



THE
ATHENÆUM
PALL MALL LONDON

ITALIAN WINE LUNCHEON

to be held on

Wednesday 21st February 2024 at 12:30pm

*The wines and food of Piedmont:
“Flavours beyond Nebbiolo”*

Presenters:

Professor Neil Pearce

Dr Jonathan Punt

Professor Franco Merletti

Chaired by: Professor James Crabbe



MENU e VINI

Aperitivo

Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG, Ferrando, 2021, ABV 12.5%.

Primo Piatto

Insalata di bresaola e songino, finocchio, sedano, olio di noce.

[Bresaola, lamb's lettuce, fennel, celery, walnut oil dressing]

Roero Arneis DOCG, Bricco delle Ciliegie, Giovanni Almondo, 2022, ABV 13.5%.

Timorasso Derthona Colli Tortonesi DOC, "La Colombera", 2021, Azienda Agricola Fratelli Semino, ABV 14%.

Secondo Piatto

Petto di faraona, mousse di noce moscata e cannella, tajarin, tartufo nero, cavolo nero.

[Breast of guinea fowl, nutmeg and cinnamon mousse, tagliolini, black truffle, cavolo nero]

Verduno Pelaverga DOC, Bel Colle, 2022, ABV 14%.

Dolcetto Dogliani DOCG, "Papà Celso", Azienda Agricola di Abbona Marziano, 2022, ABV 14%.

Michele Chiarlo "La Court" Nizza Riserva DOCG, 2017, 14%.

Dolce

Torta di cioccolato e nocciola, sorbetto alla pera.

[Chocolate and hazelnut tart, pear sorbet]

Brachetto d'Acqui, "Braida" di Giacomo Bologna DOCG, 2022, ABV 5.5%.

Caffè / tè e Cioccolatini

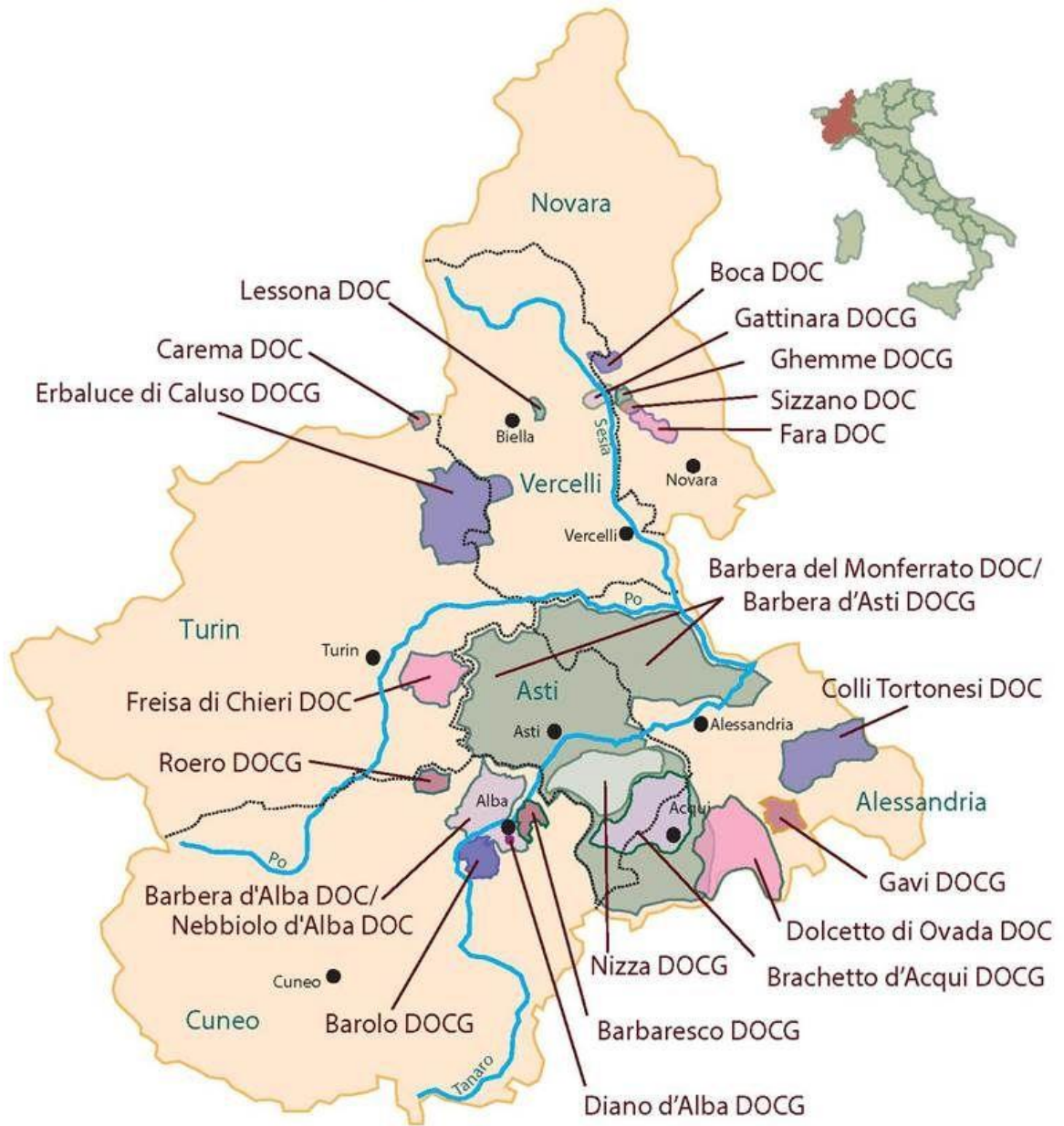
Gianduia.

