



The Good Fellas of ITALIAN WINE

By Marisa Finetti // Photography by Tyler Gallo / AN&D Studios // Styling by Ricci Lopez for STITCHED

Gone are the days when most fine dining was decidedly French and when Italian wines were either “nice on ice” or arrived in straw-wrapped bottles. Italian restaurants today reflect culture and sophistication with wine professionals championing Italy’s great regions and their native grapes, inspiring conversation, and overturning stereotypes and myths. Here, meet the “good fellas” who bring the best juice that Italy has to offer right into our city’s restaurants and bars.

GINO FERRARO

“The Captain”

Owner, Ferraro’s Italian Restaurant & Wine Bar (ferraroslasvegas.com)

Aha moment: “Realizing French oak is terrible for Italian wine.”

Favorite hangout: “Late-night Barolo and cigar on Ferraro’s patio.”

Calabria-born Ferraro was a purveyor of Italian foods prior to opening his award-winning off-Strip spot in 1985. He feels compelled to evangelize about the superiority of Italian wines, more specifically, the nebbiolo grape. Taste & Learn events in his private dining room and an extensive Italian wine list draw those who appreciate his homeland’s wines as fervently as he does.

KIRK PETERSON

“The Natural”

Import Wine Specialist, Southern Glazers Wine & Spirits of Nevada (southernglazers.com)

Aha moment: “[They] happen all the time and are among the best aspects to studying Italian wine.”

Favorite hangout: “Terminal 3, McCarran International Airport.”

He whet his appetite while exploring fine wine with the money that was meant to pay for film school. Witty, measured and funny, Peterson’s insightful palate and decadelong tenure at the helm of Joe Bastianich’s Las Vegas wine programs made him one of the most powerful Italian wine buyers. Now, he’s as Italian as a Kition suit.

HENRY DAVAR

“The Professor”

Wine Educator & Business Development Manager, Breakthru Beverage Nevada (breakthrubev.com)

Aha moment: “Driving in Barolo. October. Fog.”

Favorite hangout: “Got verdicchio by the glass?”

There had to be wine life beyond France. And when he dropped some lira on his first Amarone and his first Taurasi, he truly fell in love with wine. Today, if he’s not teaching Italian wine classes somewhere in the world,

he’s likely at home enjoying wine made from native Italian grapes.

HRISTIAN ILIEV

“The Advocate”

Lead Sommelier, Carbone (inside Aria) (aria.com)

Aha moment: “Blind tasting 2001 Giacomo Conterno Monfortino.”

Favorite hangout: “Forte with Nina and Stefan [Manchev].”

His father, a doctor, made wine. But Iliev’s teenage years in Bulgaria were all about the hardcore punk scene. Then one wine class in Las Vegas reconnected him to his viticultural roots and he has since poured “excitement into every glass with all who dine at Carbone.”

MIKE TADICH

“The Explorer”

Italian Portfolio Manager, Breakthru Beverage Nevada (breakthrubev.com)

Aha moment: “The more I learn about wine, I find out how little I know about it.”

Favorite hangout: “Opera in Verona.”

The mechanical engineer from Serbia helped develop what is today’s “FlexFuel” for GM and retired early, only to find out three days later he was bored. Tadich filled in for a sommelier who had a broken leg and memories of his grappa-making grandfather brought him full circle, and today he focuses on discovering boutique producers and bringing their wines to Las Vegas.

From left:
Gino Ferraro,
Mike Tadich,
Kirk Peterson,
Hristian Iliev and
Henry Davar