

YACHTS

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CODECASA

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KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

The Codecasa family, eponymous with the shipyard founded in 1825, is a name well-respected throughout the Italian yacht building capital of Viareggio. The yachts currently being built by Fulvio Codecasa are intended to match the famous Dutch yards in terms of quality of production. It's this uncompromising attitude that characterises the brand, as we discovered on a visit to the yard.

By Dominique Gabirault



Codecasa's two centuries of trading is in itself an achievement, but when a shipyard boasts amongst its production portfolio commercial trawlers, container ships, high-speed Coastguard launches, offshore supply boats, fast aluminum yachts, large open sports yachts and custom steel yachts of up to 65m... that is seriously impressive. Such experience and a spread of competences in varied fields, ensures Codecasa's reputation for quality of construction is comparable with the best international shipyards. Such a deep knowledge of shipbuilding can only be built over a long history of breaking new ground and a long tradition of innovation. The founding of the Codecasa shipyard in Viareggio dates back to 1825, when Giovanni Battista Codecasa (born in 1803) settled there and began building sailing boats.

Known as the 'Maestro of Ascias', Giovanni primarily focussed his talents on the brigs, 'goélettes' and other 'barcobestia'; the latter a local reference to a type of merchant ship of heavy tonnage. Continuing the

Tristan was arguably the strongest of the family's personalities, at just 27-years of age, he undertook a significant expansion of the shipyard established by his father



dynasty, Giovanni's descendant, Giovan Battista Codecasa, also known as 'Tristan' (1875-1956), was arguably the strongest of the family's personalities. In 1902, at just 27-years of age, he expanded the building site by 1,258 square metres and began building small ships in 'Darsena Lucca'. But, the limited size of the inner basin necessitated the creation of an additional shipyard in the new "Darsena Toscana". Such investment enabled Giovan Battista to survive the Great Depression of 1920's, which decimated the shipwrights in Viareggio.

For a short two-year hiatus, the firm was sold and came under the direction of Cooperativa Calafati Codecasa, however Tistino continued to direct and to supervise work through until 1922 when the Cooperativa was dissolved and the Codecasa family reassumed ownership of the yard. World War I had a particularly harsh impact on the town of Viareggio and subsequent technical evolutions in maritime design and manufacture seriously disrupted the traditional shipyards. The two main revo-

The resplendent Codecasa headquarters are located in Viareggio, along with three of their five shipyards



I Shipyard

lutions; the switch from sail to engine propulsion and the switch from wood to metal construction were managed with brilliance by the Codecasa family, proving its capacity for adaptation.

The Battistas family grew and produced five children, four of whom were boys: Ugo (1908-1973), Sandro (1907), Antonio (1904) and Marcello (1912) and Rosa (1915). During his time directing the yard, Giovan Battista, assisted by his sons Ugo and Sandro, built nearly a hundred ships. Throughout the 1930's the family continued its high level of production and underwent restructuring - bringing all everything back under one roof in a single shipyard. While Marcello and Rosa chose different careers, Ugo and Sandro continued to collaborate with their father until 1946, when Tistino stood down from the running of the business. Under the two siblings Codecasa once again restructured, dividing production across several smaller specialist yards, each concentrating on a particular portion of the wide and varied range. This diversification enabled Codecasa to gracefully navigate the transition from wood to

metal construction, and thus become one of the pioneers of steel shipbuilding in Italy. With extensive experience building commercial vessels, the yard continued to concentrate their attention on launch trawlers and small trading ships. In the 1960's however, with Europe back on its feet and an increasing demand for leisure craft, the brothers embraced the opportunity to build large steel private yachts and, along with compatriots Benetti, carried the torch for Italy in this field. Ugo Codecasa continued pushing the family business forward until its death in 1973, when his 35-year old son Fulvio (1938) took his place, while his brother Sandro, retired eight years later in 1981.

1973 proved to be a pivotal year for the Codecasa brand. Following the death of his father Fulvio found his hand on the tiller of Codecasa and, given a great freedom to develop his ideas and define a new strategy, he turned his attention to exploiting the specialist niche of the leisure yacht market. Fulvio was a firm believer in the growth of the private yachts sector and the evolution of

the market fully justified his foresight. Thus, Codecasa became one of the first, and leading, Italian steel built private yacht shipyards in Italy. While it was Fulvio's father Ugo that first worked steel hulls, the son preserved and developed his father's legacy until moving more recently into aluminium builds.