ITALIAN WINE REGIONS



PIEDMONT WINE REGIONS

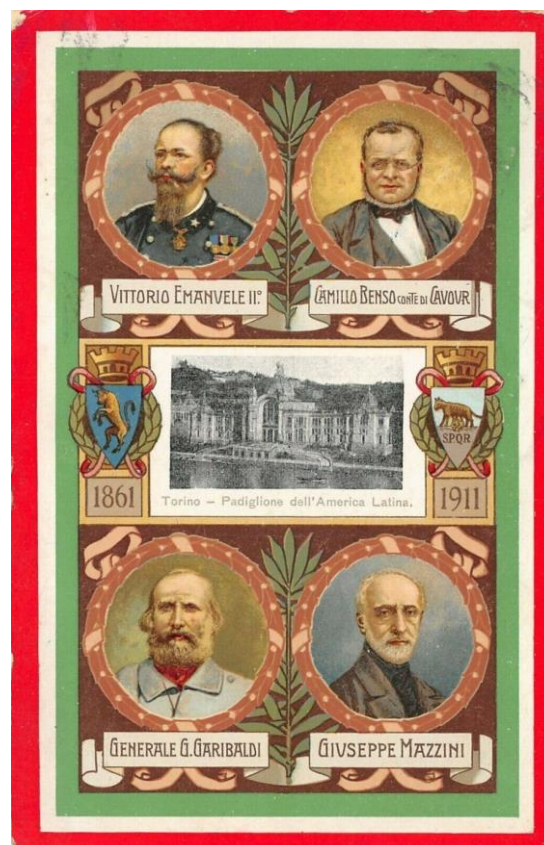
Wine Regions of Piedmont



HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Almost all Athenaeum members will have visited Rome, Florence or Venice, but it is likely that considerably fewer will have visited Turin, the capital of the Region of Piedmont. This is one of the most historic and beautiful Baroque cities in Europe, but has perhaps always lived in the shadow of the famous Renaissance cities. Since 1563, it was the capital of the Duchy of Savoy (Savoie), the subalpine region which spanned parts of present-day Italy and France. Its geographic position isolated and protected it during the periods of Habsburg, Bourbon and Papal domination from about 1550 to 1860. However, the court was francophone until the late 19th century, and this and its proximity to France gave it relative prosperity and an openness to the Northern European ideas of the Enlightenment - in contrast to the rest of the Italian peninsula.

