



## RECIPES BY CHIARA SOLDATI... NOT ONLY IN THE KITCHEN!



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LA SCOLCA LOOKS TO THE FUTURE,  
BEYOND COVID-19

April 2020



### **What is happening in these days in the agriculture, specifically in the vineyards?**

For even the most experienced wine industry veteran, Covid-19 represents a unique and very difficult problem. It's impossible to argue that a shutdown of restaurants and other places where people congregate isn't a secondary problem, that the professional future of the restaurateurs, bar owners and sommeliers isn't now uncertain.

Nothing can make the situation better, or improve it immediately, but there are things that can be done. It's important to be both compassionate and innovative. This is not a typical situation, and it does not call for ordinary solutions. For those who have built up strong relationships with customers and the local community, now it could be the time to gently suggest that they should invest in their future enjoyment. For restaurants, that could be in the form of vouchers for future meals and drinks, or even something more inventive. An idea could be, for example, to sell now vouchers for future wine experiences, such as 'A Taste of Gavi', to be used later. This could be surely really appealing for consumers.

The season is dry with sunny days. After two cold weeks now the temperature are around 13/20 c°. The vines are healthy; the countryside has its natural rhythms and continues even in this difficult moment. We just finished the pruning and the first buds are starting to bloom on the plants and we, like every year, carry on all the necessary operations, certainly with all the precautions adopted to guarantee the safety of the employees. Even in the cellar we follow all the necessary activities such as decanting or pumping over, and we take care of our wine to guarantee our standards of excellence always and in any circumstance.

### **What feedbacks are you gathering from other markets?**

The USA, one of largest export market by value, is now the country with the most confirmed COVID-19 cases globally. At this time, more than half of the USA states are in lockdown, with the severity of measures varying from state to state. This is having a severe impact on off and on-trade sales of consumer goods and services. In the last weeks, the value of sales in the USA on-trade declined by 20%, when compared to the same week in the previous year, according to Nielsen/CGA. This was due to 38% of consumers reducing their time outside their homes and 53% avoiding gatherings with other people. This decline in on-trade sales was happening even before most states closed on-trade dining, bars and pubs in mid-March. As we move further into mid-April and even more social restrictions, the opposite is happening in the off-trade. Sales of consumer goods in the off-trade increased by 53% in the last week of March 2020, compared to the previous year (IRI Worldwide).

Wine.com, one of the largest online wine retailers in the USA, has also experienced an increase in sales. Daily demand is triple that of a normal day in March/April as new and existing customers buy more bottles per order than usual. The state of New York now allows any restaurant to sell alcohol with any take-away food order. Consumers in the United Kingdom are also under social distancing restrictions, which are having a similar effect on the off-trade/on-trade share of business as in the USA. During Mid-March 2020, total sales of consumer goods in the on-trade dropped by 15% compared to the previous year, mostly because of the closing of restaurants, which declined by 21% in sales (CGA). Again, this was before the



government put in place more severe restrictions, so it is expected that these figures will deteriorate further.

The latest off-trade sales data from IRI Worldwide, the last week of March reports a 48% growth in grocery and non-grocery sales compared with the same week a year ago. Increased, also in UK, the food and wine delivery made by restaurants. This is a global trend that will increase even more after the lockdown: people discovered a new way of living.

### **How are you managing the situation?**

The events of the past days and weeks have been unprecedented, however, our main priority continues to be the health and wellbeing of our team, our customers and our community. We have made the decision to keep up all our activities taking care of our team. We are very close to all our partners all over the world more than ever. We're still delivering, we're still making it happen, but it's almost like we were writing a new business model in a day. We are promoting orders online for the Italian wine lovers and we are offering complimentary shipping in Italy during this time.

Everyone in La Scolca is reimagining their work in the context of this national emergency, I'm just really trying to be creative and roll with the punches.

Everybody will get through this together. We just have to help each other out as much as we can. La Scolca with its 100 Years of history and the 100th Harvest is equipped to continue its strategic and operational activities both in the vineyard and in the international markets. In compliance with the measures taken to prevent the spread of the covid-19, La Scolca has organized its internal team with smart working and maintaining agricultural work to protect the health of the vineyards.

