

La Spinetta One Liter Club, for the real wine lover...



Newsletter April 2010

Finally Spring

The winter is over, trees are blossoming and nature is waking up from a long slumber. That means that also at La Spinetta the busy work in the vineyards has begun again.

Last week many hands were necessary to pluck all the weeds from underneath the vines so that they can put all their energy into growing healthy leaves and luscious grapes to be harvested at the end of the summer.

Spring is our favorite time of year, to see nature and the vineyards coming back to life. Fresh green, blue skies and crisp air. The only disadvantage Spring has compared to the Fall is that there are no white truffles!

Bruno, Carlo and Giorgio Rivetti and the La Spinetta Team

A word from Giorgio



When we think about great quality wines, we think about a wonderful bouquet, an amazing long lasting taste and a bottle that we can forget in the cellar for years and after rediscovering and opening it, finding that all the flavors are even more stunning.

Unfortunately these kind of wines are not easy to make, but involve a great effort in the vineyards and later in the cellar and therefore end up having a price that is beyond our everyday wine-drinking budget.

But also with our everyday wines, we should aim for quality and while we think about quality and price first, we also have to think about our health. Today, in most wealthy countries, consumers luckily have become much more health-conscious regarding food. More and more processed food is viewed critically and we seek out fresh, natural produce and ingredients, if possible made without the use of chemicals. For wine, we should do exactly the same. We should seek to drink wines that are not full of chemicals, products that were added during the grape-growing process or later during the winemaking in the cellar.

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Unfortunately, the consumer is usually provided with very limited information on how a wine was made. By looking at the label of a bottle on the shelf, it is impossible to gather information on the real content of the wine. One would have to really know the producer in order to make a judgement.

Of course one can buy “organically made” or “biological” wines, but even then very little information is given, and some producers use these terms more for marketing and sales reasons than for an implementation in their wine-making philosophy.

At La Spinetta we are proud to grow grapes and make wine as natural as possible.

The list of chemical products that wine producers worldwide can use in the vineyards and in the cellar is extensive. Some old-world countries, like Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland and Italy, have certain legal restrictions. The majority of new world countries however have almost no restrictions at all.

Generally speaking, the cheaper a wine is produced the more chemical products are necessary. When aiming to save money throughout the winemaking process, one needs to use chemicals to make up for the lack of attention or mistakes in the process. The result of this attitude in “winemaking” is a wine that is for the most part artificially made.

If the shelf price for a wine is € 5,00 or € 6,00 or under, the producer is left with € 3,00 to € 2,00 or less to make it. Under these conditions consumers should expect a wine not only of low quality but also a wine that is unhealthy to drink.

So instead of worrying whether a well-made wine has too much alcohol (14% or 14,5% alcohol), that one might think unhealthy, one should be concerned about the chemicals in a bottle of a cheap wine which are truly health damaging!

Giorgio, the farmer

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List of chemicals legally and commonly used in the wine making process in Italy, but **not used** at La Spinetta:

In the vineyard	In the cellar
FUNGHICIDI (to kill fungus): Product names: PROPINED, MANCOZEB, ZIRAM, FOLPET, BENLAXIL, PROCYMIDONE, VINCLOZOLIN, QUINOXYFEN, FENARIMOL, TRIADIMENOL, AZOXYSTROBIN	Potassium Sorbate (E202) Sorbic Acid (E200) Additional Tartaric Acid (naturally occurring in wine) Additional Tannins Calcium Carbonate (chalk or lime)
INSETTICIDI (to kill insects): Product names: METHOMIL, PIRIMICARB, CHIORPIRIFOS, FENITROTHION	Potassium Carbonate Anthocyanine (E163 – antioxidant) Active Coal Perfumed Active Coals
DISERBANTI (to kill weed and grass): Product names: GLYFOSATE, TRIMESIO	Potassium Ferrocyanide (fungicide) Metatartaric Acid Gum Arabic
Chemical fertilizers: Product names: list of products available is endless	Ammonium Phosphate Ammonium Bicarbonate Polyvinylpyrrolidone, a thickening agent

Interview: speaking with Mats Hanzon

Mats Hanzon is a huge wine lover, exceptional wine connoisseur, journalist from Sweden and, last but not least, a very good friend to La Spinetta. He is a very successful management consultant, whose heart has been with food and wine since 1966. His credentials include the Stockholm Cooking School, work as writer and wine critic for Scandinavia's largest food & wine magazine, former partner in Sweden's largest wine import company and President of Swedish Wine Academy.



