

★ BREWERY PROFILE ★

DEL DUCATO



Parma, Italy www.birrificiodelducato.net

Not content with their hi-falutin' ham and wheels of elegant cheese, their tasty tortellini, and wonderful wines, Parma's swinging basket of gastronomic goodness now includes some rather decadent beer too.

Birrificio De Ducato, perched on Italy's upper thigh, in the small town of Le Roncole, is one of the country's classiest, most creative craft breweries. Brewmaster Giovanni Campari, handsome and hirsute, with a build that belies the epicurean enticements around him, exemplifies all that is enchanting and unique about Italian beer culture.

Campari is a former food scientist whose fondness for fermentation took him from the kitchen to the brew kettle, and his beers, like many others that have been instrumental in the Italian craft beer renaissance, sit hand in glove with the nation's "slow food" movement.

Like many of his craft brewing countrymen, Campari uses an array of indigenous and inventive ingredients, including chili, chamomile, green pepper, and licorice. But it is not just in the pantry where he reaches for his inspiration.

Fittingly for a brewery based in the birthplace of Giuseppe Verdi, Campari calls on music as his main muse. "Music evokes feelings and ideas that materials find difficult," he says. "I always draw comparisons with music when I talk to people about my beer. Everyone has their own sense of harmony within them. Someone who is educated in music

will discover the nuances of a symphony by Mozart or Beethoven at a deep level, but, equally, the 'man of the street' will be touched by the warm beauty and harmony of the music."

His father was a professor of cinema and his mother a teacher of Italian literature, and Campari studied classics at high school. But he was seduced by science, and began home-brewing as a university student.

Campari was then taken under the wing of Agostino Arioli at Birrificio Italiano, one of the key characters in Italy's genteel brewing revolution and the creator of the legendary Tipopils.

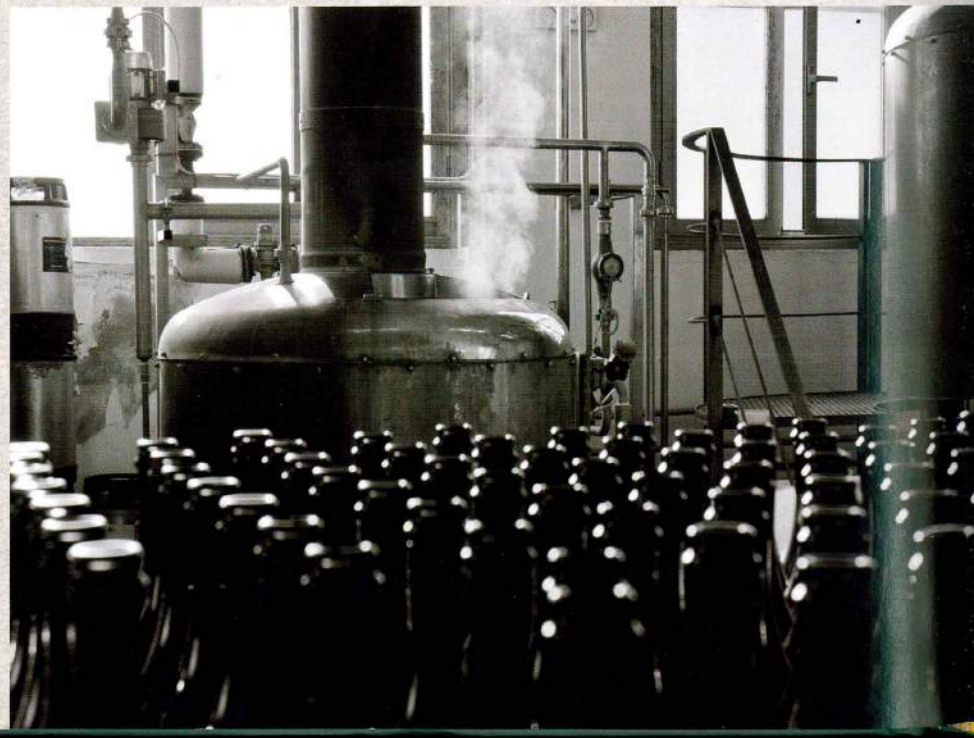
"Agostino inspired me a lot," Campari says. "He taught me how to manage fermentation. But above all I was fascinated more by the man than the brewer. He has an admirable philosophical approach that is reflected in his beers."