In 1977 Codecasa created another shipyard in the port area, called Codecasa Ugo. In 1978, the partnership became a joint stock company, a legal structure in line with the brand's future strategy. In 1982 Codecasa Due was also created in Darsena Toscana, integrating the shipyard Fulvio's uncle Sandro had founded. Then the repurchase of the closed shipyard Giorgetti in 1988 enables Fulvio to create a third yard, named Codecasa Tre, right next to Codecasa Ugo. So, with three shipyards operating under the Codecasa brand, the company lays down a marker and enters the world of private yacht construction with some aplomb!

The 1970's started with a yacht of 80' launched and, with its explorer-style looks, is favourably received by the





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market. Conceived in collaboration with naval architect Franco Harrauer, the yacht named Gram featured a hull inspired by the long-distance commercial craft the yard has so much experience with. The second yacht produced was the G.V. First (35m in 1972), and she boasted the dramatic profile of a thoroughbred ocean-going vessel. From 1973 to 1981, Codecassa launched yachts that proved to be extremely different from one another. Entrepreneur a 35m splashed in 1974 and designed by Anselmi Boretti, plus Casabella (33m in 1975) sailed regularly in American waters. In 1976, the 35m Renalo was built in collaboration with the Italian shipyard Profilmarine and sported angular lines penned by Alberto Mercati. During this period of eclectic production, a 'Codecassa style' began to emerge; the 1975 launch of the 27m yacht Fair Play and 1978 splashing of sister ship Malua are widely regarded as the first to carry Codecassa's distinctive DNA. Following in the same spirit, the 35m Gipsy was launched in 1979, but Codecassa proved they were still flexible and willing to surprise the market with the unveiling of a 35m steel/aluminium sailing vessel called Barcablu. Two highly important launches followed in 1982: Luisella and Maichol. Not to only was Luisella the largest yacht ever built by the yard at 62m, but it was also highly innovative, being the first yacht specifically intended for the charter that could accommodate more than 20 passengers in eleven suites. This splendid small liner allured celebrity Max Grundig (the producer of television sets by the same name), who renamed it Maria Alexandra. Maichol, an extremely well proportioned motor yacht, was the first of a series of three 25m units launched consecutively at a rate of one per annum.

This concept of series, or semi customisation, building became a part of Codecassa's strategy, enabling them to once again weather the financial storms of the 1980's that sunk so many other Italian shipyards. Fulvio Codecassa remarked in a later interview; "In times of crisis we built yachts by financing them, then waiting for more favourable times to sell. Thus instead of resorting to mass redundancies, or heavily discounting our prices as many others did, we preferred to wait it out. I must therefore thank all the people who understood this difficult master plan and who ratified my decision." The plan paid off. By refusing to devalue their product, their clients remained faithful. During the 1980's one brand loyal customer requested a 50m seven-cabin custom yacht; Aleanna was delivered in 1986. Her elegant lines were used again on future units.

In 1987 Codecassa demonstrated their penchant for innovation and pioneering spirit once again, introducing a new range of yachts built entirely out of alumi-

nium. Produced by the Codecassa Due yard, the range consisted of two models; an 18m and 22m. While three units were built, one of 18m in 1987 and two 22m in 1988 and 1991, their popularity was restricted by the comparative cost of the new fibreglass built craft. Meanwhile, the Codecassa Due yard, which specialised in aluminium builds, produced two offshore oil rig support vessels; Packeta in 1989 and SD 101 in 1990.

The new Codecassa 33m Ambra, launched in 1987, proved to be the first in a long series. A total of six of these full-displacement units were launched between 1987 and 1995. In 1990, the owner of Aleanna (a 50m delivered in 1986) took delivery of his new 60m yacht; Jonikal. Propelled by 3,760hp Wartsila Nohab engines, this new 760-tonne giant of the seas flirted with a top speed of around

20-knots. Later purchased by Mr. Al Fayed, Jonikal was refitted and lengthened by almost 5m before being renamed Sokar. In light of the increasing demand

for faster yachts, in 1992 Codecassa launched the 37m aluminium craft, Aquajoy. Featuring ultra-modern lines and twin 2,200hp MTU engines, Aquajoy could achieve 25-knots.