Mats, when somebody reads your wine background it quickly becomes quite apparent that you know more about wine than the average

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winemaker, or even people that were literally born amongst vines. Where did this mad passion for wine come from?

My absolutely mad passion for wine comes from attending the City of Stockholm cooking school in the 60s, it was me and 16 elderly ladies trying to fight our way through robust Swedish cuisine and French fine cooking. I had the task of sourcing the wines to be drunk with the food we prepared and found the glorious world of wine!

You are especially mad, please excuse the re-use of the word, about Italian wines. When did you discover your love for Piemonte wines, and what makes Piemonte wines more special than wines from other regions?

I adore Italian wines and have applauded Italy's great winemakers since a long time ago. It is the world's most interesting wine country with exciting wines bursting out of many regions, particularly Piemonte where I find the friendly battle between the lovely traditionally styled wines and the new fruit-driven masterpieces very interesting.

Obviously somebody like you, who over the years has built his passion for wine even into his work life, leads a private life that is long determined by his passion. In what way has your passion influenced your family? For example, when having a nice meal together do you all talk about the wine in front of you? Does your family still give you anything else but bottles of wine for birthday and Christmas gifts?

Needless to say, my wife Eva and our three sons Viggo, Theo and Odd cannot help being involved in my passion for wine since wine is always present in our homes. All the family enjoys not only the wines but the whole meal which we have tried to make into an important meeting point, a time for fun and enjoyment and yes, we talk about food and wine and the lovely crazy people who make them. Last week our oldest son turned 30 and all the wines we drunk were from the 1980 vintage, including Don Perignon 1980 on a magnum!

My family believes that the wine cellar is big enough; Daddy does not need anymore bottles. So all I get for Christmas is socks and underwear!

Do you expect your sons and one day your grandchildren to carry on with your passion?

At least two of our sons are actively interested in wine and I can only hope that they will have us much fun as I have had amongst the great wines of this world and of wonderful people who make them.

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How does a wine lover like you plan his holiday? Do you at all care if the hotel has a spa, a golf course or an ocean view? Or do you ask for the hotel's wine list in advance and research the local restaurants in its vicinity with the same motive prior to making a reservation? Is a luxury vacation on a tropical island an option for you, or do you much rather prefer to stay at a nice B&B in a wine region?

Funny you ask; I am actually a partner in L'Hotel de Beaune as well as the Restaurant Bistro de L'Hotel in Burgundy. So for vacation I turn my nose towards Beaune or our house in Italy, where we also have a nice wine cellar now filled with our favorite Piemonte wines. We are also partners in the Hedges Winery in Columbia valley, Washington State, USA, which apart from great wines also have nice accommodation overlooking the Red Mountain appellation. Sandy and sunny beaches are probably very nice but I prefer to get lost in a good wine cellar somewhere!

With your passion is it possible to stay friends with people that are wine-ignorant? If so, what bottle of wine do you open when getting together?

Most of our friends are passionate about wine and food so the problem does not really exist. If somebody is ignorant enough not to like i.e. 1999 Staderi I simply serve them the Valeirano 1999 instead! And if that's not good enough, I will probably ask them to leave and take an empty half bottle and put it up somewhere where the sun don't shine!

On the contrary, what does an evening look like, when you get together with friends, that share your passion for grape juice?



An evening with friends would most likely start with grape juice with lots of bubbles in it. A great Champagne, preferably a blanc de blanc from Guy Charlemagne or Gaston Chiquet or even a mature Franciacorta from Ca' del Bosco. Equipped with nice bubbly our guests would probably gather around the kitchen island for a few nibbles, then grab a few glasses of different white wines to go with Swedish fish at the table. The game bird will be accompanied by some Piemonte wines plus a few cheeses. Finally, my wife Eva would do a light dessert to accompany a lovely Moscato d'Asti or Ramandolo. Really good espresso and a Grappa would finalize a rewarding evening and then we send them all back home by taxi.

Can you roughly describe the dimension and content of your private wine cellar? Or do you even have more than just one?