### **What kind of efforts have you been making to keep on working safely?**

In compliance with the measures taken to prevent the spread of the covid-19, La Scolca has organized its internal team with smart working and maintaining agricultural work to protect the health of the vineyards. We are working from home with video conferencing, online meetings, chat and emails. Deliveries, vineyards and cellars are regularly open respecting social distancing measures and distributing to each team member masks, sanitizers, gloves.

### **What kind of investments are you doing for the vine?**

It is crucial to maintain, even in this difficult phase, a constant collaborative relationship with our partners on all markets and in every sales channel.

Meanwhile, the company continues to carry on all the other projects it has started: the expansion of the new cellar inaugurated last year, the works for the enlargement of the welcoming and tasting area, the enhancement of the digital sector and technological innovation, and the fundamental work of business coaching and motivation of the internal team. We have a new young collaborator who is carrying out a tourism project that we hope to be able to present and inaugurate soon, to always look ahead, ready for new challenges and opportunities.



### **What do you think about the impact of the virus on the eno-tourism as you have been doing a lot of investments to welcome more visitors in the cellar and in the lounge area?**

It's a dreadful time, but optimism breeds confidence in you, our staff and our business. Be proactive on social media; stay in touch with your customers; and focus, as much as is possible, on when this crisis will be over. No-one expects it to be easy, but if we can make it through the spectre of Covid-19, everything else will seem much easier. We are working for a new turistic offer in La Scolca. This year will not be more focused for Italian tourism, but we hope to welcome very soon also our international wine lovers when things will get back to normal. It can happen in a 2 months or 6 months or 12 months, the most important that you should "put in the work" in any time this period so you can be one step ahead of the curve, accelerate, make up for your loss, double down. We are working on different proposal for September/October. We will program tastings, vertical tasting, show cooking with wine parings, wine tasting and golf course, wine tasting and fashion.

### **Trends on the markets: how the COVID-19 pandemic is upending the alcoholic beverage industry?**

Historically, the beverage business was among the most recession resilient businesses worldwide. I'm considering that never before the reaction to this difficult situation has been so different country by country.

We are looking as any Country is approaching the crisis with different cultural approach and we are looking the different mental training to overcome this situation. Everyone is living and working in an unusual condition.

And everyone should find strength and support. Each business strategy should be developed for each country.

During economic downturns, overall consumption of alcoholic beverages wouldn't change so much: wine sales would rise and liquor sales would decline. Demand for budget and mid-priced and premium wines would increase. The distribution, however, would change in the future.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be different for the wine sales compared with experiences in past recessions. Some producers have seen their sales soar, while others have seen them decimated.

The feedback in this period from our partners is the surprise that consumers are preferring the choice of awared brands.

On-premise sales for consumption such as bars, restaurants or winery tasting rooms typically would change in the future. While off-premise sales for home consumption, sales from grocery and liquor stores or mail order firms would increase.

La Scolca is working for a brighter future with its partner.

Wine is consumed in many ways across many markets, in this period we have identified a number of global trends: demographics changements, maturing Consumers naturally showing a different wine drinking behaviour than younger consumers. Similarly, we are also seeing more of a gender equilibrium. As this is a politically and economically charged topic.

Globally, we have also seen a continuing focus on all things culinary, wine drinkers have become more involved with the category. The growing significance and



development of our food culture has led to consumers becoming increasingly influenced by food and wine matching and brand awareness. Consumers, especially younger ones, are also increasingly more open to be trained about wines. It is important the training made by sommelier schools.

In this critical moment it seems that wine drinkers are focusing more on online channel.

In terms of the on-trade, consumers after the lockdown will be more looking for authenticity. Consumers will be looking forward for experiential eating and drinking. young Wine consumers are also becoming more visual when choosing their wine. Again, the growing influence of smartphones has resulted in a very visual economy, where we navigate via visual cues and wine consumers are basing their purchase decision on the visual appeal of the label or bottle.

Our Global Trends policy have focused a lot on responsibility and the consumer's duty towards the environment and their health, especially in terms of the consumers relationship with wine. Younger consumers are increasingly paying attention to the impact on the environment and, globally, we can see a change in mindset when it comes to ethical products Companies must therefore act looking for sustainably-produced. La Scolca celebrated last year 100 Anniversary, our philosophy is to consider our land as an heritage to transmit to next generation. I'm looking to the future and the fifth generation, my son Ferdinando, will enter soon into the business.

