

# THE STORY OF ACQUA DI PARMA

Acqua di Parma is one of those iconic products that never ages. Its distinctive packaging and timeless fragrance have been the hallmarks of understated elegance for almost a century. The story of this classic cologne begins in a small perfume factory in the northern Italian city of Parma, once home to the dazzling court of the Gonzaga dynasty, Marie Louise of Austria and Giuseppe Verdi, and raised to literary fame by the French author Stendhal.







Duomo e Battistero di Parma

**A**round 1916, all the most popular men's fragrances were from Germany, which is how cologne got its name – from the city of Cologne, Roman Colonia. They were powerful, intense and complex in their composition. When Acqua di Parma introduced its new scent, it was greeted with enthusiasm for its Mediterranean notes of fresh citrus. By the 1930s, Acqua di Parma's cologne had become so popular that its production had to be stepped up and its distribution system expanded. This was the golden age of Acqua di Parma: the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, when the glamorous

starts of Hollywood set the style and influenced people's choices. Cary Grant, David Niven, Ava Gardner, Lana Turner and later on, Audrey Hepburn, used Acqua di Parma and said so.

The 1960s swept through with change even in this field, as it did so many others. Other perfumes challenged Acqua di Parma's supremacy, though its long tradition and discreet style made it the 'best-kept secret' of traditionalists. The turnaround for Acqua di Parma came in the 1990s, when with plenty of investment and a concerted effort at branding, it made a resounding comeback. >p43





Left to right:

Empress Maria Luigia by Robert Lefevre, 1812

Portrait of a young woman by Francesco Mazzola il Parmigianino - early 16th c

Detail of Diana and Acteon by Francesco Mazzola il Parmigianino, early 16th c



>In 1993, three friends who also happened to be in the luxury goods business, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, president of Ferrari, Diego Della Valle, founder and owner of Tod's, and Paolo Borgomanero, shareholder of the La Perla Group, joined forces and bought Acqua di Parma.

They were determined to safeguard an Italian classic, a stately brand of unrivalled quality that was part of an important family tradition. They did not want this small but historic name to be sidelined by the clamour and din of fads and signature scents. Though they were well aware of the economic value of the brand, the partners were driven to fulfil their plan by their personal fondness for the Acqua di Parma name and scent, which all three used routinely. Since then, Acqua di Parma has gone from strength to strength.

The first Acqua di Parma boutique opened in 1998, on Milan's Via del Gesù, right alongside the leading international

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couturiers. That positioned the brand immediately and effectively. Within a year, numerous Acqua di Parma corners were set up in the world's top department stores. Today, Acqua di Parma fans are legion, yet somehow, the brand continues to retain that aura of special elegance. The underlying message is that those who use Acqua di Parma have sound, good taste.

Within three years, Acqua di Parma was doing so well that LVMH, the world's number-one producer and

distributor of luxury goods, bought into the company. The agreement between LVMH and the Italian partners saw the opening of flagship stores in the leading capital cities of the world, the development of new product lines, and a further expansion of Acqua di Parma's highly selective distribution network (in Malta, Acqua di Parma is sold only by Camilleri Paris Mode, in Annunciation Square, Sliema).

A spokesman for Acqua di Parma said that the rise of the Acqua di Parma brand coincides with the luxury market's return to all things classic. "Every new luxury product aims to acquire the status of a 'modern classic', and Acqua di Parma is an integral part of this trend," he said. "Acqua di Parma will never go out of fashion because it has always been an *haut de gamme* (high end) product, attracting a growing number of consumers."

The original Acqua di Parma now forms the basis of an entire product line. Its main ingredients are Sicilian citrus, lavender, bergamot, verbena and Bulgarian rose. Its packaging is immediately recognisable on the shelves, even by people who are unfamiliar with its aroma. Its distinctive appearance stems from the design of its packaging, marked by an unusual shade of yellow combined with the colours of the city where it was created, and the straightforward logo depicting the royal shield of Parma. ■