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Can you roughly describe the dimension and content of your private wine cellar? Or do you even have more than just one?

Yes, I had the privilege of collecting wines since I was 18 years old. To be absolutely sure that we will never run dry of wine, we have cellars in Stockholm, on our island in the Stockholm Archipelago and at the house in Mondaino, Italy. In the early days I promised myself to drink every wine I have collected, but now at the age of 64 I realize I have to give it up, much to the satisfaction of our three sons!

The cellars are basically equipped with wines from all over the great world of wines, but I have to admit that the large part is wines from Italy and France and there is lots of them.

When you meet with winemakers like you meet with Giorgio, are they all impressed by your wine knowledge or do they sometimes feel even a little intimidated?

First of all let me confess that I get as much pleasure out of meeting the winemakers as I get out of drinking their superb wines. Some of them are not all that interested in tasting other peoples' wines which means they don't have a wider tasting experience like I have, tasting over 4000 wines a year from every corner of the world. But with Giorgio it's different because he is always as curious about any wine from anywhere as I am and we have so much fun digging into the cellars as well as doing barrel tastings at the winery.

I have the humble impression that winemakers respect my nose and palate since it has been around a few wines for over 40 years!

How many winemakers can you call your friends?

I believe I have at least 20 wine making friends that I have the privilege of calling my friends, friends that make wonderful wines and share my happy respectful attitude to wine.

Vinitaly 2010 just ended. Is the time of the fair still a very exciting time for you? Did you make any new discoveries?

This year, I actually missed visiting Vinitaly for the first time in over 20 years, mainly due to the 30th birthday that I mentioned before. Vinitaly is the best wine show in the world because everybody from the producer side is there; it is the most complete manifestation of any wine country in my opinion. Viva Italia!

From a wine-lover's point of view, it seems that you already live the dream life. Is there anything left that you dream about and would like to realize in the future?

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Yes, I have been very fortunate in my wine life and had the opportunity of tasting an abundance of exciting wines and meeting their wonderful producers, but if I did not have any wine dreams left I would probably drop dead right now!

No, I am still dying to get to taste Giorgio's 2009 wines which I understand will be outstanding, I will always look forward to my annual meeting with my friend Ferran Adria at the El Bulli Restaurant north of Barcelona to explore hilarious wine pairings with his beautifully bizarre food. I would love to see somebody like Giorgio to challenge the potentially great Arneis grape variety and take it to its full potential. And I would love to expand our small hotel and restaurant in Beaune into a group of such pleasure units into other wine areas i.e. Piemonte. I can dream of such a delightful place in La Morra overlooking the vineyards of Piemonte and having a few glasses of Barolo and Barbaresco with you in the afternoon sun. And so on...

Michael Skurnik, owner and managing director of Michael Skurnik wines NY will be answering our questions in the next newsletter.

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Barolo Campe Vine: work in the vineyard

We are planning to follow a vine from our Barolo Campe vineyard for a year, in order to show you the development of the plant as well as to explain the work that we are doing in each phase to this Barolo vine, and to any other red variety plant, that we cultivate.



This photos was taken on:
February 1st



March 1st



April 1st

Snow and rainfall in February usually prevent us from being able to go into the vineyards. By the end of February we start pruning the vines. We cut all the new shoots except one which is selected as the strongest and most vigorous-looking one.

All the cut branches are removed and burned at the side of the vineyard. The ashes are left there for natural fertilization. This year at the beginning of March it snowed once more, we therefore delayed the staking of the remaining shoot to the middle of March. Staking means that we secure the vine along a wire. This process requires experience and skill, as the shoot might be rigid and can easily break when being bent and moved along the wire.

At the beginning of April the ground is full life and the vine ready to start with its new life cycle.

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A Summer in Piedmont, there is actually more to this region, than just food and wine...



breadsticks.

