

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



Another year has started...

... the older we get, the faster a year goes by, it seems. One day we celebrate Christmas, the next Easter, in between a couple of birthdays and then it is Christmas again, the last day of the year and the first of the next and then it is starting right from the beginning...

We are so busy that time flies. Our lives are filled with obligations, expectations, goals, challenges, appointments, conferences, objectives, lives on the fast lane, full of stress, no time for anything. Perhaps it is time to rethink and to slow down, to enjoy the moment, with the people that we love, **carpe diem** to all of you and a truly happy new year!

Bruno, Carlo and Giorgio Rivetti and the La Spinetta Team

A word from Giorgio



The future of Barolo and Barbaresco...

For many years Piedmont producers found themselves in a "heavenly" market situation. The world demand on Barolo and Barbaresco was higher than the production. I remember the years 2000 to 2004, where we sometimes didn't want to answer the winery phone anymore. We did not want to turn down people as we were sold out on our Barbaresco and Barolo production.

Selling those wines was all about allocating quantities to existing customers.

To La Spinetta it was always fairly clear that this market situation was only temporary. But unfortunately the wisdom was not shared by most of the other producers. While we continued to make our Crus, the total Barolo and Barbaresco production in Piedmont almost tripled in less than ten years, while the demand on these high-end wines decreased.

Today the "Barolo and Barbaresco heaven" has turned into a

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



Newsletter Winter 2010

fierce competition. While there is only a market for so many bottles of these high-end wines, there is much more wine still being produced. Many winery cellars in Piedmont are stocked with multiple vintages of Barolo and Barbaresco, especially the ones of the small producers, who never really had a chance or missed out to build up a brand and a solid clientele. These producers now try to discount their wine and give special deals, doing great damage the reputation and image of top Piedmont reds.

As a true-blooded Italian it is hard for me to admit, but the French wine producers have handled the decrease in demand of high-end wines much better. For example in Champagne, where the producers rigorously decide on the annual production quantity of all Champagne according to world demand. This secures a fair price and the reputation of the wine.

I have had many discussion with producer colleagues in Piedmont regarding this problem. My advice, which I have expressed in several newspaper interviews, is that we increase the quality of Barolo and Barbaresco, while decreasing the production. A very smart way could be to change the DOCG and include a regulation regarding the age of vines, not allowing Nebbiolo vines younger than 20 years to be used for Barolo and Barbaresco production. This would at once eliminate all the "new" Barolos and Barbaresco that were created during the past ten years. Certainly these wines can still be sold as Langhe Nebbiolo for a price that is in relation to their quality.

So far my idea has found only a few supporters, but I will continue to fight for what I believe is right: an increase of quality, a decrease of production and a justified "high-end" wine image for Barolo and Barbaresco. After all, Barolo was always considered to be the king of Italian reds, and should continue to be received as such!

Giorgio, the farmer

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



Newsletter Winter 2010

Interview: speaking with Jean Pierre Giraud from French barrel maker Taransaud

In 1672, an ancestor of the Taransaud cooper family began to make his first barrels. Originally based in Cognac, and dedicated to producing barrels for the local brandy distilleries, the company today supplies wine barrels to the finest châteaux in Bordeaux and the great domains of Burgundy, and their excellent products are sought after by top wineries all over the world.

Jean-Pierre Giraud is the Managing Director of Taransaud, in our opinion one of the most if not the most prestigious maker of French barrels. Jean-Pierre's work brings him to all the wine regions in the world. Imagining him to be very busy businessman, we appreciate that he is taking the time to answer questions for our OLC newsletter.



Jean-Pierre, not wanting to bore you, but could you just in a couple of words explain the steps of making a barrel?



I have a great passion for wine. So I love to compare wine and barrels because they are very similar. To make wine, there is a recipe, a process, which you can learn at the university. But to make GREAT wines, there is no recipe – just attention to detail and years and years and sometimes many generations of experience. To make great barrels, it is exactly the same.

You need great wood - selected by the best purchasers, exclusively in France; the best splitters to optimize the wood and make the best stave wood as possible; the best seasoning: 100 % in open air; the best cooper team, selecting the tightest grain; full control of the bending for the strength of the barrels, and the best possible toasting to optimize the exchange between wood and

wine.

