



FONTANA CANDIDA

Mauro Merz

Head Winemaker for Fontana Candida and Frascati's Unofficial Ambassador



As head winemaker for Fontana Candida, the leading name in wines from Italy's Frascati region, Mauro Merz is the driving force behind a movement dedicated to ushering in a return to the high-quality, small-production wines of the past. Those "heritage" wines – beloved by centuries of Romans – were the reason the Lazio's Frascati region was among the first to receive DOC recognition. However, success in the 1970s was followed by a period of over-production and an overall decline in quality, leading to a gradual loss of respect over the next couple of decades.

Merz sees his mission as twofold: reviving the wines of Frascati and updating the image of the Frascati region. Since joining Fontana Candida in 2001 Merz has steadily implemented his vision to restore the typicity of Frascati wines and to combat standardization. The less productive, more complex, traditional Malvasia di Lazio is being re-emphasized over the higher yielding Malvasia di Candia, with its super-size bunches of grapes. Local growers, supported by Fontana Candida's team of viticultural experts, are being challenged to produce better quality grapes, whatever the variety.

"My greatest challenge is to encourage and convince growers to renew and regenerate their vineyards, so that future generations will remain in the business and continue the work of their fathers." – Mauro Merz

Strict selection and painstaking vinification are all in the service of bringing back the Frascati of yore: complex, fuller-bodied, and able to age as desired.

This passion to recover the typicity of Frascati also manifests itself in Merz' love of the Frascati region. He has taken his adopted home to heart and could easily take on a successful second career as a tour guide to the Lazio's best eateries, foods and sites. Merz comes from a family of wine producers in northern Italy's Trentino region. He studied at the prestigious San Michele all'Adige Agrarian Institute, applying his newfound skills at the Cesarini Sforza spumante winery back in Trento. His family heritage of white wine production, together with his formative experience brought him south to the vineyards of Frascati where he worked for several years before joining Fontana Candida in 2001.



Merz and his wife Carola have two children: Camilla and Valeria. An avid cross-country skier, Merz loves the mountains, viewing them as places of peace and solitude for regenerating the mind and spirit. In 2009 Mauro and Carola moved to a new home amid the Frascati vineyards and since then one of Merz's favorite pastimes has been gardening. Even in his free time, planting, sowing and then watching the plants grow and flourish is a source of fascination for Merz.

Back at work, musing on 25 years as a winemaker Merz says: *"To be successful, you can't be anything other than passionate about wine. My role is simply to create something from the collective labor of many hard-working and dedicated men and women."* That modesty, and respect for the land and its workers, has won Merz many accolades, including "Frascati Winemaker of the Year" (Espresso Guide to Italian Wines 2011).

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