In 1994, Codecassa launched another aluminium yacht, Blue Velvet, who's naval architecture and external design came from the drawing boards of Frank Mulder. Built by Codecassa Due, this curvy 31m jewel was powered by a veritable cavalry of almost 7,000 horses coupled up to two KaMeWa waterjets. Her top speed of almost 40-knots makes her a very special vessel indeed. Throughout the 1990's Codecassa continued to develop its expertise in aluminium. In

"In times of crisis we built yachts and waited for more favourable times to sell"

Evidence of Codecassa's design DNA has been carried through from their early production.





1995 they launched the 24m Visotta that packed triple 1,150hp MTU's that pushed her top speed up past 30-knots. Aluminium production was paying dividends, by Codecasa hadn't forgotten their steel building heritage. Between 1991 and 1994 the brand launched the 50m yacht Away, Iliki V (40m in 1994) and of both LS Two (1993) and Oktana (1995). Arguably one of the most important deliveries of this era however came in 1996, when Fulvio unveiled the Codecasa 48 Charly Coppers. This yacht was the first in another long series, eventually evolving into the Codecasa 49, 50 then 51. Its owner commissioned the exemplary twelfth yacht of this series, Aldabra, as recently as 2011. Over the 15-year lifespan of the series, the length has increased slightly and the design modernised, but the spirit remains the same.

Following in the wake of the Codecasa 33 launched in 1995, Codecasa's new 34 D was launched in 1999. Drawn with full, round side picture windows and a full beam salon, this model was produced twice: Antares in 1999 and Iliki VII in 2000. During this decade some single yachts, such as Lola D (32m in 1999), Aldebaran (42m in 2002), the 35D Carina (35m in 2003) and Ferdy (43m in 2007) were launched. While production was running high, at the beginning of 2000 Codecasa once again surprised industry watchers by entering the large Open market. All the ingredients necessary to succeed were present: 35m aluminium units, propelled by powerful MTU engines coupled to KaWeMa waterjets.

To capitalise in this new sector, the yard called upon the talented Andre Bacigalupo, an expert in fast hulls. The first model, the 35 S launched in 2004, was for a very



informed owner... none other than Fulvio Codecasa himself. Christened after his wife, Maria Carla was the yard's first attempt at a 35m fast boat. A second 35 S was launched the following year in 2005, finished in a distinctive blue colour.

In 2007, the yard unveiled a second model in the line up, this time equipped with a flybridge. Mirroring the aesthetic lines of the 35 S, two 41 S units were built: Bellissima C in 2007 and Flying Dagger II in 2009. Come 2010 the range was added to again, with the new 45 S and the first example, Dénommé Framura 2, is feature a distinctive flybridge. The crowning jewel of this series is currently under construction in the brand's new yard in Pisa. Code-named C 120, the future 50 S is an eye-catching and elegant tri-deck. The 50m aluminium construction boasts a stable of 7,800 horses produced by triple MTU engines. Her designed top speed will be more than 25-knots.

Throughout the yachting industry the sizes of yachts are ever increasing, and Codecasa's latest models are no exception. The yards most recent models have been based on hulls from 62 to 65m. The first 62m called Apogee (2003) was built for an American owner, and the second, Mo Neikos (2006), was delivered to a loyal Codecasa client who was upgrading from a 50m. In the 65m range, three units were launched between 2008 and 2010. The first, christened Main in 2008, belongs to fashion designer Giorgio Armani... it was ordered as a replacement for his 50m Mariù delivered in 2003. Armani, desiring a very particular design, took an active role in the yacht's construction. His influence can be seen in the black hull and aft deck salon that occupies the yacht's full beam. This would later be modified during Mariù's 2008 refit.

In 2010, the yard launched two 65m vessels, although they were very different from one another. Family Day is a project that embodied the desires of Fulvio Codecasa. It is quite simply a splendid yacht with a design of absolute purity. The third 65m, Lady Lau, was more conventional and also launched in 2010. The market has undergone much change since 2008 however, and new market conditions required shipyards to navigate carefully. Always staying ahead, in 2011 Codecasa presented their latest innovation: the Vintage Series 42 Metre. Based on a new concept, which combines classicism and modernity, this yacht (named F73 East), is the forerunner of a new range with a 50 metre already planned. Unlike many brands, thanks to its structuring of the business, Codecasa is able to begin building, and indeed launch, yachts prior to receiving a signed order. This method, known as "construction in speculation", has often been used by the company and remains a part of their business philosophy.



