



The farm and its history: Of a wine called Lugana, already renowned and appreciated by the ancient Romans, we have a first written evidence already in the XVI century. In 1596, Andrea Bacci, doctor of the Pope Sixtus V and lover of oenologic matters, wrote, on the first edition of his "De Naturali Vinorum", that: "Between Peschiera and Desenzano exquisite Trebulani wines (read Trebbiani - editor's note) are produced and a golden, sparkling variety of Candia wine which can be reserved for up to three years." The farm Cà dei Frati is situated in the hearth of the production area of Lugana, on the southern shore of the Lake Garda, not far away from the peninsula of Sirmione: over 40 hectares planted with vine on clayey soil, divided in several allotments, all located in particularly productive zones. The name chosen by the farm is not casual, but wants to recall the past historical events of the Sirmionese viticulture, the period when the shod Carmelites of the Friary of Santa Maria del Carmine decided to plant some vineyards to produce the wine necessary to their needs and to the celebration of the Holy Mass. In an estate census, carried out in June 1782 after the friary had been closed, we find a note of: " a house situated in Lugana in the estate of Sermion Veronese in the district place of Chiavighina called the place of the Friars, composed of several constructions, such as wine cellar, kitchen, stable, fireside and shed with two rooms upstairs, loft, barn, well and threshing-floor, contiguous to other rural buildings, wine cellar upriver..." The farm and its protagonists Since 1939 the history of Cà dei Frati, which rises exactly on the same place where "Sermione Veronese" had his estate, is bound to the vicissitudes of the Dal Cero family. Domenico Dal Cero and his son felice moved from the family's farm in Montecchia, in the province of Verona, to Sirmione and started up an activity as vine grower which was then inherited by the grandson Pietro, who, in more recent years, in 1969, bottled the first Lugana endowed with the name and the trade-mark of the company. Since more than fifteen years his children Igino, Gian Franco and Anna Maria help him to conduct personally the management of the vineyards - planted with the double Guyot system - the production and the commercialization in Italy and abroad. Cà dei Frati projected towards the future This new generation has introduced many innovations: the adhesion to the VIDE (Association of first-class vine growers), the modernization of the equipment and the structures of the winery, the experimentation of new techniques of wine-making and of conduction of the vineyards, the market survey and the seizure of new, not only local market shares to give an always greater prestige to the "colors" of the Lugana and to the company. A direct consequence of this new working methods and of the tenacious and proud confidence in the great potentialities of the "terroir" of Lugana, has been the widening of the range of wines of Cà dei Frati with the introduction, beside the traditional ones, of a number of innovative wines paving new ways to the local viticulture. This diversification has been obtained by means of various strategies: revitalizing the "base" wines and weighing up the possibilities of the vines that are native to this area or have acclimatized here since a long time (Lugana, Barbera, Gropello, Marzemino, Sangiovese), limiting the contribution of international vines like Cabernet and exalting to the maximum the "weight" of the vines that are historically bound to this area in the red blends. Only in one case, for the Pratto, it has been intentionally aimed at new combinations of the Lugana with French vines like Chardonnay and Sauvignon, but different solutions might be found for the future, above all the recovery of hundreds of years old Tocai cultivars of which we have evidence in the area of San Martino della Battaglia. A new engagement in the vineyard in the winery In order to exalt still more the attentive, handicraft-like style of production of which the company is very proud of, since it considers it a distinctive and qualifying hallmark, the Dal Cero's new generation has decided to intensify the engagement in the vineyard, not only by increasing considerably the available cultivated surface and therefore the company's presence with wide plots of ground in the very hearth of the Lugana. With the collaboration of the Center for experimental vine growing and wine-making, the company selected some special clones of Lugana. The successive phase consisted in the survey and comprehension of the peculiar microclimate of the area and of the beneficial influence exercised by the lake on the vines to increase the value of the zones of the hilly inland that are dry, well drained, not subject to stagnation and benefit of the higher position, of optimal maturation conditions and of a calcareous-clayey soil which confers more refinement to the wines. Furthermore, perhaps even more important, the company has adopted more linear systems of conduction of the vineyards, with the passage from the Sylvoz to...