

# A coffee dream

Andrea Illy

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EDIZIONI

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Edited by Alessandra Viola  
Translation by Gail McDowell

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*There are those who look at things the way they are,  
and ask why.  
I dream of things that never were,  
and ask why not?*

Robert F. Kennedy

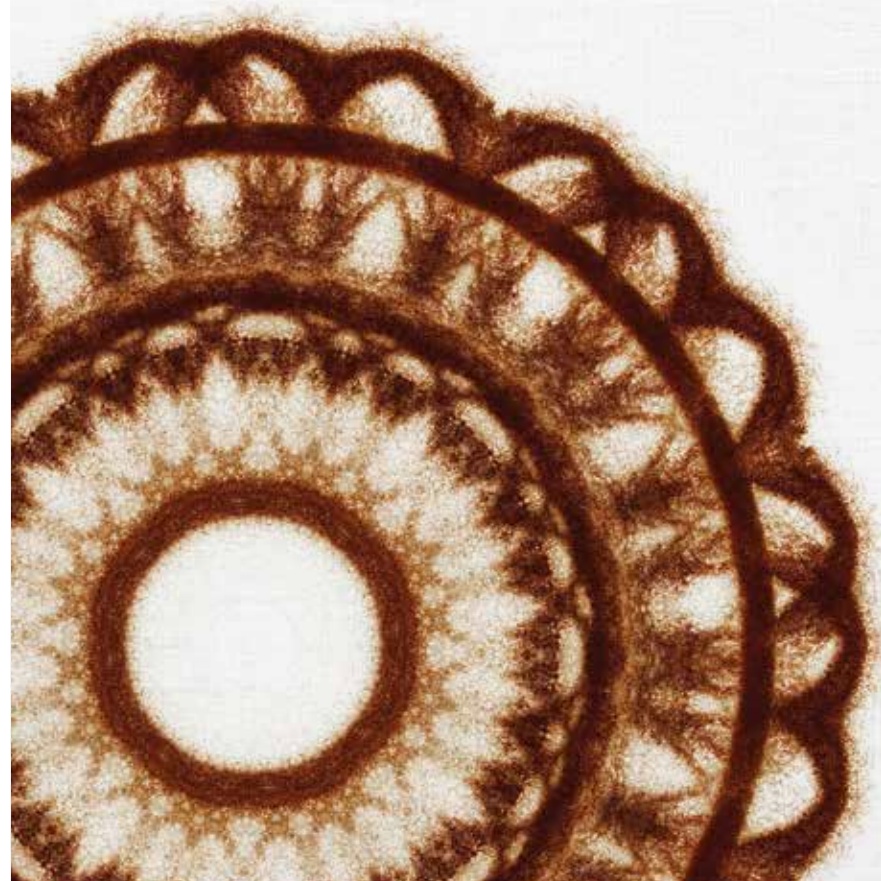
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# Coffee dreams

CHAPTER 1



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## MY FIRST COFFEE

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I clearly remember the day I tasted my very first coffee. The kitchen was flooded with sunlight; I had never seen such intense light before. I was about four years old and I was watching my mother grind coffee beans with our big coffee grinder. The cumbersome contraption made a metallic yet cheerful noise; it sat out of my reach on a piece of furniture and it filled the house with a fragrance that even then seemed like the best in the world.

In those days, at home it took forty-five minutes, sometimes even an hour, to prepare a good cup of coffee: it was a complex and delicate operation, a rite. To me, those were magical moments and the time passed in the blink of an eye as I waited for permission to taste a coffee. My mother would weigh the coffee beans on a small scale, and then she would grind them and carefully examine the result, after which she would frequently throw it out and start all over again. Those early coffee grinders never produced a proper fine ground coffee powder. She could gauge it at a glance and this is one of the reasons I had nicknamed her “the engineer.” It seemed to me that she was performing an extremely difficult task which required great attention and precision, measurements that were incomprehensible to me. Only later did I understand how fundamental it was to obtain the quality my mother required and which made that elixir of hers absolutely the most coveted beverage in our family.

At last, on that sun-filled afternoon, there were a few small

spoonfuls of coffee in store for me. When the moment arrived, I conveyed them carefully to my lips, making sure not one drop fell. When I think back to that moment, I can still see myself savoring the highly fragrant, bitter liquid and closing my eyes, letting thousands of unknown aromas of faraway, exotic places permeate my mouth, and wondering whether someday I would ever visit them. I liked to imagine that each spoonful took me to a different place, and I know for sure that when I opened my eyes again after those fleeting voyages, my mother was there and she was smiling at me, making me feel safe forever.

I think that moment is when “beautiful” and “good” fused inside me into one single sensation: the flavor of coffee. For the first time, I had the indistinct yet very intense impression that coffee might mean something more than simply a boiling hot and delicious liquid from faraway countries; it was something that was to give meaning to my entire life. As I sipped the coffee next to my mother in the kitchen, it tasted like the dream of a perfect world. Ever since then, in and through coffee, I have been trying to make the dream come true: a world that is fair, beautiful and good, in which the aroma of coffee is a symbol of harmony. A passion was born in me that day which still informs my work: to make the dream come true.

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## THE SUBSTANCE OF DREAMS

But what is a dream? To the ancients, the visions we have in our REM sleep phase were divine messages. Nowadays, we call them dreams and consider them fabrications of a psychological nature: Freud believed they were signs of subconscious mental activity that aims to satisfy our urges. However, from a philosophical point of view, there has always been only one question: how can we distinguish dreams from reality? Plato, in his *Theaetetus*, wrote that dreaming is no less real than waking and that “the resemblance of the two states is quite astonishing.” To Schopenhauer, too, dreams and life are “leaves of one and the same book.”

These are the ideas that inspired me: dreams aren't something distant and unattainable; they are another aspect of reality. Even the cognitive model seems to consider dreams and reality to be two different sources of knowledge, no longer counterposed and each one functional to the mind as a whole. Daydreams are, and always will be, fed by the imagination, devoted to satisfying desires and, thus, destined to create wellbeing, pleasure and beauty. In a word: happiness. The same happiness you can get from the flavor and beauty encapsulated in a coffee. There is a whole world inside that little cup. More than just a sophisticated and delicious product, it is an entire culture, or better yet, many cultures combined. There are the fragrance and exoticism of the marvelous places it comes from. There is a millennium of history, geography, art, and the families of thousands of people; there are entire nations. A coffee contains about one thousand aromatic substances and five hundred other substances; it is produced in over seventy different countries and it gives work to roughly one hundred million people all over the world, and to twenty-five million families in the producing countries alone (source: ICO). It is a complex beverage, the most incredible in the world. In particular, espresso coffee rests upon a sort of extraordinary equilibrium, regulated by a critical point. It is a veritable *unicum* of beverages.