The uniform grey of the Codecasa 51 'Regina d'Italia' enhances her superb lines

The Codecasa 50S, under construction at the new yard in Pisa, is part of an exciting new Open series for Codecasa





VIAREGGIO, ITALY'S YACHTING CAPITAL

To better understand the phenomenon that is Viareggio, the yacht building capital of Italy, one has to look at its heritage. This secular cradle of Italian naval construction concentrates manufacturers of sea going vessels of various sizes and since its birth in the 16th century has relied on strong links with maritime commerce. Following the decline of sail, and indeed the terrible effects of the Second World War, the local shipyards turned their attention to the building of pleasure boats and private yachts.

Viareggio became the stronghold for Italy's yacht building industry in the 1960's. Today it is to the Italian yacht market what Detroit is to the American car industry. The notable difference is that Viareggio protected its interests by increasing land area for its prolific shipyards and increased the harbour capacities through successive extensions. However, as

the size and number of yachts being built increased throughout the late 20th century, these extensions couldn't keep pace. This obliged shipyards in the city to decentralise their activities, expanding into other areas of Italy, in order to profit from easier access to the sea and infrastructure better suited to the needs of the modern yacht building industry.

The city's position as a bastion of naval construction remains, however, with a range of national subcontractors supplying its yards. This recourse to subcontracting on a large scale is one of the characteristics of the production process in Italy. Many of the world's greatest yachts continue to be built in Viareggio and great shipyards still call it home: Codecasa, Benetti, Falcon, Maiora, Picchiotti (now Perini Navi), Sanlorenzo, Tecnomarine, Versilcraft to name but a few. Yacht building remains the pillar of the local economy.

To bring you up to date, two yachts are currently under construction. We saw the second 42m Vintage series (hull F 75) in the giant hangar in Codecasa Ugo. Also, the first vessel in the new 50m Open range, the Codecasa 50S (hull C 120), is under early construction in the new yard in Pisa. The commercial side of the business is also still busy, in 2012 the Codecasa Due yard, took orders from the Italian Coastguard for two different types of high-speed motorboat: a class 300 of 18.8m and a class 800 of 10.6m.

Fulvio Codecasa, a modest man, has remained faithful to his long-standing strategy, which has not only enabled him to become one of the leading protagonists in the private yacht market, but also to remain at the helm of an independent and stable family-run corporate group. Codecasa's various shipyards benefit from an excellent reputation for world-class quality, backed up with a history of achievement. Fulvio's current plan is to deliver one or two yachts per annum, to complete at least three sales per year, and to always have one or two vessels under construction 'on spec'. As one would expect of this innovative yard, future offerings are currently being scrutinised, and we were shown ambitious plans for projects being studied: a 50m Vintage Series, a new 65m, and indeed one 72m project that will represent the largest yacht ever produced by Codecasa.

'LA FAMIGLIA'

During our visit to Codecasa, Roberta Bartali (head of communications for the yard) and Ennio Buonomo (husband of Fulvia Codecasa) warmly hosted us. The Codecasa family continues to employ their talents within the yard and through their occupation of various management positions engender the true 'family business' spirit that prevails. Ennio Buonomo, a former crewmember aboard the Italian America's Cup entrant Azzurra, proved to be very knowledgeable about the yard's heritage, and Fulvio Codecasa, even granted us a few minutes of valuable time for an interview. A humble and private man, he generally avoids the limelight and the media, but answers questions directly and succinctly.

Fulvio Codecasa directs the family group with his daughters, Elena and Fulvia, and his sons-in-law, Ennio Buonomo and Fabio Lofrese, following the longstanding methods that have proven reliable in the past. Many potential customers seem to find themselves perfectly at ease with this environment, the fact that they can deal directly with the "boss", owner of the company, is a reassuring factor. This 'family business' philosophy is found on all levels, and Fulvio's attention to detail is omnipresent. Far from remaining ensconced in his office or the boardroom, he'll move around the entire facility ensuring each department strives to achieve perfection in their work. From the drawing board, through to the final design and construction, Fulvio reviews each stage of a yacht's development and doesn't hesitate to order

a task to be redone to achieve his stringent levels of quality control.

To match their exacting standards, Codecasa carefully select their collaborators. Franco and Anna Maria Della-rolle are the designers who have drawn the majority of the yachts over the past twenty years, providing consistency in their production. Generally, a new yacht often takes inspiration from the lines of yachts that have come before it, evolving the yard's DNA. At Codecasa the preferred direction is one that eschews revolution in favour of evolution. It is rare that a ship-owner comes to see them with a very personal project, remember the company has built many of their yachts on speculation and that the yachts are generally sold while under construction. While this method can dramatic reduce the delivery period, it also demonstrates the confidence Codecasa have in producing yachts their owners desire.