While the study of this uncertain period has resulted in great success for some brands, and tough losses for others, the very idea of 'luxury moments' represented by a premium glass of wine shows that having nice things is something that we can treat ourself, remaining safety home, in order to enjoy little good things of life.

A desire for improved quality; a better product; a more valuable experience; and crucially, an opportunity to enhance self-feeling it is the key success for premium wines like La Scolca or many historical brands. Wine is democratic pleasure, whether you have a lot of money to spend, or just a little, it is always nicer to buy better, and importantly, to buy quality, buy a reassuring brand and businesses are increasingly responding to this desire.

### **How do you see the short term future for the Italian food and wine world?**

Italy has potential for recovery but if the right actions are implemented. The economic recovery must be made with gradual reopenings, specified plans and medium-term investments. What do you need for Italy and specifically for the food and wine sector? We need a forward-looking policy that rewards courageous entrepreneurship, who knows how to manage transitions and who knows how to train new skills, a policy that simplifies bureaucracy and makes it competitive. The pandemic was a completely unexpected event which is now putting a strain on national economies and also on the balances that had consolidated over the past decades.

This situation could be the end of globalization and see a return to nationalisms. Italy is one of the countries that has benefited most from globalization. Technology will push towards greater globalization, nationalisms will slow down the return to expansion. The problem will have to face will be to provide bars and restaurants with health devices and therefore facing new habits. In my opinion, we will





continue to witness a development of wine and food delivery.

### **How do you see international geopolitical balances?**

In just few weeks we have witnessed a new structure. Starting with strong tensions within the EU, now we are seeing the rebirth of strong individualisms. This situation of great disorder is a great risk because only united and with common strategies can one be truly strong and competitive. We have seen the historic deep EU and US alliance falter. We have witnessed a weak Europe and an Italy with little weight in the negotiations. We have seen new players in the international scenario represented by China and Russia. Europe and Italy must regain strength and credibility to offer themselves also as reliable interlocutors, but above all with new commercial partnerships. Unfortunately, we have witnessed a lack of vision and determination, slow decision-making, selfishness. For now, the overall response has been insufficient. Immediate actions are needed to finance infrastructure and innovation: a new Marshall plan.

### **What do you think of the Italian measures that have been presented by the government?**

The resources are significant, but I fear that long disbursement times for families and businesses will effectively notch the funding program. Submitting all entrepreneurs who are suffering to long credit investigations, multi-level bureaucracy means giving inadequate responses for the current economic emergency. I hope that substantial improvements can be made in the Parliament and that they will take stronger and faster measures.

### **What do you think of the so-called phase 2?**

I hope for a concrete dialogue involving all the social partners and the needs of all economic and productive sectors. It needs an overview with strategies that also look to the medium term.

### **Which “recipe” do you propose?**

The economic recovery is made of gradual reopenings, strategic planning and medium-term investments, aid to businesses and simplification of bureaucracy. We need new growth, to raise the GDP. Businesses are the main players, but we cannot do it alone, we need a strong modern, leaner audience.

### **What proposals have the Italian restaurateurs made to the government?**

Cancellation of national and local taxes, credit for utilities related to commercial activities and payment plan without interest; extension until the end of the year of the extraordinary fund for employees that are not working right now; suspension of leases, mortgages and rentals until the end of 2020; easier access to credit; an extraordinary tax relief on the employees that are working, tax exemption on social security contributions and benefits up to June 30th 2021; possibility for the restaurants and bar to extend home deliveries; non-refundable support measures for the mandatory closure period imposed by law by the covid-19 emergency (equal to 10% of turnover in relation to the same reference period): these are the



measures requested from the world of Italian catering, unfortunately bended due to the crisis imposed by Coronavirus, which has already cost € 12 billion to restaurants, bars and clubs, that could reach 28 billion losses by the end of the year, according to Fipe. The "Rete della Ristorazione Italiana" (Network of Italian restaurateurs), counting more than 26 business associations and 34.000 associates, developed these measures in order to survive first and then start again full power to preserve the Made in Italy, its tourism, superb wineries, excellent food and more.