A well-made espresso is a true masterpiece; I don't think there is any other way to define it. No other product on our table is as complex and so difficult to prepare, even though we might consider it an everyday and almost banal activity. But the truly wonderful thing about coffee is that when we drink it we can forget about all of that and simply enjoy its evocative power, the inspiration it sparks in us.

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## MERCHANTS OF DREAMS

Coffee is, without a doubt, a dream of a beverage, and not only because it's so delicious and comes from extraordinarily beautiful places. For over one thousand years, it has inspired

# THE CHEMISTRY OF ESPRESSO



From a chemical point of view, espresso is a solution, an emulsion, a colloidal suspension and an effervescence, all at the same time. Basically, it is a small miracle of chemistry and physics.

The solution is formed by the chemical substances of coffee (including its aromas), solubilized in water (carbohydrates, acids, caffeine). What emulsifies with the water are the oils contained in the coffee beans (thus, in the coffee powder), which do not melt spontaneously but, thanks to the high temperature and the mechanical action of extraction, disperse in the water in the form of tiny droplets. The effervescence comes from the presence in the water of a gaseous phase (primarily carbon dioxide), which remains trapped during the preparation and reemerges on the surface of the espresso as a layer of crema. And finally, the suspension is provided by the presence of miniscule solid particles of ground coffee, which remain in the beverage and sometimes can be seen in the lighter crema as tiny dark points (tiger stripes).

A perfect espresso is a minor miracle. In order to obtain this result no less than a dozen variables need to be calibrated to perfection, including the amount of coffee put into the filter and even the filter itself, the tamping, the grind, the hardness and quality of the water, its temperature and pressure, as well as the extraction time.

the creativity of the best minds. For instance, that of Baba Budan, whose story was first told to me by my father. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Yemen and Ethiopia jealously protected their well-consolidated coffee production and wanted to maintain their monopoly in order to control their already-flourishing commerce with Europe. For roughly a century, they were able to prevent the fertile coffee cherries from leaving their countries by subjecting them to a boiling process which rendered them sterile. In Yemen, they also decapitated anyone who attempted to export them. But in 1670, Baba Budan, one of the many pilgrims who traveled to Mecca every year, by means of a ruse and at the risk of his own life, was able to smuggle a few coffee cherries out and take them to India. He swallowed seven red coffee beans and, after recovering them, he planted them in southern India, on the hillsides of Chickmagalur, in the state of Karnataka. From there, coffee propagated with great success in Indonesia, too, first on the island of Java and then on Celebres, Sumatra and Timor. Baba Budan's gesture was honored to such a degree that he was even proclaimed a saint and the entire area where he had planted the coffee beans was named after him, Baba Budan Giri. Today, it is a site of pilgrimage and venerated by both Hindus and Muslims, a rare case indeed.

Another exemplary story describes how coffee arrived in the French colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Santo Domingo, thanks to the particularly ingenious mind of Gabriel de Clieu (1687-1774), who governed Guadeloupe for almost twenty years. According to the report he himself published in the "Année littéraire" in 1774, de Clieu transported to Martinique one or perhaps several coffee plants which the French government had received as a gift from Holland. According to other sources, he smuggled them out. During the lengthy Atlantic crossing, he even shared his meager supply of drinking water with them to ensure their survival.

Instead, a love story seems to be behind coffee's arrival in Brazil in 1727, thanks to Francisco de Melo Palheta. The viceroy of Brazil had entrusted him with the task of bringing him some of the precious seeds from Guyana, where they were also jealously safeguarded. According to one story,

he obtained them through his diplomatic talents and the excellent impression he had made on the governor of that country. Another story has it that the governor refused to give him the seeds and things went quite differently. According to this version, Francisco obtained the seeds through his charm: it appears that the governor's wife fell in love with Francisco





# COFFEE IN ITALY

Coffee made its first appearance in Italy in 1615 in Venice, thanks to travelers who, for a myriad of reasons, set sail from there for the Orient. After the coffee was loaded aboard ships in the port on the Yemenite shore of the Red Sea, it was transported to Venice and was initially sold at exorbitant prices in pharmacies as a medicine.

It seems that Pietro della Valle (1586-1652), an author and musician who had set sail for the Orient after a romantic setback, described coffee-drinking and introduced it in Venetian circles upon his return. Coffee had already been mentioned by Prospero Alpino (1553-1617) – a physician who was the first to describe the plant after having observed it in Cairo, highlighting its beneficial therapeutic properties – and the Venetian Gian Francesco Morosini (1537-1596), Venice’s ambassador to the Sultan of Constantinople. In 1585, he reported that the Turks had the habit of publically drinking, in shops and on the streets, a “black water” that came from a seed called qahvé and which supposedly had the virtue of keeping people “quite wakeful.”

One thing is certain, by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, coffee houses were already widespread throughout Venice and were known as “shops of water and ice.” Their success soon sparked many a polemic: some people considered coffee – which came from Arab countries and was consumed by Muslims – “the devil’s invention” and they asked the Pope to outlaw it. But Clement VIII (1536-1605) wanted to taste it first, and he liked it. In fact, they say he was so enthusiastic about coffee that he declared it would be a sin to let only infidels drink such a delicious beverage, and he gave it his blessing instead. After receiving papal approval, coffee was freely consumed throughout Venice and in 1624 the Venetians also learned the technique for roasting it. In 1676, the first coffee shop was founded in Venice; it became known as Caffè Florian in honor of its owner, Floriano Francesconi. In 1750, Caffè Lavena was established. By 1759, there were 206 coffee shops in Venice, thirty of which were in Piazza San Marco alone.

# VIENNESE COFFEE HOUSES

Viennese coffee houses are world famous thanks to the literary aura that surrounds them, and they are still special places today. Every detail is carefully attended to, the coffee is served with its unflinching glass of water, as clients read newspapers at marble-topped tables, sitting on the famous curved beechwood chairs designed by Michael Thonet. In the evening, musical recitals and readings are held.

