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Contact

Mary Kate Buckley: Urlari Wines, +1-203-216-3615 [urlariwines@gmail.com](mailto:urlariwines@gmail.com) [www.urlari.com](http://www.urlari.com)

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## **Azienda Agricola Urlari**

Overview	Even in the world of wine, where little is commonplace, Azienda Agricola Urlari stands out for its unusual pedigree. The story began in the 1980s when Roberto Cristoforetti, designer of dominant world ski champion Alberto Tomba's winning ski boots, became enamored of wine while traveling with Tomba – known as much for his love of fine wine as his prowess on the slopes. It continued into the new millennium, when, in 2002 at Chile's Portillo Ski Resort Cristoforetti met Mary Kate Buckley, then Regional Vice President and General Manager for Nike's Americas Region, who impressed him with her business experience and marketing savvy. It culminated in 2008 in their joint partnership with winemaker Jean-Philip Fort of Bordeaux, a specialist in St. Emillion wines, including Chateau Angelus, bringing together the three world wine cultures Cristoforetti most esteems – Italian, French and American.
Urlari	<p>Cristoforetti began searching for suitable land in 2003, and in 2004 purchased the 25-acre Urlari plot in Riparbella, in Tuscany's coastal Maremma region, four miles from the Tyrrhenian Sea and 12 miles north of Bolgheri, home to many great Super Tuscan wines, much appreciated by Cristoforetti. He purchased the plot from a sheep farmer with large holdings, and to keep the evil eye at bay maintained the Urlari name, simply adding Azienda Agricola (agricultural company). Urlari itself is an approximation of the Italian verb Urlare, to yell, or howl. Riparbellans say that this field was named around Christmas 1944 when Allied troops were hiding in the heavily forested area and enemy troops were so close they didn't even dare use electric devices and so they developed bird calls, or yells, Urlari, to communicate their positions to each other.</p> <p>The land has been cultivated since at least Etruscan times (700-200 BC) as attested to by unearthed artifacts including a coin dating to 200 BC, and, auspiciously, shards of a ceramic wine vessel, pointing to a previous, if ancient, history of wine making on the property. Urlari includes about 300 25-year old olive trees and borders on Barone di Paoli's historic Tenuta di Casaglia's tiny 15<sup>th</sup> century chapel. Several large estates have been planted to vine in Riparbella in the past few years, including by the Ferragamo family and Caiarossa.</p>
Wines	Azienda Agricola Urlari produces three wines, Pervale, named for Cristoforetti's beloved daughter <i>Valentina</i> , a blend of sangiovese, cabernet sauvignon and franc, merlot and alicante bouschet, first released in Italy in 2010 with the 2008 vintage, L'Urlo (the howl), 100% merlot first released in Italy in 2011 with the 2009 vintage and Ritasso, (named for a nearby stream), 100% sangiovese, first released in Italy in 2015. Urlari's distribution has expanded and now includes Switzerland, Austria, France, and the USA.
Vineyards	Prior to purchasing, Cristoforetti hired a geologist, Dott. Gian Franco Ruffini of Cecina, to run tests including sampling various terrain at 20, 40, and 60 inches that showed the soils were a relatively consistent mix of clay, silt, and sand. Drainage was rated excellent due to 20° slopes and 30% gravel. They selected slopes at between 700 and 800 feet above sea level, to which Ruffini assigned a score of 9.5 out of a possible 10 to describe the suitability for vineyards. In 2006 tractors prepared the vineyards while Cristoforetti hired agronomist Stefano Pinzauti of the University of Florence who, with an agent from the VCR France Nursery, selected the phylloxera resistant rootstock best

suited to the soil profile and varieties he wanted. He planted 10,500 sangiovese R5/775 Paulsen cl.IS V1 vines on a southeastern-facing slope, and imported from France: 10,000 cabernet sauvignon 169/R110 cl.151, 9,500 cabernet franc 214/Gravesac cl. 264, 10,000 merlot 181/Gravesac cl 244, and 5,000 alicante 804/R110 cl.7 planted on eastern facing slopes. In 2007 he imported additional vines from France, 3,500 petit verdot 400 R110 c. 456 planted on a southwest facing slope and 1,500 merlot-cl 181/Gravesac cl 244 planted facing east, bringing the vineyard total to 50,000 vines. The petit verdot and 50% of the merlot are guyot-trained; all the other vines are trained in the spurred cordon method and all are extremely densely planted with 3,300 plants per acre, with 5' 3" between vines.