### **Tell us some trends for wines in Italy...**

We are finding ways to secure business trying to figure out how the near future will be. In our 'new normal', both consumers and businesses are adapting and adjusting, and doing so at a pace that just a few weeks ago, we wouldn't have ever believed as possible. We are working with on-line shops and direct sales to wine lovers. We are really surprised how our brand is so loved and so many people are supporting us. We are receiving many mails, pictures with kind words and support. I believe that humans had a series of priorities for their existence, from the most basic to the most complex. We need to maintain the pleasure we derive from longterm relationships and friendships. What happens when this will be all over and we will be able to go back to the restaurants? We will come back to our lives and we go right back to seeking out those experiences? The restaurant and bar trade's future existence relies on the answer to this question being: 'yes'. We will support our partners and in general the wine world. What is clear is that the pandemic will create far reaching, long-term changes in how alcoholic beverages are purchased and consumed in the world.

In the last years we witnessed the increase the sales of dry white wines, like Gavi, Rosè wines and sparkling. Italians started to drink more national wines and discover our native grapes instead of the international varieties. New data released by Tannico, an online wine shop in Italy, reveals interesting facts about how Italians drink wine, including information about the choices that women and millennials make, they say that even the astrological signs influence the wine choice! Women seem to prefer sparkling wines (47% of their purchases). Young people from age 18 to 35 (of both genders) often choose to buy online upscale and expensive brands as a status symbol.

### **How have you been managing communication and business relations all long this crisis?**

We are working more than usual with social media, international PR and communication. We need to be close to all our partners, sommeliers, restaurants, wine lovers. La Scolca launches this year its first program of Smart Digital Wine Tastings live on Instagram worldwide to present the new 100 vintage, the new products, the new packagings and all the 2020/21 novelties; and of course some vertical tastings of La Scolca Gavi dei Gavi Black Label, the iconic wine of La Scolca.

With our marketing team we thought of launching a new format that we do not exclude using also in other circumstances as an activity aimed at international partners.

A new way of approaching the markets is required by the constant threats to



which we are subjected everyday: terrorism, social revolts such as in Hong Kong, natural disasters and today the coronavirus pandemic - reiterating, however, that it has been officially confirmed that packaging and wine are safe and cannot be contaminated.

### **This would Happen to be Vinitaly time...How do you envision this kind of events for the future?**

I think that nothing will be like before. Also the classical promotion will need to be changed and designed in a modern way. It's absolutely crucial that wine producers, restaurateurs, importers and wine professionals are engaged with a joint project that could be representatives at all levels to create a new world of wine. Vinitaly like all the others Show in my opinion need to be changed for the future as the market will change. *We can imagine some specific days only for international trade, days only for Italian professional and one day only for consumers.*

### **Let's move to the wine. What are the news about La Scolca wines for 2020?**

This year we present the new Soldati La Scolca Classic Method Blanc de Blancs sparkling wine and the new packaging of new limited edition dedicated to the 100 Harvest

### **What news do La Scolca has? New countries? New markets?**

Personally as CEO of La Scolca I'm never tired to experience new challenge looking forward for new business cooperation, new markets and new product.

### **What about the next projects?**

I'm studying a new wine that probably will be available end of this year. This wine will represent our renaissance, a symbol of a new era after a tough time.

A wine partly different from what we have produced until now, but made with the same passion and enthusiasm: a wine with intriguing aromas and flavors, a surprise for all La Scolca lovers!

### **What are are you doing during the day?**

At the time away from the office, the truth is that we have never felt closer.

Never before is it important to remain united and rediscover the humanity that distinguishes us. Only if we all act together responsibly and respecting the rules, will we be able to overcome this challenge.

The values of solidarity and inclusion have always been part of the La Scolca team and all the people fond of the brand.

When I'm at home I spend time working, speaking with my son Ferdinando. I also train myself with pilates practice listening music.

When this time will be over, we can be proud to say that union is the key to overcoming any difficulty. For this reason I call all my friends, italians and all over the world, I write letters and I try to maintain a friendship. It is important to don't feel alone in this moment.

My parents live in France and we talk every day with facetime. Now are two months that we aren't able to meet.





### **What are you cooking?**

I love cooking! I cook fish, pasta with crabs or shrimps. I cook many different types of risotto, vitello tonnato, biscuits or fruit cakes for breakfast. Today I prepared a tiramisù!

All paired with La Scolca! I'm rediscovering the recipes of my family tradition.

### **What books are you reading?**

I wasn't prepared to stay at home so long time, but this time it is a good opportunity to read. I finished to read "The True Memoirs of Little K" written by Adrienne Sharp. It is a beautiful picture of Russia at the time of Romanov. Yesterday evening I started to read Arthur Schopenhauer's essays on how to reach happiness in life.

