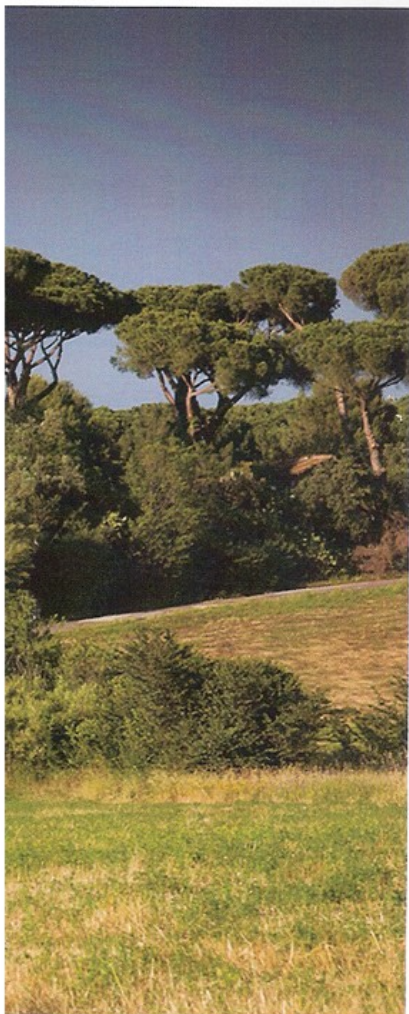
anco and Fioranello rosso. Roughly an annual 25,000-bottle production makes this wine a Via Appia Antica exclusivity, sought-after internationally. Some of the finest restaurants in New York City and California have Fiorano on the wine list, with Japan, Holland, Germany, and other parts of Europe following close behind. And while Alessandro intends to bring production up to 32,000 bottles annually, for now the stock is always sold out.

Down at Santa Fresca - the heart of the estate - sits a cluster of restored buildings, a chapel, and a swimming pool and extensive gardens that evoke *la grande bellezza* of Rome's most celebrated parks. The family uses the main villa for weddings, conventions, tastings, and sommelier master classes, and plans for even more cultural and artistic events are on the horizon, as well as exhibits of sculpture and photography, theatre pro-



Photo courtesy of Tenuta di Fiorano





Alessandro Jacopo with the award-winning Fiorano Bianco and Rosso  
(Credit: Allison Zurfluh)



“Fiorano has always been an organic vineyard; it's in our blood and in our philosophy.”

Alessandro Jacopo Boncompagni Ludovisi

ductions, poetry readings: things that work well with the concept of an oasis outside of Rome. Used, silos have been tagged as future accommodation, and off in the distance, a vast country home awaits renovation, which not long from now will host Alessandro Jacopo and Carolina's budding family. ««

For more about Tenuta di Fiorano:  
[www.tenutadifiorano.it](http://www.tenutadifiorano.it)

For more about Gallerja Art Gallery in Rome:  
[www.gallerja.it](http://www.gallerja.it)