Piedmont was the driving force behind Italian reunification, and Turin was the first capital of Italy from 1861 to 1865.



Nowadays Turin is the capital of the Region of Piedmont, and is the third largest (economically) city in Italy (after Rome and Milan), perhaps known best for its auto-industry and its football teams. However, the surrounding region of Piedmont is widely regarded as the crown of Italian wine-making and gastronomy.

Perhaps because of all of these influences, Piedmont's viticulture is the most stable and developed in Italy, and has perhaps made the most progress towards identifying best terroir, and developing and implementing the most advanced methods for expressing the unique characteristics of the local grape varieties.

The key axis in the Piemonte wine region (see map) is that extending from Alba in the Southeast to Asti in the Centre. To the West of Alba is Bra, one of the original centres of the Slow Food movement. The most commonly grown grape, Barbera, is grown in all of the three main regions of Asti, Alba, and Monferrato. Other key regions featured today include Erbaluce de Caluso (North of Asti), Roero (just north of Alba), Brachetto d'Acqui (in the Southeast), and Dogliani (in the Southwest).

Piedmont is often compared to Burgundy, with both regions involving largely family-owned vineyards producing extremely fashionable wines (Pinot Noir, Nebbiolo) which demand care and attention, and are increasingly over-priced. For those club members who have tried wines from Piedmont, these will almost certainly have been either Nebbiolo (of which the most famous types are Barolo and Barbaresco) or Asti Spumante (made from Moscato Bianco). Just as Turin has lived in the shadow of more famous Italian cities, there are a number of fabulous wines from Piedmont which are little known, and which have lived in the shadow of Nebbiolo and Moscato Bianco. In this luncheon, our aim is to introduce these lesser-known, but spectacular, Piedmont wines.

Piemonte means "at the foot of the mountains". It is almost encircled by the Alps, and has its own macroclimate, with a

very hot growing season followed by a misty autumn, and a cold foggy winter. Less than 5% of Piemontese vineyards are classed as “flat”, with each vineyard involving a relatively unique constellation of conditions, slope and elevation. The area is as famous for food as it is for wine, and has played a prominent role in the Slow Food movement.

As with many other parts of Italy, Piedmont has preserved its large variety of “local grapes” – there are hundreds of grapes throughout Italy that have been used for centuries to make “local wine”. It is only now, that vinification methods are evolving to best bring out the unique character of these many varieties. In Piedmont, progress first came with the generation that revolutionized the production of Barolo and Barbaresco (the “Barolo Boys”). Now, similar spectacular developments are occurring with other “local grapes” which until recently have been little known, and relatively under-developed.

In this luncheon we are featuring six of these “local grapes”, most of which were either relatively little-known or were not highly-regarded, until being “rediscovered” in the 1980s. Will they ever rival the great Nebbiolo? Time will tell, but the recent spectacular developments in their vinification and expression suggest that many of them will come close.

SOME WINE & FOOD FACTS

Viticulture: ca 42,000 hectares under vine.

More than 90% on hillside sites.

Rich geological diversity:

- Turin and North-East Granite and porphyry.
- Langhe and Monferrato Marl, sandstone and chalk.

Viniculture: Production of ca 2.5 million hectolitres *per annum*
- 5% of the national production.

Grape Varieties: Autochthonous - 21 (14 red & 7 white).
Others - 12 (6 red & 6 white).