In the relaxed elegance of these cafés, many Austrian intellectuals of the 19th and 20th centuries found an atmosphere conducive to their creativity.

This sophisticated ambiance inspired what is known as coffee house literature, which includes works by poets and authors such as Karl Kraus, Arthur Schnitzler, Alfred Polgar, Stefan Zweig and Peter Altenberg, who supposedly even had his mail delivered to the Café Central.

In 2011, the Viennese café was nominated by UNESCO’s Austrian commission as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, describing it as a place “where time and space are consumed, but only the coffee is found on the bill.”



and, aware of how important the coffee seeds were to him, she hid them in a bouquet of flowers she gave him before he departed. The seedlings born from those seeds of betrayal didn't produce fruit right off the bat. Cultivations in Brazil didn't begin in a serious way until twenty years later, and only in 1840 did the country become the world's major producer, a record it still holds today.

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## KULCZYCKI

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What is certain is that, for one thousand years, the most creative minds have been inspired by coffee and they have consumed it in quantity. This probably wasn't a fluke since, as many scholars sustain, its widespread consumption in Europe coincided with the scientific revolution during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and, later, the Enlightenment. Its stimulating properties, that improve the attention span and clarity of thought, made it an excellent coadjutant for creativity, concentration and alertness. During the Age of Enlightenment, this "drink of reason," the epitome of modernity and progress, became the beverage of preference of scientists, intellectuals, merchants and clerks, mirroring the propagation of a new rationalism.

Venice, Trieste, London: in a short time, the coffee house conquered Europe and, in the second half of the 1600s, it established itself in the heart of the continent, Vienna. We can thank Jerzy Franciszek Kulczycki (1640-1694) for this. A Ukrainian nobleman of Orthodox faith, he was a merchant, diplomat, soldier and spy, and is considered a national hero by the people of Vienna. His name is associated with the first Viennese coffee house. It is said that Kulczycki was in the Austrian capital during the Turkish siege in 1683, which left the city's inhabitants exhausted and starving. Dressed in Turkish clothing and singing Ottoman songs, he managed to cross enemy lines and ask Charles V, duke of Lorraine, for help. After which he returned to Vienna and reassured the city of its imminent rescue; the people thus decided to carry on their resistance. The arrival of the Christian forces turned the tide of the battle and Kulczycki was rewarded with a

considerable supply of the coffee that was found in the camp of the defeated Turkish army. He opened a coffee house in Vienna which soon became highly popular and where, in Turkish attire, he would personally serve his clients. He was also the first to propose drinking coffee with milk. Vienna has memorialized him with a statue and every year, in October, the major Viennese coffee houses organize a celebration in his honor. Vienna's cafés have multiplied since then, becoming, in one century, the very symbol of an era and hosting the gatherings and reminiscences of key exponents of Central European culture.

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## GRANDFATHER FRANCESCO'S THREE LOVES

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In the early 1900s, in a café in Vienna very similar to the one Kulczycki had opened, my grandfather, Francesco Illy, became acquainted with coffee. A carpenter's son, he was born in 1892 in Timișoara, which today is in Romania but back then was part of Hungary. When he was about sixteen, he decided to leave home and seek his fortune; he moved to Vienna, one of the commercial and cultural capitals of Europe at the time. I don't know much about that early period of his life, but what is certain is that by the time he was twenty he was already the head of administration at two large companies (he worked at one in the morning and at the other in the evening). I like to imagine him strolling the streets of Vienna, young and inquisitive, busy deciding what future to construct for himself. I can see him sitting at a café, or looking through a shop window, smelling that fragrant magic and having a look around, progressively falling in love with the beverage and its preparation, which had already won over so many Europeans. His destiny was fulfilled a few years later, at the outbreak of the First World War; he enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army and after the war ended, he settled down in Trieste. He could have suffered the same tragic destiny as so many other veterans. Instead, he found the three loves of his life there: the city of Trieste, whose charm went straight to his heart; coffee, with its historical cafés and its dedicated port, which

was already the main coffee port of the Mediterranean and a keystone of Europe's entire commerce and consumption; and third, beautiful Doris, who was to become his wife and with whom he started the family which still runs illycaffè today. Thus, Francesco, a stateless person until shortly before 1950, decided to settle in Italy and request Italian citizenship, trading first in spices, then chocolate and finally coffee. Trieste was the ideal place for this activity and for my grandfather's cosmopolitan vocation, which mirrored the city's in full.

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## TO OFFER THE BEST COFFEE IN THE WORLD

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In 1933, he and a partner founded Illy-Hausbrandt, which produced and marketed coffee and chocolate. The two partners had different backgrounds and entrepreneurial ideas, but they shared the ambition of creating an important company from the ground up. They combined their talents (along with my grandfather's patent for pressurization) and for about twenty years things went smoothly: the company grew, made profits, expanded. It even managed to survive the terrible wartime period virtually unscathed. But starting in the 1960s, the different business outlooks animating the two partners' efforts emerged in full and they later went their separate ways. Francesco Illy wanted to dedicate all his resources to building his dream, inspired by an apparently simple idea that was actually revolutionary: to offer the best coffee in the world. At the beginning of their collaboration, my grandfather and his partner, who was a coffee roaster, divvied up the sales areas: Francesco, who had already traveled widely in Europe and spoke many languages, kept the most distant areas for himself. The company's international vocation might derive in part from this initial choice. But already in those years, and for a long time afterward, one of the most important domestic markets was southern Italy, where more coffee was drunk and, above all, which had a more evolved culture of preparing coffee. Therefore, in order to conquer the country's most interesting market, right from the start Illy-Hausbrandt

# TRIESTE

Coffee has a very special bond with Trieste, a proudly cosmopolitan and open city that safeguarded its vocation even during the most fervent periods of nationalism.

Trieste's early commercial activity was fostered by the Habsburgs, who on several occasions during the 1700s emanated measures to develop the port and create a mercantile community connecting it with the empire's other commercial centers and its capital. This expansion apparently came to a halt during the invasion and short-lived domination of the French, but after the fall of Napoleon, maritime commerce (and coffee's) regained vigor thanks to new incentives offered by the Austrian administration, which made Trieste a "free port" with significant tax exemptions. When the Suez Canal was opened in November 1869, coffee imports were augmented with activities revolving around the cleaning and selection of the beans. This was soon followed by the first roasting shops, which led to the first blends that personalized the product through exclusive combinations of aromas. During the last quarter of the 1800s, Trieste had 66 companies importing and marketing coffee, four specialized in processing it, and roughly ten roasting shops.

