

The Leader in Pinot Grigio

An Interview with Jane Scott, Vice President, Marketing, Santa Margherita USA

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to joining Santa Margherita USA, Jane Scott worked in senior positions throughout the wine business including Freixenet USA., Remy-Cointreau USA, and Remy Canada. Scott has a diploma in journalism from Grant MacEwan University and has additional certifications from Université d'Ottawa, Western University Ivey School of Business, and Cornell University.



Jane Scott

COMPANY BRIEF Since founding Santa Margherita in 1935, Count Gaetano Marzotto dedicated his life to establishing the winery and its estates as one of the leading ambassadors of Italian wine excellence around the world. With the establishment of Santa Margherita USA (santamargheritausa.com) as the U.S. importing arm in 2016, the import team proudly carry on his vision in the United States. Santa Margherita USA is a fine wine import company representing premium and ultra-premium wine estates from Italy.

Will you discuss the history and heritage of Santa Margherita and what have been the keys to the strength of the brand?

Santa Margherita was founded by Count Gaetano Marzotto in 1935 in an undeveloped region of northern Italy just outside Venice, and named lovingly after his wife, Margherita. He had a vision to develop the entire region agriculturally, not just for wines, and to make a community for the people working the land. His vision remains our pillars today – respect for the region, the traditions, the land and the people. Today, we still use that to guide us in all our decisions. This was the foundation for what would become today Santa Margherita Gruppo Vinicolo, a wine group currently run by the third generation of the Marzotto family. Santa Margherita Gruppo Vinicolo has become one of the most respected Italian wine groups in the world and consists of eleven wine estates representing some of the finest regions in Italy.

I work for Santa Margherita USA, which is the importer of the Santa Margherita Gruppo Vinicolo portfolio of wines. SMGV is our parent company. The Santa Margherita brand is the anchor of the group and renowned worldwide as the leader in Pinot Grigio. Here in the United States, Santa Margherita's success is due

to an unwavering commitment to the quality of the wine and our consumers have rewarded us with their loyalty by making Santa Margherita one of America's favorite wine brands.

What are the keys to building brand awareness and brand loyalty in such a crowded space?

The wine category is large and fragmented in the U.S. and can prove challenging. Due to its position as the category leader with strong consumer awareness and loyalty, our job at Santa Margherita USA is to be the guardian

of the Santa Margherita brand. Everything we do should be to ensure that we present Santa Margherita in the light it has earned over the past 30 years in the U.S. This means retaining its relevancy to the consumer by continuing the conversation about how Santa Margherita is a part of their lifestyle and their repertoire of fine wines and, ultimately, is the perfect accompaniment to their meals.

We have nine other wine brands we bring into the U.S. that are much newer to the market. Building awareness and loyalty for these brands occurs on a much more granular level. Many people are introduced to their favorite wines by friends or by their favorite wine store or restaurant. With these brands, our job is to share their stories. We always lead with what's in the bottle since the quality comes first, and then present the wineries' stories to help inform and educate the consumers so they can choose the wines that appeal to them.

Will you provide an overview of Santa Margherita Wines' offerings and its new releases?

We have four wines within the Santa Margherita brand. Our Pinot Grigio is the most well-known, but we also have a beautiful Chianti Classico Riserva, a Prosecco Superiore DOCG and a Sparkling Rosé.

Additionally, we have a Franciacorta estate called Ca' del Bosco, which produces a sparkling wine made in the classic method. It



Santa Margherita Villa in Italy



Santa Margherita Winery

is truly an example of the best quality from the best area and represents the most respected wines of that region.

We have a Venetian winery called Torresella that makes Prosecco DOC and Pinot Grigio. It has been one of our fastest growing brands in the U.S. In 2021, we will be launching our Torresella Prosecco Rosé DOC and we cannot wait to have this wine in the U.S.