### **What movies and TV shows are you watching? What music genre do you prefer?**

I 'm watching news from all over the world in order to be update about this critical situation. I'm watching also movie about vineries like "A good year" with Russel Crow, "Back to Burgundy ", "Sideways", all in original language. I watched again the Italian movie "Dove non ho mai abitato" directed two years ago by Paolo Franchi where La Scolca black label is part of the love story . The movie now is available on Netflix. I love to listen to music on Spotify, mostly music of the past like Brian Adams, Bruce Springsteen, U2, Pink Floyd.

### **How are you spending time with your family?**

With my son we are thinking about new place to visit together, we are talking about his future an his decision to follow the family business at La Scolca. And I'm happy about this future.

Never give up.

My family has been producing wine for 100 years, we are used to reacting with strength, courage and a spirit of sacrifice to all kinds of difficulties, but above all with foresight and vision and it will be like this once again.

### **Do you have time to work out?**

Yes! I'm very active and now I practice pilates and yoga.

### **What kind of wines do you prefer?**

I always love to discover new tastings. Including Russian or German white wine. I love to understand the native grapes of countries where I sell my wines in order to understand better the trend of national markets. Personally, in my free time, I drink Chablis, Sancerre as French, I drink Brunello and Barolo as Italian. Normally I love to drink wines from my friends's winery. As gift for special moments I drink Champagne and I prefer the small brands because I find in that tasting the strong indentity of terroir.

### **Do you have some wine habits?**

Speaking for myself, I am missing the comforting ambiance of restaurants where I'm usual to dine when I'm at home and not travelling, my local Italian restaurants. My habits is to drink wine in my free times with friends. For me the time-honoured



cultural tradition of drinking has been passed down through generations, and I remember when we discovered new bottles of wine accompanying family meals. The consumption of wine for me is usual in the evening and the weekends, usually in a social context. I believe that drinking with meals and among family or friends to increase the pleasure of eating is maintained, mainly thanks to the use value of wine. This tradition could be a protective factor, the Italian culture. I maintain our large number of traditions, drinking wine during “Aperitivo” like a moment of friendship.

In these time I love to cook and experiment new food paring.

### **Can you tell us about the wine habits of Italians?**

Wine in Italy is not simply considered a drink, but it is part of local habits and culture, especially when sitting around the table.

Wines has always been an integral part of the Italian conviviality and hospitality. In order to have a fair overview of the social aspect of alcohol it is important to keep into account the historical, cultural, economical and social issues related to it.

Italians have also taken up the American tradition of the “happy hour” and they maintained the tradition of “aperitivo”. More and more people enjoy this time of the day, between 6.30 and 8.00 pm. After a day at work, the “aperitivo” is a moment to relax and socialise, either in a public place or at home. It consists of a drink, wine, sparkling wine or cocktail, accompanied with a variety of some cold and/or hot foods. Bars offers a large selection of finger food but also tastes of pasta and meat in such amounts that an “aperitivo” can actually replace a dinner.

Wine is an integral part of the Mediterranean diet. In these day many friends are organizing virtual “aperitivo” as a moment to chat or relax with video call all together. Wine is primary emotion, passion and give us the opportunity to escape in a dream time only sipping a glass.

Italy is home of the oldest wine-producing regions in the world and Italian wines are known worldwide for their broad variety.

Wine production is not just a cultural issue but it is a milestone in our economy as Italy is a major wine producer in the world. It is interesting to notice that the ancient name of our country was “Enotria”, a greek word that means “land of wine”.

### **Can you give us some information about La Scolca novelties and upcoming projects?**

The key words: adaptation, adjustment and agility, we are working on new business strategies: virtual tasting, business coaching, we are also utilizing social media to offer videos and live demos of recipes and masterclass. We will not stop all our investments in innovative practice.

We are launching our first program of Smart Digital Wine Tastings live on Instagram worldwide to present the new Sparkling Classic Method Blanc de Blancs, the new packagings and all the 2020/21 novelties; and of course some vertical tastings of La Scolca Gavi dei Gavi Black Label, the iconic wine of La Scolca.

This is a new format that we do not exclude to use also in other circumstances as an activity aimed at international partners.