

THE *tastingpanel* MAGAZINE

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Etude senior winemaker/
general manager Jon Priest
is pictured in the winery's
sustainably farmed Grace
Benoist Ranch.



**ON GRACE
BENOIST'S**

green **EARTH**

**WINEMAKING IN
CONCERT WITH
NATURE AT ETUDE'S
CARNEROS ESTATE**

An Unconventional Italian Wine

YEARS BEFORE THE GAVI DOC WAS CREATED, **LA SCOLCA** INVENTED GAVI DEI GAVI

Translated as "The Knights of Labor," Italy's Federazione Nazionale dei Cavalieri del Lavoro organization offers a nod to those who represent national progress via a tradition instilled in 1901. Each year, it recognizes 25 businesspeople who are committed to ethical and social responsibility and have the ability to improve working conditions in Italy.

Among the 25 people who were awarded the title in Rome by the president of the Italian Republic this past May was Chiara Soldati, fourth-generation owner of La Scolca winery. For the past 103 years, her family has been cultivating Cortese grapes in the village of Gavi in the Apennine Mountains, on the border between Piedmont and Liguria. La Scolca is synonymous with the prestigious white wine Gavi dei Gavi.

"This honor allows me to be an ambassador for my country—not only as a woman but as a woman representing agriculture. Few women have received this notoriety, and far less people in the grape-growing business," Soldati tells *The Tasting Panel*.

While most recipients are from the Italian economic or technological sector and are bestowed with the title of Cavaliere del Lavoro at the end of their careers, Soldati notes that hers is "still at the beginning." In person, the 48-year-old beauty shines with personality. "This is a wonderful appointment, knowing that the Italian Republic believes in our family's mission and what La Scolca represents globally," she says.

We met with Soldati in Beverly Hills to taste some of her new releases and talk about La Scolca's plans for the next generation. Her 20-year-old son, Ferdinando, has now started working for the winery, and her pride was discernible as she told me, "He's motivated for the future of our heritage and will be part of our history. Soon, he will be the one traveling the world as a spokesperson for our wines."

Gavi became a DOC in 1974 and a DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita) in 1998. Gavi dei Gavi, for its part, became a registered trademark in Europe in 1969 and in 1971 in the U.S., where it's best known as La Scolca's Black Label. All of La Scolca's wines are produced from the Cortese grape and are 100% fermented and aged in stainless steel.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LA SCOLCA



Chiara Soldati is fourth-generation owner of La Scolca winery in Gavi.

La Scolca 2020 White Label, Gavi DOCG, Italy (\$22) Following aromas of pineapple, white rice, and almond, the palate speaks to clear flavors of lemon peel, lanolin, and powdered vanilla with a hint of minerality. **93**

La Scolca 2020 Gavi dei Gavi Black Label, Gavi DOCG, Italy (\$50) Scented with jasmine, marzipan, and fresh linen. Salty minerality peeks through notes of lemon verbena and passion-fruit sorbet, met by well-mannered acidity. Lean, pure, and pedigreed, this wine is "the classic of the classics," in owner Chiara Soldati's words. **95**

La Scolca 2017 Gavi dei Gavi Limited Edition, Gavi DOCG, Italy (\$60) Released in June 2022, this wine comes in a bottle that's painted black. Made with grapes from 60-year-old vines and aged for five years in stainless steel, it has a yeasty, dough-like character, similar to Champagne without the bubbles. The mouthfeel shows an innate richness, balanced by a thread of keen acidity and a touch of lemon peel. The elegant finish is sweetened by hints of hazelnut and jasmine. **95**

La Scolca 2008 D'Antan, Gavi DOCG, Italy (\$100) The freshness of this mature white wine, uniquely aged in steel, is apparent even as it demonstrates weight and density, offering up a cashmere blanket of vanilla custard as it settles on the palate. Its mineral quality evolves as it opens up, delivering lifted notes of almond butter and fresh cream. A squeeze of lemon on the finish is exquisite. **96**



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