Two permanent workers manually care for the vineyards year-round, pruning, removing shoots and leaves as well as many clusters to ensure uniform ripening and optimum maturity and aiming, depending on the varietal, for 2.2–2.6 pounds per plant.

**Winemaker** Cristoforetti spoke with a variety of winemakers and in July 2008 met with Jean-Philippe Fort, a member of the Michel Rolland consulting team in Bordeaux, where they spent hours sampling the world's top wines and found that they were both attracted to the same style: powerful and intense, extremely complex but also perfectly balanced. Still, Cristoforetti had to convince Fort to consult for a winery outside France, something Fort had never done. What persuaded him, he says, were the essential elements of superior quality (terroir, vines, philosophy and vinification) that the winery already possessed, along with the knowledge that the winemaking venture was still in concept phase, a blank sheet of paper that invited him to experiment with different approaches and influence the wines from the start.

In 2008 they brought in their first harvest and transported their grapes to Guado al Melo in nearby Castagneto Carducci for vinification of PerVale 2008. By their second vintage, 2009, Urlari's cantina was fully operational.

**Climate** The climate at Urlari is classically Mediterranean: sunny year round with mild winters, dry summers and modest rain. Only occasionally do temperatures fall below 32°F and in summer Urlari's elevation allows for temperature variances of up to 26°F between day and night while winds off the Tyrrhenian cool vineyards during the day so that maximum temperatures don't go above 86°F with minimums between 50° - 59°F.

**Vinification** Clusters are transported to the winery in 30 pound plastic crates designed to prevent crushing when stacked. At the winery they are deposited onto a conveyor belt to avoid breaking grapes' skins. Leaves and stems are removed, the fruit then moves along another conveyor belt to a crusher that gently breaks the skins to release juice as grapes drop to fill conical-shaped temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks below. Juice is pumped over the crush every six hours using peristaltic pumps. After two weeks, the grapes are gently pressed and the wines are aged between 12 and 18 months in French oak barrels of various toasts imported from Nadalie, a cooperage in Ludon in the Medoc in Bordeaux. The wine is bottled and aged an additional twelve to 15 months in bottle prior to release from the winery.

**Labels** Urlari's labels were inspired by an ancient Etruscan coin Cristoforetti found at the site as he planted as well as Etruscan art in general. Etruscans believed the moon reflected the cycles of nature, its light influencing all growing things and that, like the moon, what is empty will in time again become full. Urlari's labels therefore explore the influence of the sun and the stars' light on nature, and feature images of animals that still howl nearby, their elongated forms demonstrating the spiritual power with which the Etruscans endowed them, a wild boar on Pervale and a wolf on L'Urlo. Ritasso's angel represents the figure on the Etruscan coin found while preparing the field. The five stars on the label represent the five varieties that are blended in Pervale. The cross-shaped form of the labels references the crosses on the front doors of the tiny 15<sup>th</sup> century chapel of the neighboring Tenuta di Casaglia property.

**Images** Images of the wines, winery and team are available at [www.urlari.com](http://www.urlari.com).



## Urlari, For Cross-Cultural Wine 2.0

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### Azienda Agricola Urlari

#### The Team

##### Owner

Roberto Cristoforetti was born to generations of farmers in Tuenno, a village near Trento in mountainous northern Italy. As a youth he worked with his father in their apple orchards and as a registered fruit farmer he now oversees the family's orchards. In 1975 he was hired by the Ski Boot Research Laboratory of the American Lange Boot Company's European manufacturing headquarters in the neighboring village of Mollaro where he learned to custom-mold ski boots to suit individual racer's techniques. He collaborated with Lange's engineers to innovate materials and adapt hardware and is co-named and co-patent-registered with Rossignol/Lange as designer on the first carbon ski boot (Rossignol purchased Lange in 1989). He has also collaborated with Italian design firm Pininfarina, famous for its Ferrari designs, to design visually arresting ski boots. He has crafted boots for some of the greatest ski racers of our time: since the 1984 Sarajevo Olympics, 79 Olympic medals have been won by racers wearing his boots, including gold medalists Phil Mahre, Alberto Tomba, Herman Maier, Tommy Moe, Picabo Street, Julia Mancuso and 2011 overall world champion Maria Riesch.

