



A family affair - Soc. Agr. Casella del Piano

Introduction

The agritourism has existed since 1996, first as the individual farm of Casoli Umberto and since 2007 as a family company

The farm is located at 450 msl in the eastern countryside of the municipality of Gubbio, just 4 km from the town centre. We are surrounded by sown fields and you can admire the mountains of Gubbio. From the farm you can also see the Basilica of Sant'Ubaldo located on Mount Ingino and in winter the world's largest Christmas tree. The farm covers about 40 hectares, cultivated using environmentally friendly methods.

- Name of the farm/agritourism: Soc. Agr. Casella del Piano s.a.s.
- Legal status: limited partnership
- Year of establishment: 1996
- Location (detailed address or coordinates): Via Linosa, 12, 06024 Gubbio PG (Italy)
- Links to website, social media profiles and other relevant links related to the farm/agritourism:
<https://caselladelpiano.it/>
<https://www.facebook.com/agriturismocaselladelpiano>
<https://www.instagram.com/caselladelpiano/>

The agritourism restaurant participated in and won a popular television programme 'Four Restaurants', which pits four local restaurants against each other challenging them on typical dishes, considering location, service, food quality and price.

Offered services and management

The offer of agritourism services has been implemented gradually, starting with accommodation only and arriving today with numerous services: from the swimming pool to the restaurant service where we serve traditional Eugubian and Umbrian dishes prepared with products from our farm and from local companies. They have also implemented the didactic farm service with routes for both children and adults. To date, the management is split in half: Silvia's brother takes care of the agricultural part and she takes care of the agro-tourism part

Restaurant: Zero-km menus are offered daily, with typical Eugubian dishes prepared with produce from the fields and farms on the farm. Vegetarian and gluten-free menus are also available by reservation.

Educational farm: Educational farm with courses for children, activities for the whole family, and cooking courses for adults on traditional Eugubian dishes.

Farm: from the original Chianina breeding we moved to a downsizing of the breeding and an implementation of cereal, fruit and vegetable cultivation and the introduction of beekeeping with the production of honey and the cultivation of herbs.

Other facilities: there is a golf area, a wellness centre, swimming pool and children's play area.





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Personal business experience in agritourism: advantages and disadvantages

Multifunctionality has allowed the company to always be active and have earnings that balance out moments of crisis in other business branches. For example, in times of agricultural crisis due to climatic problems, agrotourism still produced profits, while during the covid period, when the tourist part was completely at a standstill, the agricultural sector kept the company on its feet. Having activated various collateral services over the years was also a huge help in that period, in fact, even if the accommodation part could not be used, with the first reopenings the restaurant service allowed us to work with local tourism thanks to tastings, lunches and dinners.

The main problems encountered are linked first of all to the bureaucratic part that concerns any modification or implementation of new services with rules that are not always easy to interpret and that often generate expenses that are not commensurate with the magnitude of that modification or service. In addition, another major problem is related to finding skilled labour that is able to understand the need to be as multifunctional as the farm where they work: skills are required not only in the agricultural sector but also in hospitality and vice versa.

Personal training derives both from 'experience in the field' because she is the fourth generation to manage the company, so she was born and raised there, and from external training: in addition to having a Master's degree in Tourism Economics, she has had work experience in other companies that deal with hospitality and continue to attend training courses to stay up-to-date on the trends and innovations in our sector. Silvia strongly believes in continuous training and in the formation of business networks to better promote and enhance the territory.

Innovation, diversification and multifunctionality

The innovations intended to be implemented concern both sides of the business: the primary sector and the hospitality sector. The former involves expanding the production and direct sale of agricultural products, alongside organizing educational events and tastings in collaboration with other farms. The latter involves making some changes to both outdoor and indoor spaces to enhance the overall guest experience.

In 2008, educational farm activities suitable for the whole family were initiated by Casella del Piano farm. This expansion has led to the creation of an educational space suitable for children, young people, and adults. Guests have the opportunity to engage in real contact with nature and to understand the labor behind a given product. The aim is to bridge the gap between today's technological society and rural society through educational and entertaining paths that actively involve the entire family.



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Other tourism and territory-related services offered include forest walks, educational city walks around Gubbio, wine and food tasting events featuring products from our farm, as well as wedding services.

Knowledge and experience transfer – tips for other farmers

For a new farmer looking to enter the hospitality industry, it would be advisable to understand what the strong point of their farm is and then enhance it through agritourism activities. It would be advisable to undergo training rather than improvising in this activity, both to provide adequate service to guests and to create a truly profitable branch for the farm.

In her project, Silvia would include more training for themselves and their employees. This is something they have started to do by taking advantage of training courses made available by trade associations. With broader knowledge, everything can be organized better to make it more profitable.

The required skills are indeed numerous: skills related to hospitality, knowledge of at least one foreign language (preferably English), skills for managing the costs and revenues of a tourism business, skills related to personnel management (obviously necessary as the business grows), an aptitude for problem-solving, and all the knowledge required to manage the legal obligations related to the agritourism sector (HACCP, safety regulations, etc.).





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Farms' Charm

