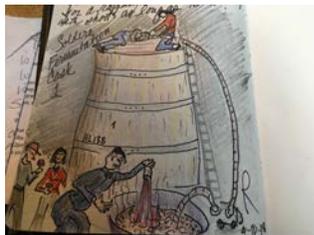




**A Tribute to our Mentor  
Gianfranco Soldera  
By Robert A Hefner III  
2/16/2020**

*Grandissimo! Grandissimo!* I was standing at our altar of winemaking in Gianfranco Soldera's Case Basse cantina along with his son-in-law Paolo and MeiLi.



Grandissimo! Grandissimo! Gianfranco extolled as he excitedly waved his open hand collecting the glorious scents from a large tub of bubbling ruby red 2018 Sangiovese must as we vigorously pumped over from one of his giant 150+ hectoliter fermentation casks.

Gianfranco's extraordinary invitation to join his Case Basse 2018 harvest and processing began on a fateful trip in 2005 to taste Tuscan wines. It was then we first met the great spirit and force of life that was Gianfranco Soldera. But before we could taste from his giant Slovenian oak aging casks in "the most natural of all wine cantina's" we were guided on an unforgettable tour of Case Basse, through Graziella's spectacular gardens, a prolific orchard and a pond full of "frogs and insects" and Gianfranco's explanation of the importance of the



interdependence of a biodiverse polyculture of both flora and fauna as critical components of growing wines of great quality and place.



Nor will we ever forget our “love at first sight” encounter with this warm and wonderful man himself while tasting his wines of exceptional energy and quality from his giant casks, and our first annual spirited learning and philosophical lunch at Il Leccio with Monica his daughter and interpreter for

the day, along with Cristian Bruseghini our friend and then sommelier at Harry’s Bar, London who arranged our trip.

Over the following thirteen years of Gianfranco’s life, we returned each year to learn more and more about the workings of nature by the maestro himself, more delightful luncheons at Il Leccio, great Soldera wine along with beautiful organic food products he brought himself; prosciutto from his special butcher, risotto from the family in Italy and of Case Basse olive oil.

combination of delicate along with the very few create a “harmony” exceptional “pleasure.”



ancient rice-growing De Acchi course Soldera’s own handmade Gianfranco’s mantra that the flavors from fresh organic foods organic authentic great wines within humans that gives

Our annual visits became not only the renewal and growth of our friendship with the great man himself but also importantly our continuing study of Gianfranco’s philosophies that have created his high quality, beautiful world-class Sangiovese wines over so many vintage years. And Gianfranco himself was a world-class mentor.

Seven years after that fateful introduction to Gianfranco, fate once again intervened in our lives ----- a truly serendipitous event lead to our purchase of and move to our glorious property near Charlottesville, Virginia, located in the Monticello AVA that included some at the time twelve-year-old Cabernet Franc vineyards. So, with Gianfranco’s philosophies deeply embedded in us by then MeiLi and I said to each other, “why not!!!” --- with Gianfranco as our mentor and

guiding light, we believe we can accomplish Thomas Jefferson's dream to produce world-class, natural and authentic wines in his beloved Virginia.

We built our cantina in 2013, and Gianfranco persuaded our superb, globally knowledgeable consultant and fellow Soldera disciple, Alberto Antonini, to join our journey just in time for our recently launched 2014 Cabernet Franc harvest. And each year thereafter, during our annual visits to Case Basse along with Alberto, we always immersed ourselves deeper and deeper into the science and philosophies of Soldera wine growing. Always followed by the pleasure of continuing and expanding his philosophies and occasional deep dives into microbiology at our inciteful and delightful Il Leccio lunches.

We have been continuously blessed by fate that has gifted us such an in-depth "Soldera" education to start our journey in winegrowing within our Ramiisol Territorium.



During our 2018 annual summer Case Basse visit fate struck once again! Gianfranco looked across his giant desk and challenged us "if you want to take a Giant Step Up" in your winegrowing, join us at harvest. We committed on the spot. And that fall, arriving at Case Basse just in time for all the activity we learned, studied and worked side by side with Gianfranco, Monica, Paolo and the team during the Soldera 2018 harvest, processing and fermentation that sadly became Gianfranco's last living harvest.



Now, as we go forward, we have dedicated ourselves and the future of our Ramiisol wines to continue to build upon our foundation of Gianfranco Soldera's life experiences and fortunately, our continuing relationship with Monica and Paolo.

So Gianfranco, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for our future and will never forget the importance of.....*Grandissimo! Grandissimo!*