A summer in Piemonte brings you outside. The ritual aperitivo, the early evening drink to refresh yourself after the hot afternoon sun or whet your appetite before dinner, now is often held outdoors. You meet up with your friends and neighbours at the little tables set up outside your local bar, drinking a cool glass of Langhe Bianco or Moscato d'Asti while the bar offers a board of small antipasti – pieces of creamy tomino or savoury raschera cheese, fresh salami spiced with pepper and nutmeg or a taste of insalata russa, served with the typical grissini

As the evening settles, you discuss the events of the day and make plans for the weekend: maybe you will go to visit a music festival – there are many outdoor concerts during the summer, in Alba and the villages scattered through the Langhe region. Well worth the visit is the annual Jazz Festival at Monforte d'Alba. The old medieval town quarter of this Barolo wine village clings to a steep hilltop, crowned with a tower, beneath which a natural amphitheatre offers a stunning setting for top-class jazz musicians. You can enjoy a glass of wine while listening to great music and watching the sunset colour the mountains and the stars rise over the hills and vineyards. Other towns offer blues, pop, folk and classical concerts throughout the summer months. Also film festivals are held, such as the Short Film Festival held in the town of Bra at the end of June.



During the day, the hills of the Langhe invite for walks among the vineyards and hazelnut groves. The hills also attract a colourful bunch of cyclists (street- and mountain bike), hikers, horse-back riders and motorcycle enthusiasts, that enjoy the winding roads and the stunning scenery of vineyards before the backdrop of the mighty Alps.



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The mountains encircling Piemonte are famous for winter sport, but also in the summer offer many things to do for the outdoor enthusiast – hiking, biking and also climbing opportunities abound. The region is famous for mountain sports in all forms, from climbing rock faces to leisurely strolls along softly rolling hills.

Not far from the Langhe are two wonderful Alpine national parks, the Gran Paradiso National Park, known for its wealth of flora and fauna, and Val Grande National park, known for its wide variety of hiking trails.



Of course there is still the food...

If all this activity has given you a good appetite, maybe visit one of the gastronomic festivals in the area, such as the snail festival of Cherasco, the frittata alle erbette festival of San Benedetto Belbo or the festival of the carne all'albese in Benevello. Or maybe just a stroll across one of the colourful farmers' markets that are a weekly fixture in every town – on Saturdays in Alba, Tuesdays in Dogliani or Wednesdays in Asti, for example.

You will be able to pick up fresh cherries from the Roero, local chestnut honey, boar salami and toma cheese, along with your seasonal fruits and vegetables. There are many other reasons to explore the towns and villages of the region, for example the sumptuous baroque churches that adorn even the smallest villages in Piemonte.

Of course there is still the wine...

And not least, the summer is an ideal time to stop by your favourite wine producer to see how the vintage is coming along this year...

Cooking Piemontese with Giovanna Rivetti



Giovanna Rivetti was born in 1947. She is our "vineyard manager" and our "in-house chef". She learned the work in the vineyard from her father and the work in the kitchen from her mother. Both parents taught Giovanna skills which until today are great assets to La Spinetta.

In each newsletter Giovanna will share one of her secret recipes with us.

Today she is teaching us how to make Piemonte's famous Vitello Tonnato, cold veal roast with



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tuna sauce. This classic antipasti is a bit tricky to prepare, but following Giovanna's recipe, very rewarding. You will need the following ingredients to make Vitello Tonnato for 10 people (minimum portion and size of meat in order to roast meat to a perfect rose color): 1,2 kg topside of veal, 50 gr butter, 50 gr anchovies in oil, 30 gr salted capers, some rosemary, 35 gr of canned tuna, 0,75 l Lidia Chardonnay, 150 gr mayonnaise, 20 gr lemon juice.

Thoroughly tie meat together with a thread. Then slowly roast it with butter in a frying pan on low temperature. Add the capers and rosemary to the meat, as well as the oil of the anchovies. As soon as the meat has taken some color, add a glass of Lidia and continue to cook for 30 minutes. Keep turning the meat so that the inner part will remain pink. Let the meat cool down with the lid on the pan.

For the magic sauce:

Use the remaining liquids from the meat and add it together with the tuna and the anchovies into a blender. Blend everything to a fine sauce. Add mayonnaise, lemon juice.

Whatever is left of Lidia Chardonnay perfectly pairs with this dish.

Buon appetito!

One Liter Club – first release!

It is time for the first edition of One Liter Wines to leave our cellars. We have now released the Barbera Gallina 2007, Barbera Bionzo 2007 and Pin 2007 bottled in the special one liter format available in limited amounts exclusively for the members of our One Liter Club.

Club members who have taken advantage of this special offer and who have reserved some of these limited number of bottles will be able to receive their wines either shipped directly to their homes, or ready to be picked up at the winery at their convenience.

