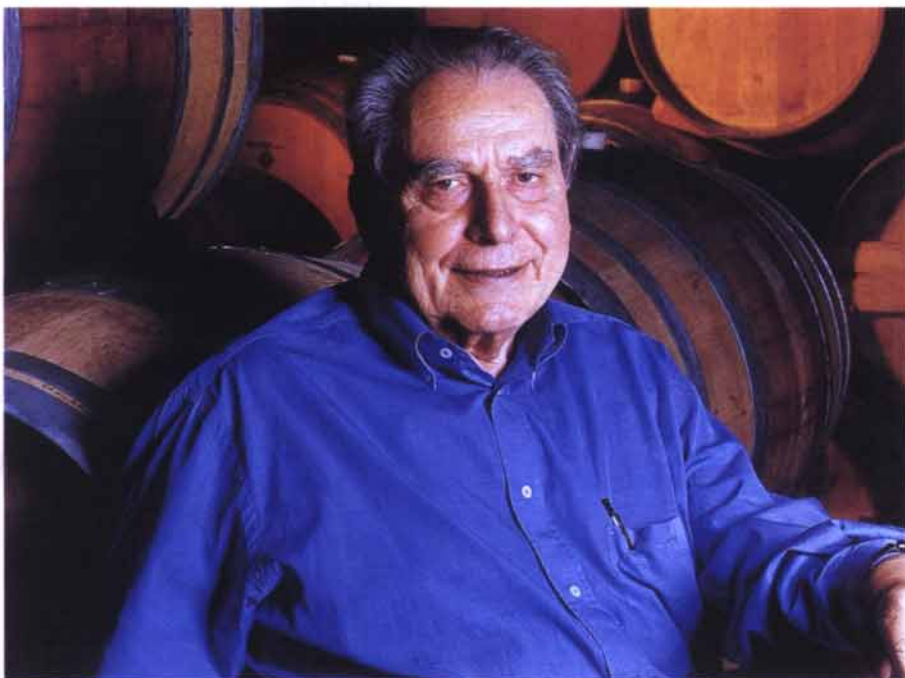


DOLIUM

Growing on Italian roots



Engineer-turned-vintner Mario Giadorou built most of his winery underground to provide cool, steady temperatures.

IN THE MIDDLE OF A VINEYARD IN

Luján sits a small, gray brick building that looks like a capital “L” fallen on its side. You might assume it’s a small office space, or maybe even a pumping station. But the shoebox-sized building is actually a winery capable of handling a 400,000-bottle production.

That’s because the bulk of the structure lies underground, the idea of Mario Giadorou, a former building engineer now turned vintner. The main impetus for moving underground was function, rather than form. The facility is naturally cool, and requires little power to maintain a steady temperature.

“I was able to use nature instead of power to keep things in order,” says Giadorou, the gravelly-voiced owner of Dolium winery.

Giadorou, 71, came to wine through an experience not unlike that of Nicolás Catena, the country’s leading vintner: Both men had wine revelations after coming into contact with the wines of Robert Mondavi in the late ’70s and early ’80s.

“When I worked, I traveled 250,000 miles a year and I drank wine wherever I went,” says Giadorou. “I remember the changes made by Mondavi and that was the first time I really

began to take wine seriously.”

Giadorou, who traces his Italian heritage back to a family of vintners, had his dream of returning to winemaking rekindled. He named his winery after the Latin word for amphorae, the partially buried ceramic containers used by Greeks and Romans to store their wine.

The facility was built in 1997, but Dolium the brand took longer to develop. The first commercial release was from the difficult 1998 vintage; then Giadorou battled cancer, and the brand went dormant, with no production in the ’99 vintage. In the meantime, both Susana Balbo and Altos Las Hormigas used the winery to make their wines, prior to building their own facilities.

After returning to day-to-day operations, and supported by his son and daughter, Giadorou brought the Dolium brand back in

2000. Today Dolium’s production stands at around 150,000 bottles a year, so there is room to grow. Luis Barraud handles the winemaking, while Barraud’s wife, Andrea Marchiori, oversees the viticulture. The couple also produces their own Viña Cobos project at the Dolium facility.

Red wines—Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo—are the main focus (though there is some Sauvignon Blanc produced as well). The Cabernet Sauvignons and Malbecs are richly textured, with dark fruit and chocolate notes, showing admirable ripeness in the cooler 2000 and 2001 vintages. The Tempranillo, a value at \$12, shows solid varietal character with black cherry and vanilla notes. A Syrah will be added to the portfolio.

“After designing so many things for other people, I wanted to do something for myself,” says Giadorou. “It was a pleasure to be able to work independently and at the same time return to the family tradition that had been lost.”

—J.M.

Dolium Malbec Mendoza Reserva 2001 (87, \$25)

Dolium Malbec Mendoza 2001 (86, \$12)

Dolium Tempranillo Mendoza 2002 (85, \$12)