

## SERGIO LEONI: *fabulous* stoves since 1961

**Tradition** meets **innovation**, **artistic craftsmanship** combined with the **technological know-how** of a great company such as MCZ Group, which Sergio Leoni joined in 2012. Its inventor, Sergio, passed on the **creative passion for ceramics** to his son Matteo Leoni who runs the company, now in its second generation. The stoves under the Sergio Leoni brand embody all these features.

In 2021, the brand **celebrates its 60th anniversary**: throughout all these years, it has created products that are veritable interior decoration pieces, designed to last for a long time and to embellish all kinds of spaces, from the more traditional ones to contemporary and minimalist spaces.



Sergio Leoni was founded in **1961** in San Polo d'Enza, in the province of Reggio Emilia. At the time, Sergio, a master craftsman, was designing frames for open fireplaces which, although beautiful, were not very efficient at heating. By drawing inspiration from the properties of refractory materials and from northern models such as the "Stube" and "Kachelofen", which heat much more efficiently, in the 1960s master craftsman Sergio Leoni showcased his first ceramic stoves at the Florence International Crafts Fair. Although there was no market for them yet, they were an overnight success and now Sergio Leoni products are distributed and appreciated throughout Europe.



Unlike the Nordic stoves, Sergio Leoni models are not wall-mounted, but are **freestanding objects**: they are striking furnishing elements, and their originality, sophistication and elegance are as impressive today as then.

They are **artistic handcrafted stoves**, with ceramic cladding that is still manufactured according to traditional methods, by hand, using natural materials and elements such as clay, water and fire. They are unique works of art that create a warm and cosy ambience and add a delicate romantic charm to even very minimalist interiors.

Originally designed as wood-burning stoves, since 2013 the Sergio Leoni stoves have also been available in a pellet version to accommodate modern lifestyles and meet the demand for **convenient and programmable heating systems**, which can also adapt to the routines of people who are often away from home.

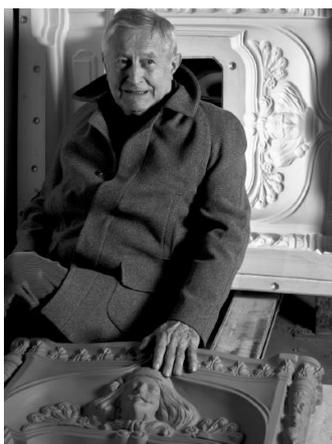
The 15 wood-burning stove models in the collection still bear the signature of master craftsman Sergio Leoni, who passed away in 2018 at the age of 89. The pellet models, instead, stem from the collaboration with designer Monica Graffeo and design studio Emo design, who gave Sergio Leoni's unmistakable style a new, more modern twist.

In particular, the two latest models, Maria Costanza and Regina, designed by Emo design, add youthful and fresh touches to the collection while retaining the feel of handcrafted ceramics.



The claddings are available in eight polished and two matt colours (white or black). For the basic colours – White, Ivory and Cella (beige/pink) – a special finish is also available, craquelure, which is obtained through a process that highlights the natural cracks in ceramics, thus giving the stove an attractive retro look.

*'My father was a true artist, a free-spirited creator, he pursued his own concept of aesthetics and did not reckon with what had already been done. He used to draw inspiration from elements that had nothing to do with stoves. For instance, the first oval stove he designed was inspired by a clock. Or, for example, to design the Maria Luigia, he drew inspiration from a Renaissance frieze he had seen in a church.'*



*I do hope that my father's original and creative spirit, which he injected into all his designs, is never lost. These are not consumer goods, they are niche products and therefore have unique, valuable and quality features. This is our distinctive feature, which ought to be preserved and enhanced, and certainly not distorted for commercial purposes. We have to keep making just few perfect pieces, tailored to our customers' needs: this is the only way we can compete with others.'*

Matteo Leoni

## The manufacturing stages and steps of SERGIO LEONI stoves

A Sergio Leoni stove always makes an impression: it does not only heat spaces, but creates its very own magical atmosphere that reminds us of past times and fairytale settings.

While the technological core of the stove is researched and manufactured at MCZ Group's headquarters near Pordenone, the ceramic claddings for the stoves are handmade in **San Polo d'Enza**, not far from Reggio Emilia. Ceramic claddings take one to two months to make and at least five people work on them. It is a lengthy and painstaking process consisting of slow, carefully planned and calculated steps that are part of a tradition of craftsmanship handed down from generation to generation.



### **THE PIT**

The Sergio Leoni workshop is arranged around a large pit, resembling a large sunken vase containing the ceramic mixture, which is constantly kept soft by revolving blades. 'We use coarse-grained clay,' explains Matteo Leoni. 'This type of clay ensures the highest possible quality, and is therefore ideal for large pieces such as the ones we produce here.' The recipe for this grainy mixture is a secret, a formula that is the result of years of experience and passed down only to the closest associates.

### **RESTING IN THE MOULDS**

The second step involves pouring the clay into plaster moulds that are only used a certain number of times. The mould must then be made again in order to continue to ensure the same level of performance. Gypsum is used to absorb excess moisture in the mixture. The piece stays in the mould for about 24 hours, sometimes even longer on damp winter days or when the piece is particularly thick or large.



### **THE DEMOULDED AND FINISHED PIECE**

When the "resting" time is up, the piece is carefully taken out of the mould, just like getting a cake out of a cake tin. This is a tricky phase since the mixture has solidified yet is still soft. This is why it is the perfect time to smooth it out and finish it by hand, removing even the slightest imperfection.

### **AIR DRYING, FIRST FIRING AND VARNISHING**

Once finished, the pieces are then allowed to dry coupled, tightly held together with inner tubes so that they fit together perfectly when it is time to assemble them. They are then left to air dry again for a period ranging from 3 days in summer to 15 days in winter. Once the piece is well dried, it is fired a first time and then varnished in order to obtain bright and soft shades.



### **PAINING AND HAND-DECORATING**

If required, for certain products, friezes and decorations can be made by hand using natural oxides, which change colour after a second firing in the kiln at a lower temperature. Finding the right combination of pigments so that the colour does not change completely with firing requires a great deal of craftsmanship.

### **ASSEMBLY**

Assembly is the final stage, when we can finally tell whether or not the various parts have been produced correctly. Each stove is designed for being disassembled and reassembled in the future, if required.



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