In that same period (and not just in Trieste), a sort of coffee house "specialization" developed: there was the Literary Café and the Café Chantant (or Café Concert). Some of them were destined to enjoy an authentic and renowned "aura": a place in literary history and a dedicated iconography.

As in Venice and, later, Vienna, coffee soon became an institution of vital importance to Trieste's cultural development. A place of encounter, discussion and elegance, the city's cafés received the confidences of many, including Italo Svevo and Umberto Saba, as well as Scipio Slataper, Giani Stuparich, Silvio Benco and Virgilio Giotti.

decided to aim for the highest level of quality: excellence. This search for perfection continues to push us one step higher every day, through the company's constant innovation and research, but even back then it was unrivaled thanks to the inventions my grandfather spearheaded.

Francesco didn't have a science background, but he did recognize the value of technological innovation. He was a combination of steely self-determination, complete clarity of intention and an uncommon ability to create and construct. I think he was an absolute genius and, in fact, he had a few amazing intuitions, such as constructing a new espresso machine, or better, "The" espresso machine. There were already a few on the market, but they were based on a technique similar to that of moka pots: they brought water to a boil and then, using the pressure of its steam, pushed the water up through the panel containing the filter. The problem was that the water was too hot; it ended up burning the coffee and making it too bitter. Plus, the low pressure hampered the extraction of the aromas, producing a watery liquid. Francesco decided to tackle the bitterness first: the quality of the coffee was so good that its true flavor had to be brought out, but how? Through experimentation, he saw that coffee brewed at lower temperatures was less bitter and much more fragrant. But the other problem he needed to resolve was the pressure, which was generated by the boiling water's steam. The solution couldn't come from the inside, because the highest possible temperature that also safeguarded the aroma was 90° C (194° F). Thus, my grandfather sought, and found, the solution on the outside, in the form of an adjustable air compressor that could provide the necessary pressure. This is how the Illetta was born; it is the grandmother of the present-day espresso machine, and we have restored it and taken it to the Expo in Milan.

The Illetta was a pioneering and avant-garde invention, and yet illycaffè was soon forced to abandon it. Even though the company had managed to survive the Second World War, during the post-war period it found itself in economic difficulty (as did Italian industry in general) and was unable to make headway in a market – coffee machines – that was already in full expansion and had attracted much competition.

# ILLETTA

In 1935, Francesco Illy patented the Illetta, the first espresso machine that featured automatic water dosing. The invention used air supplied by an external, adjustable compressor as a source of pressure. It was a pioneering machine in its day and for the first time it introduced the precise measurement of temperature and pressure: water at roughly 90° C (194° F) passing through the filter at high pressure.



Those were hard years: during the war, sanctions had blocked coffee imports and transport in the Mediterranean had been risky. Raw materials were so scarce that at a certain point illy was even obliged to roast chicory!

So my grandfather decided to return to his origins and abandoned the manufacturing of espresso machines, bringing that adventure to a premature end. But the Illetta patent had already sown the seeds of a strategy of company innovation which, in the 1980s and the three successive generations, would continue to bear fruit.

## PRESERVING THE AROMA OF THE WORLD

Also in the 1930s – before the Illetta was invented and one year before the company was founded – Grandfather Francesco filed a patent application for another fundamental invention: pressurization. In this case, too, he was inspired by his desire to obtain the best coffee possible. And in particular, this was tied to the company’s flourishing commerce with southern Italy.

My grandfather wanted to pay tribute to this commerce with a product that was worthy of so much love, but he encountered a “technical” problem. The coffee beans were roasted in the factory in Trieste and then sent south by train – endless trips which, back then, could last up to a month – and when the product arrived at its destination it was no longer the same. It was “flat” and rancid; it had lost its fragrance and some of its aroma. Francesco was distraught: he wanted to make the best coffee in the world and he couldn’t allow it to be ruined during shipping.

It is undeniably wonderful to enter a café or coffee shop and smell the fragrance of coffee. But this means that part of the aroma has been lost into the air, whereas we want as much of it as possible to end up in the coffee cup. When packaging coffee, how can we remove the air that oxidizes its aromas? Vacuum packing isn’t enough, even though it is still widely used today. My grandfather’s insight was to package the coffee at a pressure that is higher than air pressure, to prevent the

coffee beans from releasing the gas they contain and thereby preserve their aromas inside. And he did more: he replaced the air with nitrogen, an inert gas that prevents oxidation and preserves the freshness of the aromas. We still use this technology today and, in order to control and guarantee that 100% of the aromas are being preserved, in 1957 we created an in-house department to manufacture the canisters.

The preserved aromas are then extracted through the espresso technique, which emulsifies the oils with water. Espresso is the best extraction technique because infusion techniques can’t extract the oils and their aromas since there is no pressure and filtered coffee doesn’t emulsify them properly. With the correct



9 bars of pressure, the espresso technique results in perfect extraction. My grandfather used to say, “Espresso is to filtered coffee like perfume is to cologne.” He believed that espresso’s diffusion was inevitable and preached it throughout the world. He was a visionary and an inventor, as well as a pioneering and avant-garde entrepreneur, open to wide-ranging partnerships. In 1939, among other initiatives, he founded an illy factory in Switzerland. And then the war broke out, impacting Europe’s economy and affecting the lives of millions of people.

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## AN ENCOUNTER THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE

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My grandfather was an ambitious man: he combined concrete commitment and a visionary flair. At home, I often heard his name mentioned in a tone of respect and almost reverence, and he soon became a legendary figure to me. Would I ever measure up to him? I was even a little intimidated by him. He died eight years before I was born, and yet it was as though he were still with us, an essential part of our family: he had constructed something we could never betray, a dream to continue nurturing.

I’m sorry I wasn’t able to know Grandfather Francesco and his exceptional talents. I often wonder if our efforts today are in line with his extraordinary idea. On the whole, the answer is yes, we are putting all his teachings into practice: still today, my family and the company maintain his same values, his obsession for quality and innovation, and his cosmopolitan vocation. I like to think that he would be satisfied if he could judge our endeavors: we have remained faithful to his initial idea, constructing around it a modern company whose high professional reputation is perhaps even greater than its image and fame.