Admittedly, this policy of building 'on spec' can be risky and only a yard that operates under a family structure could authorise this risky strategy. Over the last few decades, building on nearly two centuries of experience, the family has followed one another into the dynasty and put it on a path that has seen the brand develop. The initial shipyard has been transformed into a powerful group, strongly established in the private and commercial sectors. Future generations are provided with a clear route map to follow, but also have the pressure of continuing this incredible legacy.



Fulvio Codecasa is intimately involved in every aspect of the business, helped by his daughters, Elena and Fulvia, and sons-in-law, Ennio Buonomo and Fabio Lofrese





THE YACHT: TRITONA

When Giovan Battista Codecasa received an order for four “barcobestia” during the Second World War, he did not yet realise that it would be an important step for the yard to establish a foothold in the private yachting sector. These boats, named Marx, Julius, Engels and Giano V, were initially intended for the transport of coal. Giano V would become, after a lengthy conversion, the private yacht of the Count Theo Rossi di Montelera, under the new name Tritona. Montelera was an enthusiastic amateur yachtsman and owner of the Italian vermouth brand Martini & Rossi. In 1938 Montrela succeeded in becoming the first European to win the Gold Cup with Alagi, a Baglietto hull: the Gold Cup being the most prestigious American speedboat race of its time. After 25-years of good and faithful service, a complete refit of Tritona was carried out in 1969 with another upgrade in 1986. It should be noted that Italians have a particular aptitude for converting obscure commercial vessels into stunning yachts, combining modern luxury with the inherent charm these vessels possess.

Codecasa is not a traditional shipyard, it is composed of a decentralised structure with production activities comprising of five entities between Viareggio and Pisa, yet it remains highly organised. In Viareggio, we toured the shipyard that dates back to the brand's origin in 1825, though it has been expanded considerably over time. Codecasa Ugo and Codecasa Tre, located in Nuova Darsena, are adjoining and include 6000sqm of covered halls equipped with retractable roofs. Codecasa Due (6,500sqm including 3,500sqm covered area) is built on the old site of the shipyard in the old port area of Darsena Toscana, the ancient heart of the city. Recently, a fourth site was built within Viareggio near the Ugo and Tre yards.

Given that Viareggio is not a very large city, during the recent crisis the Codecasa family agreed to make a large investment of about 20-million Euros to create a new facility in the “Navicelli area” in Pisa. Each component of the Codecasa group has a well-defined role. Codecasa Ugo and Tre construct vessels from 40 to 70m and Codecasa Due builds for the Coastguard and covers maintenance and refit work on existing yachts – previously, aluminium and steel craft up to 35m were also built here. The fourth yard in Viareggio is now reserved for the construction of the Open yachts and aluminium yachts up to 45m.

As for the new building site in Pisa (25,000sqm including 10,000sqm covered), this consists of a large build-

FIVE FACILITIES: PRODUCTION



ding subdivided into four hangars of 2,500sqm each. Having direct access to the sea via the channel, it is here that the new open 50 S takes shape. This new facility is located in a more suitable environment for building large vessels than the small town of Viareggio, which

has become increasingly worried by the problems posed by large scale steel-reliant industries located in an urban area. One happy outcome of this situation for Fulvio Codecasa is he has retained a splendid suite of offices on the top of the shipyards in Nuova Darsena.



BEAUTY IS ON THE INSIDE

As these four photographs illustrate, Codecasa has become a master in the art of satisfying its customers. These four photographs illustrate the capacity of the group's yards to create yachts that fulfil even the most varied tastes of clients. The more traditional owners will be drawn to the dark colours of the traditional living room of Apogee (62m built in 2003) and the immaculate white "Hampton Beach" style of the Vintage 42 Meter (2011). For those more drawn to contemporary styling, they'll choose the more modern minimalist interior, like that of Flying Dagger II (41m built in 2009) or by the electric and luminous atmosphere of Moneikos (62m built in 2006). Despite the varied choices in interior styling, each is accomplished to a very high standard, representing both the significant work that goes into their creation and the perfection desired by Fulvio Codecasa, the 'Master of the house'. It's easy to see why the yard is so popular with the aristocrats of the haute couture world like Giorgio Armani, Dolce and Gabbana, and Leonardo del Vecchio. ■