The one liter format is actually not a completely new idea – it was a common format in Piemonte a few decades ago, before the standardisation for international trade took over and made the 0.75lt bottle the norm. A liter of a good wine evokes the spirit of conviviality so typical for Piemonte, as you invite your friends or family to sit around a table and share some good food and an excellent wine to go with it.

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Not only that – a larger bottle has even technical advantages: like the magnum bottles for champagne, the ratio of wine to the oxygen trapped between the cork and the liquid is bigger, allowing for a more gradual ageing process. Seeing that we chose an exceptional vintage for our first One Liter edition, you will be able to keep the wine for quite a while – unless of course you are tempted to try it soon! Wine is after all for drinking, not only keeping in the cellar.

The second round of One Liter wines – Barbaresco Gallina 2007, Barbaresco Stardi 2007, Barbaresco Valeirano 2007 and Barolo Campé 2006 needs a little more rest in our cellars but will be ready to be released in the fall of 2010. If you are interested in making a reservation on any of these wines, please send us an email.

One Liter Club event: "one day hands-on at La Spinetta"...



Spring has only recently arrived, and our vines are just beginning to sprout their first tender leaves, but we are already thinking about the harvest – and with that the visit of our One Liter Club members to La Spinetta!

On September 4, a group of One Liter Club members will join us for the One Day Hands-On Event at La Spinetta. Our visitors will be able to experience a harvest day at the winery. In the morning, we will harvest Moscato grapes together – after a small lesson by Giorgio, Giovanna and Marco, because harvesting grapes is a



work that needs skill and attention, so that the grapes arrive at the winery in perfect condition. In the afternoon, after a picnic in the vineyards with La Spinetta wines from Tuscany, our visitors will learn first-hand how to make Moscato d'Asti by crushing and pressing the grapes and fermenting them in the closed autoclave tanks.

The day will be rounded off by a Piemontese dinner with La Spinetta Piemontese wines. During the dinner, we will also hold a blind tasting with La Spinetta and other wines.

We are looking forward to welcome our One Liter Club members in Piemonte.



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Events

Where you can find us traveling the world:

Country	City	Date	Day	Event
USA	San Francisco	May 18th	Tuesday	
USA	Los Angeles	May 19th	Wednesday	wine maker dinner with Giorgio Rivetti
USA	San Diego	May 20th	Thursday	
USA	San Diego	May 21st	Friday	
USA	Austin, TX	May 24th	Monday	
USA	Dallas, TX	May 25th	Tuesday	
USA	Seattle, WA	May 26th	Wednesday	
USA	Seattle, WA	May 27th	Thursday	
Czech Republic	Prag	June 10th	Thursday	wine maker dinner with Giorgio Rivetti
Czech Republic	Prag	June 11th	Friday	wine maker dinner with Giorgio Rivetti
Switzerland		June 15th	Tuesday	wine maker dinner with Giorgio Rivetti
Switzerland		June 16th	Wednesday	

for further information please contact Anja acramer@la-spinetta.com

Anything new at La Spinetta

No machinery allowed!:

The best part of the Campe vineyard, where we make our Barolo Campe Riserva, stays machine-free from the 2010 vintage onwards!

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Giorgio has decided that from this vintage onwards, no tractors and other machinery will be allowed in the upper part of the Campe vineyard, the one with the oldest vines and the best south exposure. He will abandon tractors and mechanized equipment because he does not want any heavy machines to put pressure on the ground. Less pressure means that the soil is looser and more aerated, which allows a healthier growth for the vines, as well as greatly reducing the possibility of soil erosion in that rather steep part of Campe.



The work done by machine and tractor is now replaced by hands and horse. In March Giorgio ploughed the vineyard with Pippo, La Spinetta's Belgian work horse, and any other work is now done on foot and by hand. Even the tricky work of spraying copper on the leaves as protection against mildew (something one cannot do without especially in a wet spring like this year) is now done with a long hose and on foot and no longer by tractor and spraying machine. Depending on the humidity level of a season, it may be necessary to spray copper once or twice a week during the growing stage of the vines, which gives you an idea about the intensity of this work, if done by hand.

Without mechanization, we have to use old-fashioned tools for the vineyard work: The grass around the vines has to be cut with a scythe, and we use a hoe to agitate the soil underneath the vines, to remove weeds and allow the soil to breathe.

