

BANFI VINTNERS

JAMES MARIANI

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James Mariani is family proprietor and co-CEO of Banfi Vintners, America’s leading wine importer, and the award-winning Castello Banfi Vineyard Estate in Montalcino, Tuscany.

The elder son of Banfi President Emeritus Harry F. Mariani, James and his cousin Cristina Mariani-May represent the third generation of family leadership in the company founded by their grandfather, John F. Mariani, Sr. in 1919.

James Mariani officially joined the family business in 1991, though he earlier interned at the company’s vineyard estates, literally learning the business from the ground up. Over the summers of 1982 and 1983, he served as part of a small team that planted the firm’s Chardonnay vineyard at Old Brookville. Four years later, he worked with the vineyard staff at Castello Banfi for the 1987 harvest. From 1991 to 1996, he joined his father and uncle as influential leaders in the development of Brunello di Montalcino in North America, as he traveled extensively across the U.S. and Canada, conducting seminars, university lectures, and wine maker dinners. At the turn of the millennium, he supported the expansion of the firm’s Chilean portfolio to more premium and super-premium offerings, while simultaneously increasing consumer confidence in Riunite Lambrusco. Having recently completed work on the re-launching of the historic Italian wines of Bolla, Mr. Mariani is now considered an unofficial ambassador for all imported wines, joining other producers and importers on numerous industry panels and tastings. He is frequently on the road to meet with the firm’s multitude of wholesale and retail customers across North America.

In assessing the market of the 21st century, Mr. Mariani, who holds a BA from Colgate University and an MBA from the Cornell University’s Johnson School of Business, speculates that current American interest in varietal wines will continue to grow while the market embraces offerings from many different wine-producing nations. “As Americans become more and more comfortable with wine,” he said, “they will better understand how the specific appellation of a wine imparts particular flavors and style to a given grape variety.”