Most important autochthonous grape varieties:

RED Barbera**, Dolcetto**, Freisa, Grignolino, Nebbiolo

WHITE Arneis**, Cortese, Erbaluce**, Moscato, Timorasso**

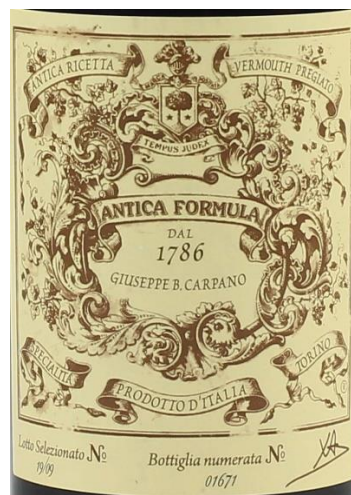
[**Grapes featured in today's Luncheon]

Quality: 94% classified - 41 DOC (equal to Tuscany).

- 18 DOCG (most in any Italy region).

Aperitivo:

Vermouth was devised in Turin in 1786 by the distiller Guiseppe Benedetto Carpano (1764 - 1815). The original Antica Formula is still produced in numbered bottles.



Home of the Slow Food Movement



***Carlo Petrini.
Born 22 June 1949, Bra.
Founder, The Slow Food Movement (1986).***



***Università degli Studi di Scienze Gastronomiche di
Pollenzo (UNISG).***

UNISG was founded and promoted in 2004 by the *Slow Food* association in collaboration with the Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna regional authorities. It is a private university legally recognized by the Italian state.

Food produce

Piedmont is a source of many marvellous ingredients including, Alba white truffles, hazelnuts, walnuts, Arborio and Carnaroli

rice, beef (*razza bovina Piemontese*), and a local variety of pear, (*Martin Sec*), especially suited to the regional baked or poached recipes.



Bovine Piemontese.



Martin Sec pears.

Cheeses. 48 of the 293 cheeses described in the *Slow Food Guide to Italian Cheese (2005)* are made in Piedmont: 8 are recognised by DOP status. Notable examples include Raschera DOP, Castelmagno DOP, Bra d'Alpeggio DOP, Robiola di Roccaverano DOP, and Toma Piemontese DOP.



Castelmagno DOP.



Raschera DOP.

Risotto. Rice, having been introduced into Sicily by the Arabs, took hold in Piedmont, notably around Vercelli, in the 15th Century. Piedmontese risotto is characteristically relatively dry and tight in texture. compared to the softer, wetter ones found in the Veneto. *Risotto al Tartufo*, made with Carnaroli rice, Alba white truffles, and Roero Arneis is a fine blend of intense

flavours. *Risotto al Barolo* is an ancient traditional Piedmontese dish: a full-bodied Langhe Nebbiolo would be a fair, and more economical, wine to employ than a Barolo.



***Italian Rice Field, (1864). Luigi Stefani (1827-1898).
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.***

Primi Piatti

Pasta. *Tajarin*, (aka *taglierini*) is a long, thin ribbon, fresh egg pasta originating from the region of Alba and now found throughout the Langhe, usually served with a *ragù*, the most renowned being derived from chicken or rabbit offal, (*comodino*). Alternative pairings include mushrooms, or truffles, notably white truffle from around Alba, or anchovies.



Tajarin.

Tajarin was much liked by Vittorio Emmanuele II (King of Italy, 1861 - 1878).



Vittorio Emmanuele II – 20 Lire Coin.

Agnolotto is a typical Piedmontese pasta which is mentioned in a book of Piedmontese cookery first published in 1798, It takes the form of a small, pinched packet, *agnolotti del plin*. This is usually filled with a mixture of meat, soft cheese and herbs and may often be served in a meat broth.



Agnolotti del plin.

A specific recipe was dedicated to Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, [First Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Italy, March to June 1861], by the chef at a renowned Turin restaurant, *Del Cambio*, regularly frequented by Cavour.



Camillo Cavour Paolo Filippo Giulio Benso, Count of Cavour, Isolabella and Leri, (1861).

Antonio Ciseri (1821 - 1891). Museo Nazionale Risorgimento Italiano, Turin.



Ristorante Del Cambio, Turin, (Established 1757).