Needless to say, all this effort can only be done on a small scale and not on all 100 hectares (250 acres) of vineyard that La Spinetta cultivates. We therefore chose the best part of the Campe vineyard from which since 2001 we have been making our Magnum Riserva Barolo Campe.

Unfortunately one has to be extremely patient in order to see the result of our efforts, as the Magnum Riserva Barolo Campe 2010 will not be released before 2019!

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Your opinion on...

Black truffles that taste like white truffles? White truffle taste all year around? The use of truffle oil in the kitchen makes all this possible, but what the majority of people does not know:

The aroma of truffle oil is not born in the earth. Most commercial truffle oils are concocted by mixing olive oil with one or more compounds like 2,4-dithiapentane (the most prominent of the hundreds of aromatic molecules that make the flavor of white truffles so exciting) that have been created in a laboratory; their one-dimensional flavor is also changing common understanding of how a truffle should taste.

A few more expensive oils are alleged to be made from truffles or the by-products of truffle harvesting and production, though in reality the flavor of truffles is nearly impossible to capture in an oil.

What is your opinion on using this artificial truffle taste?

If you like to share your thoughts and opinion with us and would like to have them published in our next newsletter, please write to myopinion@la-spinetta.com



Your comments to our question in October's Newsletter:

What characterizes in your opinion a good sommelier? And what do you expect from him/her? Do you think some sommeliers are too much, or you feel that they want to sell you something rather than giving advice? Write us your good or bad experience with this special trade!

"I have had the privilege of eating in many restaurants, professionally and privately. In my experience, sommeliers usually make a helpful and welcome contribution to a meal. Knowing the wines and the menu, they are able to match wines to the food, as well as our mood (and budget!) I have rarely felt that we were 'upsold', or had an unpleasant surprise when the bill arrived. Mostly, it has been a pleasure to talk to people who know the wines on the winelist well, and who are usually more than happy to share their knowledge."

Anandi Soans, Slow Food International, Melbourne, Australia/ Bra, Italy

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"It is important that the sommelier should be very familiar with the menu and the cooking style of the chef so that he can make his wine recommendations accordingly. Ideally, he should have sampled the core dishes of the menu and the daily specials himself, and especially also tried them in combination with wines. It is an advantage when the chef and the sommelier work well together. The sommelier should know whether the chef sees the wines as harmonic complements to his dishes, or if he is also willing to accept the wine as the main protagonist sometimes, in the case of a more challenging combination of food and wine, for example.

Another important aspect is that the sommelier must be able to quickly get a good understanding of his guest. Is the guest more conservative or willing to experiment, how much experience does he or she have with wine, does he want to impress his friends or business partners with something special (or also with his own knowledge of wine, which the sommelier then should positively acknowledge), and what is his budget. This last point I find very important. A guest for whom the visit to an exclusive restaurant is not a regular occurrence will certainly leave with a bitter aftertaste if he feels that he has been taken advantage of. I myself however have made very few bad experiences of that sort, but I have heard about them quite often.

A fond memory of mine is actually my first encounter ever with a sommelier, on a holiday in Italy, in a small restaurant that we had chanced upon by accident. We were in our early 20s, and it was obvious that we didn't have the budget for expensive wine experiments. The sommelier's recommendation in the end was the house wine (for no more than 8,000 Lire, or about €4), that was excellent and on top of that served to us with as much care as if it was a Grand Cru.

A last comment I would like to make is maybe a bit of an unusual expectation that I have, probably because of my job. It's an expectation however that is in the interest of both the guest and the owner of the restaurant: the sommelier needs to be a good salesman, and be always aware of the cellar stock - wines should be drunk at the very latest at the peak of their development, and not after that point has passed. The sommelier should therefore always know if his cellar contains stock that needs to be reduced through active selling, which also means regular tasting of his wines. That is obviously good for the owner of the restaurant, but also for the guests, who don't have to suffer wines that have gone past their prime. Besides, it will make room for new purchases.

I find it quite useful, by the way, especially if the sommelier is a person I get on well with, to ask him what his personal choice would be with a given dish. Sometimes answers have been surprising, but always faultless."

Birgit Fischer, Enoteca del'Arte, Neuss, Germany