In the Maremma – the wild, wild west of the Italian countryside – we have a wine called Sassoregale, which is a great representation of the region. We produce a Sangiovese as well as a Vermentino, which is a beautiful white wine varietal with citrus and floral aromatic notes. It's a great accompaniment to many dishes.

We have a historic property in Tuscany called Lamole di Lamole. This storied winery is both a historical part of the Tuscan landscape and also a leader in innovation and progressive methods which optimize our Chianti Classico wine offerings.

We have a northern Italian winery on the Austrian border in the Alto Adige called Kettmeir. This winery just celebrated its 100th anniversary and produces pure varietal expressions from the region. We import their Pinot Grigio, Pinot Bianco, Muller Thurgau and Pinot Nero to the U.S.

We have a Sardinian winery, Cantina Mesa, which is truly a sight to behold. The winery is located on the southern part of the island of Sardinia and the vineyards are highly influenced by the Mediterranean Sea. These vineyards literally grow in the sand, just feet from the ocean, and the wines show that oceanic influence. Sardinia is known for both Vermentino, again that aromatic, citrusy white varietal, and Cannonau, Sardinia's

indigenous red grape. The effect of the seaside resonates throughout these wines.

We have Sicilian wines as well, Feudo Zirtari, which are the perfect pizza and pasta wines.

Our group also recently acquired a winery located on Lac Garda, called Ca Maiol. We believe this region, called Lugana, is underrepresented in the U.S. They are known for crisp, floral white wines.

We also represent two wineries in the U.S. that we do not own. One is the historic Amarone producer Masi. Masi's wine portfolio is a great addition to our U.S. portfolio with their storied and beautiful wines from the Valpolicella region.

We import Fattoria Sardi, a small biodynamic producer located in Luca, Tuscany. The young couple who own Fattoria Sardi have invested their time researching and developing how best to create biodynamic rosés from Tuscany.

How do you describe the Santa Margherita customer and how broad is the target market?

The wonderful thing about Santa Margherita is that it has no preconceived boundaries on its audience. It's adored from Millennials to Boomers. We see similar affinity to the brand across multiple generations. That said, we always talk to our core consumer while introducing the brand to new consumers. We have seen throughout the years that many Santa Margherita drinkers have been introduced to the brand by one of their relatives or friends.

Will you highlight Santa Margherita's focus on innovation and commitment to sustainability?

Our founder, Gaetano Marzotto, was before his time on so many levels. His vision

incorporated sustainability before sustainability was chic. We have invested throughout the years in lowering our footprint by, for example, developing our own glass manufacturer to reduce the necessity to transport glass, installing solar panels, and deploying sustainable agricultural practices. The Marzotto family remains devoted in its commitment to the environment, not just because of the good it does for our planet, but also because it is both how things should be and how they have been. A great example of this is the Marzotto's recent commitment to rebuild the trellises for our Lamole di Lamole vineyards and to recreate the trellises as they were originally built. This was a laborious and expensive choice for them to make. It also meant more time committed to rebuilding these vineyards.

Innovation often leads to success, so we constantly strive to entertain new ideas on how to make even better wines or be more environmentally friendly. Our biggest success came from being innovative. In 1960, the Marzotto's boldly decided to make Pinot Grigio without allowing the grape skins to influence the color of the wine. This required a pioneering decision to vinify Pinot Grigio grapes, without the traditional skin contact, to create the first white Pinot Grigio wine. So, both the respect for tradition and a serious nod to innovation can be found deep in our company's roots.

Did you always have an interest in working in the wine industry and what has made the business so exciting for you?

I was introduced to the world of wine while I was working in the restaurant industry during college and fell in love with it. I was fortunate enough to have some great mentors as I built my career, and my heart has never strayed from the wine business. I marvel and respect the fact that wine has been a part of civilization for thousands of years. I've often said the world would be a happier place if we all just sat down to talk with a great glass of wine and a little antipasto. ●



A sample of Santa Margherita's offerings