Secondi Piatti. Red wine features strongly in braised meat dishes along with beef (usually brisket or shin), guinea fowl, rabbit, hare, pheasant, or duck. The latter two may also be found in recipes using white wine, as also are quail and chicken. Interestingly Marsala is deployed in classic Piedmontese dishes of veal scallops and also kidneys or chicken livers. Trout baked in red wine with anchovy fillets and

herbs is also encountered. There are many meat-free dishes involving regional cheeses.

Dolci. Pears poached in red wine and peaches baked with Marsala frequent Piedmontese restaurant menus. Locally grown hazelnuts and walnuts provide the basis for a variety of cakes, often including chocolate as a sauce or an ingredient.

Bönet (aka *Bunet*, aka *Bonèt*), [a soft cap in Piedmontese dialect; from the French *bonnet*], is a rich chilled chocolate pudding including amaretti, strong black coffee, and sometimes rum. In *Bönet Giallo*, vanilla replaces the coffee and the cocoa.



Bönet.

Giandua or *gianduja* (aka *giandoja* in Piedmontese) is a blend of chocolate with hazelnut paste, devised in Turin at a time of shortage of cocoa arising from the trade constraints of The Continental System imposed by Napoleon from 1806 to 1814: this had particular impact in Piedmont which Napoleon had annexed to France as a Préfecture of the French Empire from 1802 to 1814. *Giandua* takes its name from the Commedia dell'Arte marionette representative of the archetypal

Piedmontese inhabitant. *Gianduia* can be consumed in the form of bars or as a filling for chocolates.



Gianduia (aka Giandoja).

The idea of a chocolate-coated ice cream on a stick was conceived in 1939 in the laboratory of *Gelateria Pepino*, founded by a Neapolitan *gelataio* Domenico Pepino in Turin in 1884, and named “*Il Pinguino*”.



Il Pinguino.



***Gelateria Pepino
Piazza Carignano, Turin.***

OUR FEATURED GRAPES

Erbaluce



Since the seventeenth century, Erbaluce has largely been grown in the Northeastern corner of Alto Piemonte, known as the Canavese. *Erba* means grass and *luce* means light, and Erbaluce yields grassy flavour with good acidity and minerality (sometimes compared to a Chenin Blanc). In the valley commune of Caluso, which is its ideal home, Erbaluce is made into both a spumante, a dry white wine, and a passito.

Arneis



Arneis has perhaps lived in the shadow of Nebbiolo even more than other Piedmont grapes. In the past, it was grown alongside Nebbiolo vines as bait for birds, who were more attracted to it than Nebbiolo. Nowadays, it is grown solely for its own sake, and has an increasing global reputation for its combination of fruit, smoke and white flower, with an attractive creaminess. It reaches its peak in the rolling hills of Roero in the northeast of Cuneo province. It demands great care and constant attention from wine-makers, being particularly vulnerable to pests, and can be “flat” if left even for a few days too long on the vine.

Timorasso



Timorasso and its saviour, Walter Massa.

Grown primarily in the southeast corner of Piedmont, Timorasso is now regarded as perhaps the most promising white wine grapes in Piedmont, and in all of Italy. It was once quite common, but was driven almost to extinction in the 1980s by vulnerability to oxidation, asynchronous maturation, fussiness, and the cult of Nebbiolo. Now it exemplifies what can be achieved with careful attention to the methods and conditions required to achieve its highest possible quality. It yields wines which are slightly tannic, honeyed, and spiced, with traces of tangelo.

Pelaverga Piccolo



This is another local grape that has been grown since at least the 17th century, but almost became extinct from living in the shadow of Nebbiolo. The revival began in 1972, and now it is widely recognised as producing a light, crisp, and immensely drinkable, low-alcohol red wine - produced in the heart of Barolo country.