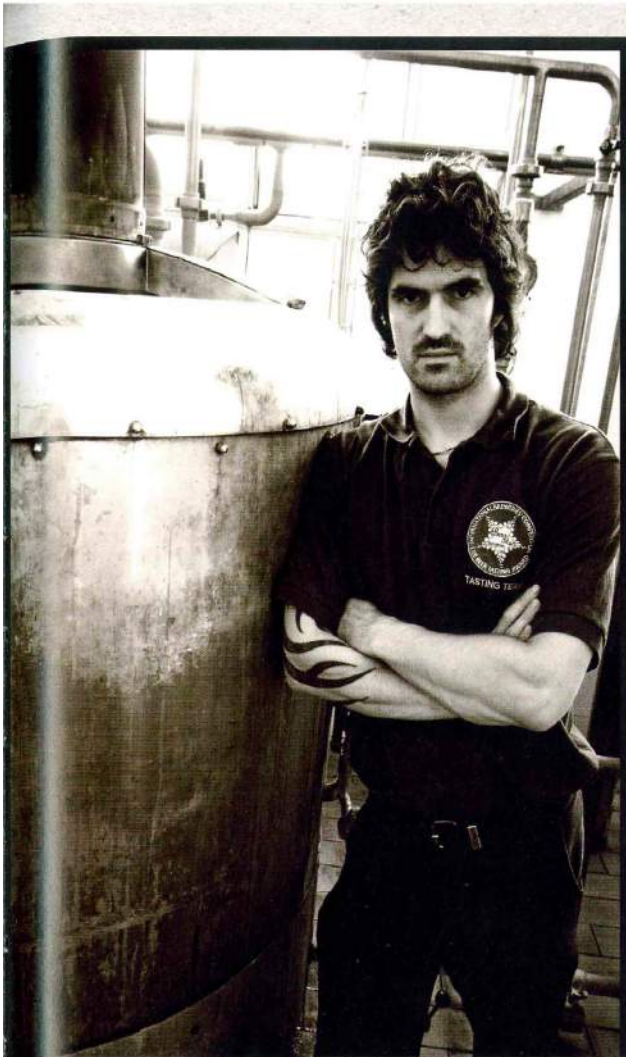
The DNA of many of Campari's beers date back to in-depth discussions with Agostino, whose Germanic leanings can be traced in Ducato's Via Emilia, an award-winning kellerbier named after the ancient Roman road that ran north from the Adriatic coast to the river Po.

This best seller is dry-hopped with Tettnang hop that Campari handpicks just before the harvest. Lagged for three weeks, it is floral and faintly fruity, with just enough bitterness to challenge the local cheese and charcuterie.



154 CURIOSITIES





Although European influences abound in his beers, Campari, like Italy itself, has developed a style distinctive in its diversity. "I have no brewing style, like I don't have a favorite meal," he says. "Our beers are very balanced and fine. They are not ordinary; they have culture, style, and a special touch that make them different. Our brewing philosophy is to brew beers that, no matter how complex they can be, are always balanced and easy to drink." As his surname would suggest, Campari likes a bit of bitterness in there, too. Machete Double IPA is an aggressive ode to America, whereas Bitter Ale is a discreet doff of the bowler hat toward England's session style.

But of the European brewing nations, it is Belgium that energizes Campari the most. Keen to help out Drie Fonteinen

Left: The brewery at Le Roncole.

Above: Del Ducato's Giovanni Campari.

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after its disaster in 2009 (see pages 196–97), he drove to Belgium, siphoned three barrels of 18-month-old lambic into his tanker, and drove it back again.

It now forms the base beer of Beersel Morning, a subtly sour saison made up of a blend of lambic and New Morning. La Luna Rossa, meanwhile, is a Flemish red-cum-kriek made from a blend of different aged barrels, some of which have held local, sour Morello cherries for a minimum of six months.

"It's the most difficult beer I brew," Campari admits.

"The process is closer to wine than beer. When it's time for blending, I turn myself into an oenologist. I try to keep my style every year but every cuvée is quite different from the others.

"The most difficult part of the job is trying to predict how the blend will develop in the years to come. But, to be honest, that's the bit I love most about my job!"

Unlike some other Italian brewers, Campari's stylistic embellishments are neither gimmicky nor gratuitous.

"Sometimes I want to be loyal to traditional beer styles and sometimes I want to push the boundaries and explore new frontiers," Campari says. "But what else is tradition if not a successful innovation?"

Grounded in Campari's scientific schooling, each unusual ingredient comes wrapped in reason: oats for a smoother mouthfeel; peppercorns for freshness; and hot pepper in the Verdi Imperial Stout because, he says, chocolate and chili is a classic match: "The heat of the chili deconstructs the fullness of the beer, giving a better finish and leaving the throat ready for another sip."

Beer, Campari insists, is an articulation of the individual. Wine is a mere idiom of its ingredients. "Wine is first of all an expression of the terroir, while beer is more an expression of the brewmaster," he says. "In the brewing process there are many variables that we can adjust to obtain an infinite range of results. Making beer is a way to express myself, like a novel is for a writer.

"My intention is to create a beer that delivers insights," Campari says. "I am truly fulfilled when, after a long research, I can finally 'taste' those same emotions in my glass of beer—and it is even more gratifying when others are able to describe, in their own words, what I wanted to express. It makes me feel I was able to communicate something meaningful."

KEY BEERS

Verdi Imperial Stout 8.2%

Nuova Mattina 5.8%

VIA EMILIA (Via Emilia) 5%

Winterlude Tripel 8%

Chimera 6%

L'Ultima Luna 13%