Inventor, entrepreneur, but above all, an enlightened man: my grandfather had very clear ideas about which moral values would guide his life and all his actions. He paid close attention to his fellow men and the care he put into his relations with others has strongly influenced my entire family. My mother

tells a story about the time when, shortly after marrying Francesco’s son Ernesto (my father), her father-in-law called her to tell her about an employee, or maybe it was the relative of an employee, who was sick, so that she could visit him in the hospital and give him her support. His consideration, as well as his determination, inspired his heir Ernesto, who in 1957 assumed control of the company, becoming its CEO and co-owner, enhancing and amplifying his father’s achievements.

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## ERNESTO

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Everything I know about my grandfather I learned from my father, who was also an extraordinary innovator and creative person. He enhanced and handed down to us children all the moral and entrepreneurial teachings of Grandfather Francesco, who he greatly esteemed. We were bequeathed with the power of his example and many of his passions.

My father was an extremely well-read and enlightened man, a cross between a scientist and a businessman; through his example, he showed us the most important values and the beauty embodied by coffee, of which he was an expert. He graduated with a degree in chemistry in 1947 in Bologna; he was president of illycaffè from 1963 to 2005 and he became an undisputed authority in the sector, holding important positions in all the major associations, from the ASIC (Association for Science and Information on Coffee, in Paris), which he cofounded; to the PEC (Physiological Effects of Coffee, always in Paris); the ISIC (Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee); and the ICO (International Coffee Organization, in London), the institution which governs every aspect of the world of coffee. In 1965, he helped found Centromarca, the Italian Association of Branded Products Industries. He was named its president and conducted important work with it, inspiring entrepreneurs, collaborating with the world of distribution, and establishing a sort of co-evolution between the two sectors.

He loved philosophy and music, he was devoted to his work, and when speaking, he used beautiful metaphors that gave

# ROASTING

Roasting is a crucial quarter of an hour, indispensable for creating the roughly one thousand aromatic substances that make up coffee's fragrance.

Inside a large rotating drum that can reach temperatures of approximately 220° C (428° F), the coffee beans first dry out, turn golden in color and begin to smell toasted. Then the beans get darker and increase in size, gaining 60% in volume. Above 180° C (356° F), the beans begin to "crack" and the pyrolytic reaction begins: the beans form their aromas and assume their characteristic dark brown color, losing roughly 18% of their weight and becoming brittle. At the end of the process, the coffee is air-cooled, which stops the beans from cooking and keeps the best aromas intact.

A large quantity of carbon dioxide is formed during the roasting procedure; afterward, the beans begin to release the gas still imprisoned in their molecular structure. During this process the coffee beans progressively lose their aromas.

It is interesting to note that roasting, as we know it today, has only been practiced since the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, roasted coffee infusions are a relatively recent invention.

Before, coffee was prepared as an infusion by letting green coffee beans macerate in cold water. And before that, the beans were consumed whole and only later were they ground and mixed with animal fat to conserve them during journeys.



# PRESSURIZATION

Pressurization is a packaging method that uses inert gas to seal the contents of the package at a pressure that is higher than atmospheric pressure. This process traps a high quantity of coffee aromas that would otherwise vanish in the first hours after roasting through the effects of degassing, which releases the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) that is produced during roasting and remains trapped inside the coffee beans at high pressure.

The technique of vacuum packing is commonly used to keep aromas from coming into contact with the air, but some of the aromatic compounds are lost during this process. This is why illycaffè has always used a different technology, pressurization, which Francesco Illy patented in 1932.

Like good wine, the coffee in illy canisters improves, the flavor becomes rounder and lasts longer. In fact, pressurization has an "aging" effect, improving the quality of the coffee in the first few months and refining it in later months.



concreteness to his concepts. It is a true shame that he never kept notes and that a great deal of his knowledge has been lost. When I realized the risk we were running, I began to write things down in order to safeguard his legacy. In 1994, the first book on the science and quality of espresso was published: *Espresso Coffee – The Chemistry of Quality*. After my father died, we asked a researcher who had worked closely with him to gather into book form everything he could remember about him, his research and his intuitions. Unfortunately, the task proved to be too difficult: the result was a small book that condensed into just a few pages knowledge and teachings that could have filled entire encyclopedias.

This is why I decided to start writing again. We had documented Ernesto Illy's technological-scientific knowledge, but what was missing was a book about his passion for ethics and philosophy. The resulting manifesto focused primarily on two aspects: ethics, in the sense of constructing long-term value to share with our stakeholders through transparency, sustainability and the valorization of people; and excellence, in the sense of the love of beauty and a job well done. Since then, beauty has become one of the founding pillars of our mission, which is to "delight all those who cherish quality of life, through our search for the best coffee nature can provide, enhanced by the best-available technologies and our efforts to express beauty."

As for technology, my father made scientific research the engine of his entrepreneurial activities. He created one of the world's first laboratories dedicated to the chemistry of coffee, in-house, and he patented many important technical solutions, such as a system that electronically selects coffee beans, discarding the imperfect ones. He also patented the coffee pod, which introduced the market to the single-serve format, enabling people to make coffee by inserting in the coffee machine a portion of coffee that is already roasted, ground, pre-measured and enclosed between two sheets of filter paper.

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## FROM THE FIAT TOPOLINO TO THE AMERICAN DREAM

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But it wasn't just offices and scientific laboratories, on the contrary: my father was constantly traveling. He opened up Europe's most important markets to illycaffè, as he drove the company's Fiat "Topolino" down the dusty and unpaved roads of half of Europe. He escorted shipments of coffee to France, Germany and Holland, and his stories and the great dream he had inherited from Francesco were a constant companion. In 1962, after countless trips, he founded illycaffè in Holland. But why in Holland, a country that is apparently so far from coffee culture? One day, the Dutch broker who sold us the green coffee had paid him a visit and told him: "I think there is a certain amount of interest in my country, we could sell your roasted coffee there." The company conducted a small-scale market research through the Italian Trade Agency and the result was – to the amazement of one and all – that there were lots of espresso machines in Holland. This convinced my father to develop that new market, but a few months after launching the project he was enormously surprised to discover that there were actually very few espresso machines in Holland. What had happened?

