History of Vermouth:

Vermouth was originally created approx. 125 years ago, as a way of "improving" bad or off wine. If wine was starting to oxidize, turning it into "vermouth" was a way of extending the wines life and hiding the fact that it was going bad.

Especially in the production of traditional method sparkling wine, when degorging the wine, taking out the yeast manually, a lot of wine was collected, that no longer was useable for sparkling wine production, yet was too precious to throw away. All wine sediments and residuals of the dégorgement were collected and then the yeast was filtered out. One would take this "off" wine and fortify it with distilled spirits and add some herbs and spices to cover up the "off" flavor.

Today no "off wine" is being used, simple white or red wine is the base for Vermouth production.

While the process to make Vermouth is rather simple the right recipe for the herbal extract is essential as well as the quality of such herbs and spices. Up to 50 different herbs and spices can be used to make a Vermouth Bianco. Very common are cloves, cinnamon, ginger, star anise, citrus peel, coriander, sage, basil, thyme, chamomile, quinine, juniper berries, and licorice. Other herbs like gentian, mugwort, wormwood as well as rhubarb and bitter orange peel have been used in vermouth to provide some bitterness. Many eastern medicinal herbs are being used, because vermouth by nature has a slightly medicinal flavor.

History of Contratto Vermouth:

The first Contratto Vermouth recipes date back to the 1890s. They were the base for a Vermouth that was only consumed locally. In the 1920s the Vermouth production was extended and recipes were modified. Most of the Vermouth was exported as Vermouth became the in drink of the epoch. Contratto Vermouth di Torino was the in drink in the 1930s, allowing the winery an annual production of 100.000 bottles.

After World War II the popularity of Vermouth had somewhat diminished, but it was still consumed in Europe and overseas. In the 1960s Vermouth became out of fashion, especially in Italy and the Contrattos decided to cease the production entirely.

Today, with recipes older than 100 years and passed on by generations, Contratto is very excited about the reintroduction
of Contratto Vermouth Bianco, Vermouth Rosso, Americano Rosso and Fernet. For the first time again since the 60th, Contratto is making four historic products, high on demand as they currently are fashionable artisanal revival ingredients for classic and contemporary cocktails.

Production Process of CONTRATTO Vermouth & Co.

1. **Base white wine:**
   As a first step, the base white wine is stored separately in a temperature controlled steal tank. Contratto uses Cortese, a the local indigenous white variety, as base wine.

2. **Preparation of herbal extract:**
   This important step can be considered the real art of making Vermouth & Co: the preparation of the herbal extract. Herbs and spices are mixed together according to the ingredient list of the recipes. To know which herbs to use and in exactly which quantity is the real challenge of making these fortified wines. With recipes as old as 100 years, modified to achieve perfection, Contratto has developed a fantastic mixture and balance of flavors. As with all great products, it is important to use quality organic herbs and spices, rather than industry pre-mixed powders and flavors.

3. **Preparation of herbal solution and maceration:**
   This step extracts the flavors from the herbs and spices and passes the flavor into a hydro alcoholic solution. What sounds very complicated, is in fact a simple process: Water is mixed together with Italian brandy in a steel tank. Afterwards the herbal extract is added, which is kept separate by strainers within the tank. A process similar to tea in a tea strainer. A two week maceration process starts at cold temperature, which is the traditional method of making Vermouth. Without heating the mix, the flavor extraction is much slower, but also much more intensive, as no heat will damage the herbs and spices. Regular pump-overs support the maceration.

4. **Mixing of base wine and herbal solution in one tank:**
   After the maceration period the herbal extract is removed from the solution and the base white wine is finally added.

5. **Adding of further ingredients:**
   Sugar and more Italian brandy are added according to the recipe.

6. **First filtration:**
   As a result of the cold maceration certain herb solids and quite an amount of essential oils have also been extracted. A first filtration separates the solids and thick oils from the product.
7. Cold Stabilization:
In addition a cold stabilization further clarifies the Vermouth & Co. from more oils and sediments. The entire mixture is cooled down to minus 8 degrees Celsius for about 8 hours and then gradually re-warms to room temperature. A ten day decanting period allows perfect natural settlement.

8. Decanting:
The Vermouth & Co is removed from its settlements and sulfites as well as caramel coloring (Vermouth Rosso and Americano Rosso) are added.

9. Bottling:
A final filtration before bottling makes the product ready for consumption.

Cocktails with Vermouth & Co.

Vermouth and Americano are excellent aperitifs (Fernet rather a digestive) on their own, and they make fine components of mixed drinks. Here is a selection of cocktail recipes:

“Milano” with Vermouth Bianco:
- 2 parts (2 oz.) Contratto Vermouth Bianco
- 1 part (1 oz.) Contratto "De Miranda" Asti Spumante or La Spinetta Moscato d'Asti
- 3 parts (3 oz). Lurisia Chinotto
serve on the rocks...

“Roma” Vermouth Rosso:
- 1 part (1 oz.) Contratto Vermouth Rosso
- 3 parts (3 oz.) Contratto "De Miranda" Asti or La Spinetta Moscato d'Asti
serve on the rocks and garnish with a strawberry...

“Napoli” with Americano Rosso:
- 2 parts (2 oz.) Contratto Americano Rosso
- 2 parts (2 oz.) orange juice
- 3 parts (3 oz.) Contratto For England
serve on the rocks...

“Sicily” with Fernet:
- 5 parts (2.5 oz.) vodka
- 3 parts (1.5 oz.) Contratto Fernet
- 2 parts (1 oz.) Amaretto
shake well and serve in a cocktail glass...

all cocktails were created by famous James Cannistraro, bartender and F&B manager, Relais San Maurizio, Italy