Dolcetto



Dolcetto is perhaps the third of the Big Three Reds in Piedmont (after Nebbiolo and Barbera). It is grown in Alba, Asti, and a few other regions, but reaches its greatest expression between Alba and the coast, particularly in Dogliani. *Dolcetto* means “little sweet one”, and the grape is certainly sweet, but the wine itself is bone-dry. Dolcetto has perhaps been regarded as an “easy drinking” wine (comparisons with Beaujolais are perhaps not entirely inappropriate), but in Dogliani it has been shown to produce plush, well-balanced, wines with a soft fruitiness and subtle tannins.

Barbera



Barbera has played second-fiddle to Nebbiolo for years, being the most widely-planted, but not the most respected, grape in Piedmont. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that with proper care and attention, Barbera is capable of producing fantastic wines, comparable to great Nebbiolo in quality, but lower in price. Compared to the latter, Barbera is less tannic, more fruit-forward, and less age-worthy. The three most prominent areas for Barbera are Asti (which is perhaps the prime Barbera area), Alba and Monferrato. Nizza (in the Asti region) produces perhaps the best Barbera, and has been granted its own Barbera-specific DOCG.

Brachetto



Brachetto produces a rosy alternative to Moscato d'Asti. At only 5.5% alcohol, it produces a sweet and lightly sparkling pink wine, ideal for accompanying desert. It was greatly popular in the 19th century, but near became extinct due to phylloxera. As with several of the other grapes we are featuring, its comeback began in the 1980s, in this case near the town of Acqui Termini.

**Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG, Ferrando, 2021,
ABV 12.5%.**



Luigi Ferrando.

- Grape:** 100% Erbaluce.
- Soil:** Silico-aluminium-alkaline type, derived from glacial moraine of Monte Rosa. Prevalent sand, with little lime, mixed with stones and round, smooth pebbles.
- Viticulture:** 35 year old vines grown in 4 hectare Torrazza vineyard in municipal district of Borgomasino.
- Harvest:** Hand harvested selection of the best grapes in late September/early October.
- Vinification:** Grapes were soft pressed and fermented in temperature-controlled steel vats. Bottle-aged before release.
- Character:** Bright, straw yellow colour. Floral, fresh apple and aromatic herbal flavours on the nose. Fresh but full bodied and balanced between the fruit, the alcohol and the acidity. Good length.
- Food pairing:** Antipasti, vegetable bisques, seafood, poultry.

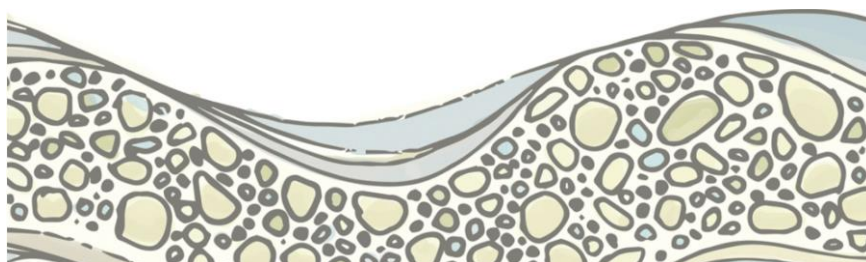
Roero Arneis DOCG, Bricco delle Ciliegie, Giovanni Almondo, 2022, ABV 13.5%.



Vigna del Bricco delle Ciliegie Comune di Montà.

Grape: 100% Arneis.

Soil: 8 hectare, East/South-West facing hillside vineyard at 340 to 370 metres ASL. Soil of marine origin is 60% sand, 25% mineral-rich clay, 15% limestone.



Acidic sand mixed with veins of clay.

Viticulture: 35 year old vines, Guyot trained with vertical shoot positioning.

Vinification: Grapes are held in a new temperature controlled environment prior to pressing. 95% of the must undergoes 7 months ageing in stainless steel vats; 5% is aged in non-toasted French oak barriques.

Character: Distinct, intense aromatic flavours, of orange blossom, and jasmine on the nose and the palate.

Food pairing: Antipasti of smoked meats such as bresaola, or fish.



La Famiglia Almondo - Località Vittori di Montà.