The mystery was soon solved: the Italian Trade Agency had indicated as "espresso machines" the moka machines which Dutch families used at home. What to do? Well, if there were no espresso machines, then they had to be introduced; he decided to become an importer of professional machines and began to sell them throughout the country. This experience was also to prove very helpful with the American market, which had the same problem. Illy became the exclusive importer of espresso machines in the United States and also provided technical assistance. After the "adventure" in Europe came the 1980s, which my father spent traveling three or four times a year to the United States. He dreamed of establishing a presence in America: it took thirty years but it finally happened, thanks to a fortunate coincidence. Alain Rastrelly, one of the top managers of the French distribution chain Casino, had settled in Phoenix, Arizona. He called my father



and offered to sell illy coffee in the United States and in 1980 illycaffè North America was created. Now the company had fulfilled its vocation for internationalization.

This is how my father began what we called his “missionarization;” we called him the “coffee missionary” and, in fact, he had become its ambassador-at-large. In Italy, we were unaware of just how famous he had become; I realized it during my first, unforgettable trip with him to San Francisco. We had just gotten out of a taxi and were crossing the street when someone driving by lowered his window and greeted him cheerfully: “Hey! Doctor Illy!” I was truly amazed: in that far-away city, people even recognized him on the street. A few years later, he was nicknamed Papa Bean in the United States. At that point, his identification with coffee was complete: he had become its icon.

By then we were present in over twenty different countries and my brother Riccardo, who had taken over as the company’s sales manager, launched the challenge to become a global brand. In just a few years, we grew from about 20 markets to 140: a worldwide presence that, today, lets consumers find our coffee in the most unexpected places, even in the Arizona desert or at the Everest base camp, over five thousand meters above sea level.

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## THE ART OF BEING COMPLEMENTARY

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Art, on the other hand, skipped a generation: my father was an esthete but not artistic, and we had to wait for my brother Francesco before this pathway was resumed. My grandfather dabbled in painting, but above all, he was an extraordinary esthete: coffee machines, objects he invented, packaging, advertising campaigns... everything was imbued with incredible beauty that anticipated the times. Decades later, we moved along those same lines to renew illycaffè’s artistic mission, in this case, too, innovating through many original projects. In my family, we had the good fortune of all being complementary. Francesco, the eldest, is truly a creative genius.

He introduced the company’s most distinctive elements – design, photography and art in general. Riccardo, the second sibling, has a highly strategic, managerial profile and numerous experiences in politics, even though he avoided joining a political party in order to maintain his intellectual freedom. My sister Anna is the emotional and relationship-oriented soul of the company, as well as a true dynamo. When she was little we used to call her “Blitz” because she was so incredibly fast. Today, she is the defender and patron of our coffee producers, with whom we have established a true fellowship. She carefully oversees the relations between the company, the family and our producers, and she spends one third of her time in Brazil. She travels extensively and is beloved by one and all. I am considered the family visionary. I enjoy this definition, but I always keep in mind what Thomas Edison once said, paraphrasing an old Japanese proverb: “Vision without execution is just hallucination.” This is why I am totally focused on execution, although nowadays I have to go about things differently to turn my ideas into reality. Before, I used to work personally, hands-on, to make the company grow; now, I have had to reinvent myself as a manager, stimulating other people’s leadership to encourage them to carry out my ideas. It is a different and difficult art, but a very interesting one.

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## 0.07

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When I joined the company I became passionate about quality: I even went to Toyota in Japan to learn about “total quality” and “zero defects,” concepts which were so in vogue at the time. When I returned, we put everything I had learned into practice, and a few years later the quality of our coffee registered 0.07 defects, a remarkable result.

During that same period, in the ‘90s, the company began to grow rapidly thanks to the combined efforts of my siblings and me. Riccardo had created an excellent sales force, in Italy and abroad. Francesco had brought art and photography into the company, launching our image. My sister was doing invaluable work with the producing countries. The results were exceptional in those years.

I remember that when I joined the company in 1990, its turnover was the equivalent of thirty million euros today. Over the next two decades, our turnover increased tenfold; the four of us, working together, constructed the majority of that value in those years. Of course, it wasn't simple. My father had always been adamant: "Sort it out for yourselves," he told us, "because I certainly won't be the one to resolve the problem of the handover from one generation to the next. If you work it out among yourselves, the equilibrium you find will be more stable; if I handle it, my decision would doubtless be overturned after my death." This is one reason he always encouraged us to cultivate our talents and to choose professions that reflected our aptitudes, without ever forcing us.

The handover was facilitated by his wisdom and foresight: in 1990, at the age of 65, he became honorary president (a position he held until 2008, the year he died). He gave his children maneuvering room and worked together with us for an enlightened intergenerational transfer. We siblings cooperated with him in this effort, writing and then signing an "Illy pact," a document similar to the ones stipulated by big entrepreneurial families, defining values, ambitions, rules for access to the company, and meritocracy. We began to discuss this formal accord in 1993; we initialed it for the first time in 1996 and then again – in an updated version – ten years later. It took us almost three years to sign it, but the result is a heartfelt pact, which we often refer to and which highlights various key factors for the company. First of all, that the company is not at the service of the family, but vice versa; our search for excellence in all we do; and our goal to create value for all the stakeholders involved.

Until that moment, there had been four of us running the company, each one in his or her own field. For a while this worked, but the company was growing and becoming more complicated, and at a certain point we realized that the arrangement wasn't functioning anymore. Riccardo had entered politics during that period, so it was up to me. Ten years later, another fundamental passage was accomplished; the holding company for product diversification was created, with Riccardo as president.

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## A COMPANY IS LIKE AN AIRPLANE

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In 2004, for the first time, we addressed the challenge of the long-term future. What would we be doing in ten or twenty years? We had never asked ourselves that question before, but it struck me as unavoidable. Our primary quality was to create nothing but the best. Only in this way could illycaffè grow four- or five-fold, and over the course of the next ten



years, in fact, it almost doubled. But limits can arise due to a scarcity of high-quality raw materials, which are not infinite, and also if a brand isn't ubiquitous. What would we do next, in order to continue growing? A company is like an airplane: to survive you have to keep flying. Would we buy other companies in the sector, collect coffee brands? This choice would have been incompatible with our values; there can be only one best of the best. It would have been hard to find another brand with our same history of quality, so our only presence in the coffee sector remained Illy and we prepared to apply our same strategy to other products. The Illy Group has bought companies in the sectors of tea, chocolate and wine: all products of the earth that have a great affinity with coffee and that offer the same combination of sensorial pleasure and inspiration, thanks to their mild stimulating properties. All high-quality products, which go together superbly. But if businesses want to grow they have to innovate. Ever since our childhood, our father had conducted a topnotch marketing campaign to make us fall in love with the company. In my case, he had concentrated on scientific matters, arousing my curiosity and sometimes even forcing my hand a bit. In my family, scientific studies were an important focal point that had been in limbo for a while. My grandfather had been an inventor; he had founded a company with a strong vocation for its product, basing everything on two patents – one for high-pressure espresso machines, and one for pressurization. But he hadn't studied science and had felt the deficiency. When my father was old enough, my grandfather told him: "You should study chemistry, to make a better coffee." He was seventeen years old and the war was raging. But he nonetheless followed his father's advice and moved to Bologna. War or no war, he had to study: there should be a chemist in every generation, to keep improving the coffee. The problem cropped up again with the next generation, mine. Who would study chemistry? My father left it up to us to choose: Francesco was the creative one, Riccardo the strategist, my sister Anna had always loved to travel but hated chemistry. That left me.

