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**INK IN MODERATION: THE SMALL PEN BIG ON SPIRIT**

The town of Bassano del Grappa is known across Italy for its world-class production of grappa and Montegrappa writing instruments. A new handmade pen, the Mini Mule, marks the latest initiative to bring both cultures together.

Since 2016, a small town in northern Italy has been serving its own popular variation of the Moscow Mule. In the historic centre of Bassano del Grappa, *Danieli Bar* mixologists Edoardo and Leone Miotti make the *Montegrappa Mule* using Habañero sugar, Chinatto, Bergamot oil, citrusfruit and local 40º proof grappa.

In Bassano, artisanal grappa distilleries seemingly occupy every street. Labyrinthine copper stills stand in full view, using the lure of scientific curiosity to entice visitors into sampling the local produce. The famous digestif’s high profile in Bassano has fooled many into believing its name derives from the drink rather than the storied mountain overlooking the town. Standing at 1,775 metres, Monte Grappa’s distinguished military history was what ultimately convinced the founders of Italy’s first fountain pen factory to also adopt its name.

More than a century after it began producing pens, Montegrappa speaks to new fine writing enthusiasts by leveraging associations beyond the classical domains of art and literature. As a fixture of Italian culture, gastronomy has been a frequent point of reference for the brand. The idea for the Montegrappa Mule cocktail came from collaborating with Danieli Bar just as the writing company was making its first foray into producing pens from copper – the material that features so prominently in artisanal kitchens and distilleries.

Three years on, the Mini Mule sees Montegrappa returning to copper, this time with a considered design that interprets the material’s unique properties for modern requirements. Measuring in at 128mm (5”) and weighing only 33g (1 1/6 oz.), the Mini Mule’s compact size is made to be taken anywhere. By reengineering the internal chambers of one of its most popular silhouettes, Montegrappa has managed to give the Mini Mule the same ink-capacity as much larger models.

The all-rounder pen’s copper exterior is designed to do much more than provide durability and rustic warmth. As well as possessing natural antimicrobial properties, copper develops a patina that reacts to use over time. It’s this ability to record the evolving relationship between tool and user that Montegrappa C.E.O., Giuseppe Aquila, found captivating. “Pens have recently come back into vogue as people tire of digital alternatives,” he explains. “Many are rediscovering the true value of pens as tools of expression and personal identity. A pen that evolves to fit the user only deepens this relationship.”

Handmade in Italy, the Mini Mule is available from fine stationers and montegrappa.com. Writers can select from steel-nibbed fountain pen (converter or cartridge-fed), rollerball and ballpoint modes, and receive a presentation box containing the recipe for Bassano del Grappa’s own signature cocktail.