Timorasso Derthona Colli Tortonesi DOC, “La Colomba”, 2021, ABV 14%.



Monreale.

Grape: 100% Timorasso.

Soil: 23 hectares half devoted to vineyards and the rest to corn and peaches. Light and dark clay soil with patches of *tufa* at 250 metres ASL.



Light and dark clay.



Tufa.

Viticulture: 23 year old vines. No herbicides are employed; only copper and sulphur fungicides are used.

Harvest: Hand harvested.

Vinification: Refined on its lees without malolactic conversion in stainless steel tanks for 9 months. Low addition of sulphites before bottling.

Character: Gold straw colour. Robust balance provides for a long-lived wine with capacity for ageing and

evolving characteristics over time. Early crisp, herbal flavours of ripe peach, apricot, acacia and hawthorn; 3 to 4 years in bottle leads to later development of mineral elements and hazelnuts on the finish.

Food pairing: Well-matched with the local Tortonese Montébore mixed cow's and ewe's milk cheese, and/or the salami of Giarolo.



Montébore.



Salame Nobile del Giarolo.



Elisa Semino, “La Regina di Timorasso” [second from right], and family.

Verduno Pelaverga DOC, Bel Colle, 2022, ABV 14%.



Borgo Castagni vineyard on border between Verduno and La Morra.

Grape: 100% Pelaverga Piccolo.

Soil: Clay and limestone with veins of chalk. West-facing exposure, cool climate and altitude.



Limestone.

Oenologists: Luca Bosio and Mario Albrito.

Viticulture: Low-impact. Vineyards worked by hand. Grass and leguminous plants between the rows of vines. Organic fertilisation avoiding systemic herbicides. Pests are controlled by pheromone traps deploying sexual confusion.

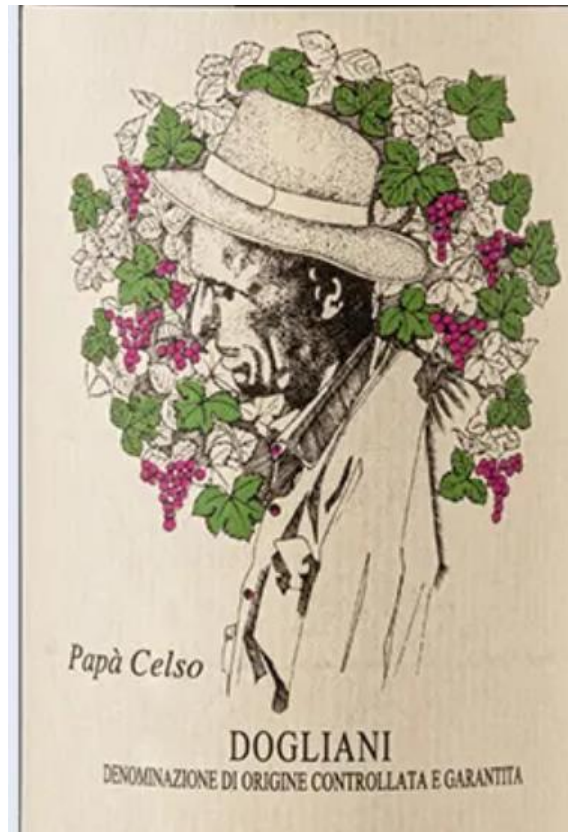
Harvest: Manual harvest of selected bunches.

Vinification: Bunches are de-stemmed and fermentation proceeds in stainless steel tanks employing selected yeasts. For 6 to 8 days during maceration there is gentle pumping over. The must is aged for 6 months on its lees.

Character: A ruby colour is well-matched with red fruits, cherries and plums on the nose followed by spices. On the palate there is a fresh acidity and balanced velvety feel, and white peppery spiced finish.

Food pairing: Equally in tune with *antipasti* of cured meats, *primi piatti* containing mushrooms, *secondi piatti* of roast meat dishes, grilled vegetables, and also aged cheeses.