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## A QUESTION OF CHEMISTRY

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I was the youngest and the others didn't want to tackle chemistry: it was an almost obligatory choice, coming at the end of a few rather wild years. When I was young, I loved high speed and motorcycles, as well as girls. I would diligently and surreptitiously file down the base of my Vespa's cylinders to make it the fastest bike in town. But my studies didn't progress quite as rapidly and I flunked my first year in high school. So my father, being the intelligent and practical man he was, gave me a choice: I could remain in Trieste and become a qualified technician (in other words, forget about university and go straight to work), or I could radically change my lifestyle and study abroad. He left the choice entirely up to me and I quickly realized it was a watershed moment in my life. I didn't have to think it over long. I was intrigued by the idea of going far away from home and putting myself to the test so, at sixteen years of age – just like my grandfather – I left home and headed to Switzerland. Being so far away, my contact with the family became progressively scarce, and a few years later, I convinced myself I was going to make Lausanne my home. After the first year of university, I had started to earn some money; six more months and I would have a Swiss passport; and I was living with a girl. I had also begun to study chemical engineering, even though I would have preferred to study medicine. I didn't know much about what was happening in Trieste, but at a certain point I tackled the problem of informing my family about my decision: I was going to drop chemistry and do something else. I remember that conversation very clearly. I thought it was a natural choice and that no one would be interested. By now I was cut out of everything, I had a new life. Instead, when my brothers and sister heard the news they protested. Stay in Switzerland? Drop chemistry? I was supposed to join the company! It was nice to hear their call to arms. A while later, I decided to continue my university studies in Trieste. It was a good decision because the city is home to one of Europe's most important scientific institutions and, above

all, because just a few days after returning I met my future wife, Elisabetta, at the café downstairs. Returning to Trieste and the company was like returning home because I had grown up in the factory: as a child I had roamed it, playing with whatever I found; as an adolescent I had been part of the summer workforce, working in the department that makes coffee canisters in order to earn enough money to buy that Vespa. Plus, to me the family had significance and meaning from an entrepreneurial standpoint, as well.

In Italy, almost every company is born as a family-run business. This vocation is part of a company's DNA, even though this factor can sometimes be distorted as the company grows, and especially if it becomes a multinational corporation. But its most important values lie in its family roots. First of all, its moral, ethical and social values. Then, the legacy of knowledge that is handed down from father to child, the true wealth of entrepreneurial savoir faire. And finally, its reputation, constructed over time and over the span of generations and which is indispensable to a solid company. A company is all this: it is the product of its knowledge, reputation and identity.

Naturally, these values can be handed down for a long time, even after the death of its founder or when there are no future generations. This is the case of Steve Jobs: his teachings will survive because Apple's original structure is his and it is a cornerstone of teachings, values and vision. Because what counts isn't the thing in itself, but the meaning we give it. And when I feel momentarily discouraged or in doubt (like we all do sometimes), I remember the story my father once told us about two workmen who were stacking bricks. One of them asks the other, "What are you doing?" The other one replies, annoyed, "Can't you see? I'm stacking bricks. Why? What do you think you're doing?" I imagine the first workman smiling as he replies, "I'm building a cathedral." Because, yes, the first workman is doing the exact same job as the other one, but he also has a vision, a project, a dream so big that he might not even live to see it completed (like Gaudí and the Sagrada Família in Barcelona) but that nonetheless can completely change his approach to what he's doing and make him happy. I'd say we are in the business of building a cathedral.

Moreover, we are afflicted with an incurable desire for perfection. In fact, after more than eighty years, we still cannot say we know how to make the best coffee in the world: there is still a lot to learn and to do. To offer the best coffee in the world is a very profound life philosophy whose goal is to help build a world we can live happily in. A world of goodness, a world of beauty.

# ILLY, THE FAMILY AND THE COMPANY

The Illy company was founded by Francesco Illy (Illy Ferenc in Hungarian), who was born in 1892 in Temesvár (today Timișoara), which at the time was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The son of Lujza Rösler and Johann Illy, a carpenter, at roughly 16 years of age Francesco moved to Vienna to seek his fortune. By the time he was 20, he was the head of administration at two companies. At 22, he was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army and fought at every front of the 1914-1918 conflict, including the Carso and Verdun. The war also took him to Trieste, where one of his sisters lived, and he decided to settle down there after the war. The end of WWI had sanctioned the passage of Trieste to Italy; Temesvár, on the other hand, was awarded to Romania. This made Francesco a Romanian citizen and would have obliged him to repeat his military service. He chose to remain in Italy.

In Trieste, he met Doris, a pianist who was giving his nieces piano lessons. Doris was born in Johannesburg; her father was from Trieste and her mother was Irish. She and Francesco had two children: Ernesto and Hedda. Initially, Francesco dealt in spices in Trieste, but he later moved on to cocoa and chocolate. However, his inventive and managerial ability found its highest expression in the coffee sector, which he began to import. To preserve and maximize its aroma, Francesco patented two new technologies: pressurization (which guarantees permanent freshness and also begins a process which we could define as the "aging" of coffee, like a barrique for the best wines) and high-pressure espresso machines (which ensure the perfect extraction of coffee's aroma during percolation). In 1933, after a rocky experience with a partner (who later emigrated to Spain) at a company called Emax, Francesco decided to raise the necessary funds to develop his patented technologies by founding a new

company – Industria Nazionale Caffè e Cioccolato Illy-Hausbrandt – with a partner (named Hausbrandt) who had a 50% share in the company. Since the 1800s, the Hausbrandt company (founded in 1892, curiously enough the same year Francesco was born) had been producing and selling roasted coffee in Trieste. The new company marketed coffee under the illy label. In 1939, always with the Hausbrandts and bringing in the Seitz family as well, Francesco founded illycaffè Switzerland in Zurich; this independent company became operative around 1950.