As Cristoforetti traveled the world with Alberto Tomba, they became good friends. Tomba's well-known appreciation for fine wines was rewarded with invitations to visit the world's top wineries and Roberto enthusiastically accompanied him. Between 1990 and 1998, they visited *Chateaux Mouton Rothschild*, *Margaux*, *Lafite Rothschild* and *Lynch Bages* in Bordeaux, *Domaine de la Romanee-Conti* in Burgundy, *Ornellaia* in Bolgheri, Tuscany, *Santa Rita* in Chile and *Opus One*, *Beringer*, *Shafer*, *Mondavi* and *Atlas Peak* in California.

Severely bitten by the wine bug, in 1998 Cristoforetti became a partner in a start-up Tuscan winery, Duca, but sold out in 2003 and began searching for land on which to plant his own vineyards. In 2004 he purchased land in Riparbella, a center of ancient coastal Etruscan life.

He set about assembling a team that would bring the best of the nationalities that excited him: France for a winemaker because of his love of St. Emilion first-growths and the U.S. for a marketing partner because of the creativity, innovation the informative and expressive communication seen in many facets of American wine industry; he frequently says; "In America, everything is possible."

As he has been for over 35 years, Cristoforetti remains a farmer and a ski boot innovator-craftsman, to which he has added the role of vintner. Cristoforetti says, "There are no obvious parallels between crafting competition ski boots and crafting premium wines. But each requires the same degree of precision and attention to miniscule detail to consistently achieve the highest standards."

### **Owner – Urlari Wines**

Mary Kate Buckley, started her career at Grey Advertising and then worked in a variety of brand management and business development roles at The Walt Disney Company in New York, Hong Kong and Paris, opening retail operations, extending distribution and establishing new business ventures throughout Asia and later, Europe. She moved back to the U.S., to Portland Oregon, to join Nike to head their global new business ventures and subsequently e-commerce-enabled nike.com. Later she led Nike's brand and business in Latin America and Canada as well as the Nike Bauer Hockey Company, before moving to Amsterdam to lead Nike's apparel business in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. She currently serves on the Board of Directors at the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort.

She was drawn to Urlari by the passion Cristoforetti brings to everything he does, and by the opportunity to tell the Urlari story. Working with Designer Valerie Taylor Smith she developed Urlari's labels in 2008 and later prepared Urlari's press kit with veteran wine publicity specialist Margaret Stern. With the launch of the website [www.urlari.com](http://www.urlari.com) she turned her focus to sales and distribution and in 2012 founded Urlari Wines to import and market wines from Azienda Agricola Urlari to the U.S.

This is her first professional experience with wine but she is comfortable working with a new business venture that is grounded in innovation and quality.

### **Winemaker**

Jean Philippe Fort, oenologist and winemaker, was born in Bordeaux and has a master's degree in biology from the University of Bordeaux. He has worked on Michel Rolland's team for more than 20 years, is known as a St Emilion specialist, and today more than 40% of the wines for which he consults are Grand Cru Classee and include *Chateau Angelus*, a Premier Grand Cru.

Urlari is the first winery outside of France with which he has agreed to work. He says this is not only because they share the same organoleptic vision and potential superior quality due to great terroir and excellent vinification facilities but because Cristoforetti sought his opinion before the winery had made its first wine, while it was still in its conceptual phase, giving him the opportunity to fully influence the wines, as well as an invitation to experiment with many different approaches in winemaking.

Images

Images of the wines, and team are available at [www.urlari.com](http://www.urlari.com)

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