Dolcetto Dogliani DOCG, “Papà Celso”, Azienda Agricola di Abbona Marziano, 2022, ABV 14%.



Brico Doriolo vineyard.



Marziano Abbona.

Grape: 100% Dolcetto. Vines of average age 63 years.

Soil: Brico Doriolo vineyard. 6.50 hectares on a 10% gradient at 360 to 410 metres ASL. Prevalent sun exposure is South-West. Soil is 40% loam,

35% clay, 25% sand. Thin, sporadic layers of sandstone (“Langhe Stone”).

Viticulture: 5,000 vines *per* hectare. EU organic certified.

Harvest: Yield of 70 quintals [100 kg] *per* hectare.

Vinification: Following crushing and destemming fermentation with indigenous yeasts proceeds for 22 days in stainless steel tanks at controlled temperatures not exceeding 30⁰ to 31⁰ C. The must is then racked into stainless steel tanks and stabilised at cold temperatures to avoid use of clarifying agents. Malolactic fermentation occurs. The 2021 vintage was bottled in March 2022 and rested at a constant 14⁰ C for 3 months before release.

Character: Pitch-purple in the glass. Lively, fresh, pure fruit on the nose. Plum and black cherry on the palate with deep, velvety tannins, good length, and bitter almond finish. Will age well over 5 years more.

Food pairing: Agnolotti del plin, white meats, mildly-aged cheeses.



Robiola di Roccaverano DOP.

**Michele Chiarlo “La Court” Nizza Riserva DOCG,
2017, ABV 14%.**



Label design - Giancarlo Ferraris.

Artistic Director of Art Park La Court.

- Grape:** 100% Barbera.
- Soil:** 3 hectare vineyard at 240 metres ASL with South/South-West exposure. “Astiane Sands”. Calcareous clay marl of sedimentary marine origin, rich in magnesium.
- Oenologist:** Stefano Chiarlo.
- Viticulture:** Planted 1976. 5,000 vines *per* hectare.
- Harvest:** Long summer with very little rain. Delayed thinning of excess bunches leaving only 5 or 6 bunches *per* vine. Manual harvest 10 days earlier than usual.

- Vinification:** 15 days fermentation in 55 hectolitre oak vats with soft showering of the cap at 27⁰ to 30⁰ C. Malolactic fermentation. 30 months maturation: 50% in barriques, 50% in large barrels for 1 year, followed by 18 months in bottle before release.
- Character:** Purple with brilliant ruby hues in the glass
Intense, elegant nose with notes of black cherry, cocoa and coffee. Elegant, excellent velvety structure with long, silky finish.
- Food pairing:** *Tajarin* (aka *tagliolini*) with porcini or wild rabbit sauce, roast veal, mature cheese such as Bra d'Alpeggio DOP, or Toma Piemontese DOP



Bra d'Alpeggio DOP.



Toma Piemontese DOP.

**Brachetto d'Acqui, “*Braida*” di Giacomo Bologna
DOCG, 2022, ABV 5.5%.**



Rocchetta Tanaro.



Giuseppe and Raffaella Bologna.

- Grape:** 100% Brachetto.
- Soil:** Medium textured soil: equal proportions of clay and sand. 56 hectares of hilly vineyard with sunny exposure at 160 metres ASL. Continental climate: temperature range from - 10⁰ C to +35⁰ C.
- Vinification:** Temperature-controlled maceration and fermentation in stainless steel tanks for 36 to 48 hours. The *prise de mousse* is achieved by the Martinotti/Charmat method. Period of bottle-aging.
- Character:** Light ruby colour in the glass with lively, persistent beads. On the nose there is an aromatic, ripe red fruit and rose fragrance.

To the palate there is a delicate sweetness with lingering raspberry/strawberry fruitiness.

Food pairing: An apt partner for typical Piedmontese hazelnut and chocolate combinations, or a mid-afternoon selection of *piccola pasticceria artigianale*.



Confetteria Pasticceria Pfatisch, Turin.

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