

# Wine and Wheels

EASYRIDERS MAGAZINE MAY 19, 2020



Marcelo Dozzo has two passions: motorcycles and wine. Both started in his garage, and now, both draw visitors to Dozzo Vineyards in Southern California's Temecula Valley, where Marcelo's vintage bikes line the walls of the tasting room and wines made by his son Damian fill patrons' glasses.

"He's still quick," Damian says of his 68-year-old father, who continues to race on weekends. And though he's passed the winemaking torch to his son, Marcelo retains his position as arbiter of what gets bottled under the Dozzo label. "He's my panel," Damian explains. "We do our trials, and I present the wines to him — usually we're in agreement. I've been making wine with him since I was a little boy."

Damian Dozzo watches father Marcelo show off an expert swirl.

Born in Argentina on a farm without electricity or running water, the elder Doffo caught the winemaking bug from a great uncle during a visit to his family's home country of Italy. After emigrating to the United States, he began making wine in 1994. What started as a hobby soon became a calling. After only a few years, his label started amassing awards, and he felt it was time to grow his own vines. In 1997, he purchased an old cattle ranch in Temecula. An hour north of San Diego, the town had been producing wine since the 1970s, but at the time, it was still virtually unknown outside of Southern California.

By the early 2000s, Marcelo had both a growing wine business and a growing collection of vintage motorcycles. So he decided to combine the two. Today, he owns roughly 250 bikes, about 100 of which are on display in Doffo's high-ceilinged, garagelike tasting room. Most are Ducatis (his favorite), but there are also Capriolos, Cyruses, Gileras, Hondas, Rumis, Vespas, and two 125 cc Vicentinas — an Argentinean brand and the manufacturer of the first bike Marcelo ever owned.

Doffo's website modestly notes that most of Marcelo's collection "may not have much value as unique collector pieces." But he has more than a few rarities — among them, one of the first Ducati scooters, a four-stroke beast from the early '50s that was quickly phased out in favor of a lighter two-stroke. "It was totally advanced," the elder Doffo says, standing next to the bulky blue scooter in the crowded garage where he restores all his rides. But, he adds, "it was a failure ... so now it's a very collectible item."



A destination for motorcyclists.

The Doffos prefer Italian craftsmanship, and that extends to Damian's winemaking. While giving a tour of the winery's small production facilities, he shows off a state-of-the-art hydraulic press that "looks like a Ferrari," as he accurately describes it. "The Italians make the prettiest equipment." And that equipment helps Damian make well-balanced, juicy wines.

"I characterize my wines as fruit-forward and really round," he says. "I like them to be harmonious [and] supple. There's never a big jolt of tannin." Doffo specializes in bold reds, made from intense varietals like syrah, malbec, and cabernet franc. But in Damian's hands, they tend to be light on the palate, with lots of smoke, spice, and acidity to balance out their dark fruit flavors. The wines are both brawny and nimble — not unlike Marcelo's vintage Ducatis.

When he's not busy tending the vineyard and making wine, Damian races with his father — as do his two sisters, who also help run the winery, Brigitte as tasting room director and Samantha as events coordinator. It's clear that the motto on the back of each Doffo bottle ("Above all else, family unity is our priority") is more than just a mere marketing slogan.

Temecula's profile as a wine region is climbing fast. Earlier this year, *Wine Enthusiast* magazine named the valley one of its 10 Best Wine Getaways, alongside such world-class destinations as Beaujolais in France and Portugal's Lisbon region. And Doffo has been part of that story; Damian is happy to report that his 2016 syrah received 90 points from *Wine Enthusiast*, the wine-world equivalent of a Top 10 finish at a MotoGP event.

"There's nothing that makes me more proud [than] to represent my pop's legacy," says Damian, surveying his vines from a hilltop that overlooks the whole property. "I've got huge shoes to fill."

<https://outline.com/hfVrdu>

COPY



Annotations



Report a problem

Outline is a free service for reading and annotating news articles. We remove the clutter so you can analyze and comment on the content. In today's climate of widespread misinformation, Outline empowers readers to verify the facts.

[HOME](#) · [TERMS](#) · [PRIVACY](#) · [DMCA](#) · [CONTACT](#)