When Francesco died in 1956, Ernesto followed in his father's footsteps and began running the company. His sister Hedda moved to Rome to dedicate herself to her musical studies, becoming a well-known harpsichordist. Ernesto received his degree in chemistry in Bologna, after which he focused on the company's commercial development, including its foreign sector, opening new markets and branches in Holland (1962) and the United States (1980). In the early 1960s, Ernesto gained control of illycaffè through an equal exchange of shares between the quota held by the Swiss company, which had transferred its offices to Thalwil, and the quota in Trieste, and in 1965 he inaugurated a new factory on Via Flavia, which still today is illycaffè's headquarters.

Ernesto became involved in product innovation, in part thanks to an inflow of capital from a regional finance company, Friulia. First off, the in-house manufacturing of 3-kilo canisters, in order to closely follow every production phase and guarantee their airtight seal for pressurization. He next gave great impetus to scientifically researching coffee and developing technological systems to select, roast and conserve the beans to enhance their quality. To this end, he created one of the first in-house quality control laboratories, inventing and patenting new equipment to electronically select the coffee beans and discard any defective ones. In the early '70s, Ernesto invented the first portioned system for espresso, creating a paper pod filled with ground coffee that allowed even non-professionals to easily prepare an excellent espresso. The pod, which today is called Easy



Serving Espresso, greatly accelerated the illy brand's internationalization, in particular in Germany, and led to the founding of a new company in the United States in 1980.

Over the course of his career, Ernesto was a founding partner and twice president of the ASIC (Association for Science and Information on Coffee), an international scientific association dedicated to coffee, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2016. In 1965, he helped found Centromarca, the Italian Association of Branded Products Industries, and in 1990 he founded the ISIC, the Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee.

In 1952, Ernesto married Anna, a native of Trieste



and the daughter of an engineer; she was also a ski champion and the two met on the slopes. Anna helped Ernesto run the business, in particular developing the pod system and increasing their foreign market. They had four children, Francesco (1953), Riccardo (1955), Anna (1958) and Andrea (1964).

Even as a boy, Francesco displayed creative talent; in the 1980s and '90s, this translated into three important illycaffè debuts in three different artistic fields: photography (a sector in which Francesco, who is also a photographer, has created important works), art (with the illy Art Collection project) and design, with the manufacturing of the Francis Francis coffee machine.

He moved to Switzerland in the '70s and, along with his wife, oversees the distribution of the family's coffee under the Amici trademark. In the 1990s, he crowned his dream of becoming a winemaker in Montalcino. He has four children: Ernesto, Vittoria, Matilde and Ludovica.

Ernesto's second son, Riccardo, a big sportsman, was a ski and sailing instructor in his youth; he entered the world of coffee through a green coffee trading company. He married quite young and has one daughter, Daria. In 1977, he joined the family business, which was going through a difficult moment due to the sharp rise in coffee prices following the devastating freeze in 1975, which destroyed a large portion of Brazil's harvest. He began his career in the company in the sales department of Bar in Italia, and in just a few years he achieved his objective of making illy the country's major commercial blend. In the late 1980s, he founded two new sales networks:

the food and the office channels, setting the first foundations for marketing strategies based on focused differentiation of the product and creating the first marketing department in the company's history. This led to the distribution of an innovative product like ground coffee for making espressos and, a few years later, the Easy Serving Espresso system opened a coffee pod sales channel in the home sector as well. Over the course of his professional career, Riccardo fine-tuned the company's strategy, centering it on the espresso segment and on quality differentiation. One result was the illy single blend and the first advertising campaigns, whose success made illy a major national coffee brand. Innovative organization of the sales sector let the management set the basis for the company's successive internationalization. In the 1990s, Ernesto and Anna transferred minority shares of illycaffè to their four children. Upon Francesco's suggestion, the siblings created the Buriana Holding (an acronym of their names and nicknames); in 2004 it was transformed into the Gruppo illy spa, with Riccardo as chairman, and initiated a series of acquisitions dealing with colonial products. Starting in the '90s, after acting as managing director, Riccardo also became involved in Italian politics. In 1993, he was elected mayor of Trieste, a role he maintained for two mandates and which later earned him an honorary degree in Political Science from the University of Trieste, in recognition of his contributions to re-launching the city's geopolitical role during his terms as mayor. Elected a member of the Italian Parliament, in 2003 he became president of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region. After leaving politics in 2008, Riccardo recommenced his full-time activity as an entrepreneur, spearheading diversification of the Gruppo illy which today sees the company involved in the sectors of tea, cocoa, wine and fruit-based products, under the labels Domori, Dammann, Mastrojanni and Agrimontana.

Ernesto and Anna's third child, Anna, has always had the world of coffee-producing countries at heart. She began her career in the sales office for green

coffee, and then worked for a while at a shipping company. Starting in 1991, her contributions were decisive in successfully launching a Brazilian award for the best quality of espresso (Prêmio Ernesto Illy de Qualidade do Café para Espresso). As a result, the company revolutionized its procurement strategy and developed direct relations with the coffee producers. A tireless traveler, she has one daughter, Nicol. Andrea, sporty and an aficionado of flying, moved to Switzerland in 1979 for his studies. He returned to Italy in 1986, and in 1990 joined the company in the quality control department, launching the company's strategy in the field of total quality. In just a few years, his responsibilities had extended to the entire product area. In 1994, he received his chemistry degree with a thesis on the chemistry behind the quality of espresso, which was later published as "Espresso Coffee: The Science of Quality." That same year, on Riccardo's suggestion, he replaced his brother as managing director of illycaffè, which he turned into a global brand, in part by developing the range of coffee products. In 1999, he became president of the ASIC and in 2013, president of the Altgamma Foundation. Always in 2013, he became president of the Promotion and Market Development Committee of the ICO (International Coffee Organization), a role that had been previously held by his father Ernesto. He has three daughters: Micaela, Jacqueline and Andrea-Dominique.

The three members of the fourth generation to have begun their careers in the company are Daria, Ernesto and Vittoria. The newest members of the family, representing the fifth generation, are Riccardo, Angelica and Bianca.