

The Toronto Hunt – April 4, 2018
A Tuscan Evening With Debbie Travis & Alessandra Angelini
by Margot Ritchie

Debbie Travis

Debbie Travis is a British-Canadian former fashion model turned television celebrity, known for her interior decorating shows 'Facelift' and 'Painted House,' and a widely read author. She and her husband and business partner, TV producer Hans Rosenstein, fell in love with Tuscany 15 years ago while filming an episode of Painted House, and launched a series of Tuscan week long luxury retreats for women in 2009. Since then Travis has become passionate about wine and created her own wine label, adding to her long list of accomplishments. Her aim is to make approachable wines and "take the guesswork out of wine", particularly for women.

Her first wine initiative turned out to be an award-winning VQA Pinot Grigio in the spring of 2016, created in partnership with Ontario's Pillitteri Estate Winery by winemaker Alex Kolundzic. She then set her sights on Tuscany, embarking on a week long search of Tuscany with Charlie Pillitteri. They found the perfect site in the hills around the Abbey of Sant'Antimo in the Brunello area of central Tuscany and launched a Rosso Di Montalcino, in collaboration with the father and son winemaking team at the La Palezzetta winery. Annual production is 1,200 cases from 15-20 year old vines on a 25 hectare estate and is available through private import. Travis also has her own 100-acre organic estate there with olive groves and a south-facing vineyard targeted to produce 3,000 cases annually for import to Canada, along with her own olive oil brand.

Alessandra Angelini – Caparzo & Borgo Scopeto Wines

Marcel Bregstein introduced Debbie Travis to Elisabetta Gnudi, a prominent Tuscan producer of Caparzo and Borgo Scopeto wines, whom The Hunt Club had the pleasure of hosting in November 2015. The two quickly formed a fast friendship. It was therefore not surprising that Elisabetta's daughter, Alessandra Angelini, was also at this Hunt Club Tuscan Evening. An Olympic class sailor with a degree in aeronautical engineering, in 2015 she left a successful career designing Rolls Royce jet engines to explore her Tuscan wine roots.

Her mother had decided to pursue a Tuscan dream of her own after the 1989 passing of her husband, Paolo Angelini, whose family owned a prominent Italian pharmaceutical company. After studying agriculture and becoming a sommelier, Elisabetta moved with her young children (Alessandra and her older brother) to Montalcino. After 2 hard years of negotiations, she bought out 13 partners in Caparzo, a Tuscan winery with 90 ha of hillside vineyards in some of the best areas around the town of Montalcino. At the same time, she purchased the Borgo Scopeto estate in Chianti Classico, and converted the five century old property into a 58-room Relais hotel. Alessandra's brother has been involved for a number of years in the wine operations. Alessandra plans to expand from her current role in marketing into winemaking, applying her expertise in chemistry and physics.

Their wines are crafted with great attention to detail, incorporating a highly traditional philosophy, including judicious use of oak, so as not to overwhelm the perfumed aspect of Sangiovese. Manual harvesting, minimal use of chemicals and gravity-based maceration are hallmarks of their approach. They have also invested considerable effort into studying various types of baskets available to enable all the grapes to arrive at the cellar in exactly the state they left the vineyard, even though some of the vineyards are 40+ km away.