

PHILIP DI BELARDINO

Philip di Belardino, is vice president of fine wines for Banfi Vintners, the nation's leading wine importer and a producer of premium offerings in Italy.

A nationally prominent, 32-year wine industry veteran, Mr. di Belardino directs sales of the firm's ultra-premium offerings from Italy and Chile to upscale restaurants and wine shops in major U.S. markets. Working in conjunction with Banfi's national sales force, he and Vinum representatives concentrate on building brands through direct personal contact with key distributor executives, retail buyers, sommeliers and the wine media.

Among the key brands Mr. di Belardino supervises are SummuS, ExcelsuS, Brunello di Montalcino Riserva "Poggio all' Oro and other estate-bottled wines produced at Castello Banfi, Montalcino, Tuscany, as well as Almaviva, jointly produced in Chile by Concha y Toro and Chateau Mouton Rothschild and other Chilean offerings, such as Don Melchor Cabernet Sauvignon and Amelia Chardonnay.

The Banfi executive began his career in the wine business in 1973 when he joined Mediterranean Imports, an import house established by his father in 1948. He held a key position at the company when it was sold to Heublein in 1983 and eventually became Palace Brands. As Vice President, Imported Fine Wines at Palace, he had responsibility over an extensive portfolio of Italian, French and Portuguese brands.

Born in Rome, Mr. di Belardino came to the U.S. with his family when he was three months old and was raised in New York City. He earned his undergraduate degree in English and an MA in speech and drama at The Catholic University of America. His wine education, however, began at the family dinner table, often in the company of winemakers, where the best of Europe's offerings complemented his mother's gourmet dishes. "Fine wines, and the lifestyle that reflect them, are an important part of my heritage," he says.

As for his selling flair, he credits his training in dramatics and the 10 summers he worked at his family's Catskill Mountain Resort, Villaggio Italia, where he directed guest entertainment. The program called for him to lecture on Italian culture and conduct lessons in the language itself.

Though business demands have always required him to travel extensively, Mr. di Belardino has managed to find time to serve as a wine educator and lecturer. Over the years, he has addressed The Society of Wine Educators, the Food & Wine Aspen Classic, the Midwest Wine Expo, and Window's On the World's Graduate Wine School, as well as wine classes at Cornell University, New York University and the Culinary Institute of America. He is a member of the American Institute of Wine & Food, Chaines de Rotisseurs and the Wine & Spirits magazine tasting panel.