To realize these objectives, we first prepare the wood, then build the barrels – bend the barrels over an open wood fire, toast the barrels over a different open wood fire, check the inside to be sure there are no blisters, make the chime and bung hole with a crozing machine.

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



Newsletter Winter 2010

Then we put the two heads in place and finally put on the galvanized hoops. We control the watertightness with fully analysed water, and lastly we clean the barrels with sand paper just before making a final quality control and shipping them to wineries.

How long have you been with Taransaud? What exactly is your role in the company? What do you love and dislike the most about your job?

I started 35 years ago. At that time we were only 24 at Taransaud – including 4 in the office, Jean and Gisèle Taransaud, a secretary and myself. At the time, Taransaud was only making barrels for the Cognac industry. In 1977-78, there was a big crisis in Cognac, and we decided in 1978 to diversify our sales and make barrels for wines. I was in charge of the sales department and I started selling barrels in California, then in Bordeaux in 1982 – thank you Mr Parker! I developed the sales in many countries (over 24 today) including, of course, Italy. starting in 1992 with Piedmont - one of my best memories!

Today, I am the commercial director of Chene & Cie, which is an umbrella company grouping Taransaud – 100 % French oak barrels, Canton - 100 % US oak barrels, and Kadar – 100 % Hungarian oak barrels. I am still travelling a lot to help, supervise and motivate the sales force, and more importantly for me, to continue visiting wineries in order to better understand the wine and alcohol industries and their evolution.



I do not like meetings and administrative tasks. I love to taste wine and exchange ideas with winemakers in order to better understand them and to be able to provide them with the appropriate barrels for their wine. A quick story: one day in 1987, a winemaker of St Emilion – classified growth - asked me to come and taste his wine with the prospect of him buying 100 barrels. After the tasting I recommended to him...not buy any barrels, because it would have been too much for his wine. I lost the barrels of course but I won his confidence, which was much more important for me!



Is it true that it is getting more and more difficult to source high-quality French oak? Has the world demand on French oak barrique increased over the past 10 years? If so, how do you see the sourcing problem and demand development for the future?

Yes, it is true that the available quantity of top-class French oak is limited in France and as the demand remains high, the prices of the best wood are always increasing.

By coincidence we had your Sales Representative for the US West Coast visit us two

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



weeks ago. Moke told me, when strolling through our barrique cellar, that more and more US wineries have changed from American to French oak. Why, in your opinion, is the refining of wine in French oak so much superior than the aging in American or Eastern European oak?

No, there is no bad wood or second quality wood. What is important is to use the right wood for the right purpose. The price segment, aging time and final blend are important criteria together with, perhaps most importantly, the type of the wine you want to make.

For example, we prove with Canton, our American oak barrel producer, that when the wood is perfectly seasoned and used with the right variety of wine, it gives fantastic results! And Canton is still establishing itself. One of the best examples is Ridge Montebello - a great wine - which is predominantly made in with American oak barrels.

From experience we know that you are a fantastic taster. Do you believe you have learned to taste or do you think that some of it is a talent that you have been given ?

I have met, and now know very well Olivier Poussier who won Best sommelier of the world 2000, Michel Bethane - one of the best wine writers, and Robert Parker, and I feel very very humble and small compared to these great and fantastic tasters - they are fantastic tasters! - I am not. My luck has been to have had the possibility to travel all around the world for over 25 years and meet the winemakers of greatest wineries and taste the greatest wines with them - it was a unique and fantastic experience... and yes, I believe that you learn by tasting.

When did you start getting familiar with Nebbiolo and Barbera? Do you think these two red Piedmont varieties are very different from the French red varieties, which we assume you were familiar with first?

I discovered Nebbiolo and Barbera in 1992, and I have to say thank you very much to Giorgio who welcomed me one evening in a restaurant in Barolo where I discovered the fantastic wines of Piedmont ... in magnum! Yes, I do think that the varieties of Piedmont are different from the French, and thank God for that! My wish today is to see winemakers in Piedmont, like Giorgio, continuing and working hard to give an identity to their wines and particularly to their terroir and region. Today, in a globalized world, if we want to survive we must be unique. The barrels must enhance the character of the terroir - that is the way we work...and certainly not overwhelm it with a taste of wood!

Giorgio likes to have representatives from barrel producers taste the same wine from different barrique, made by different French coopers, blind. Do you think that this is a good exercise to better understand the right combination of wine, type of wood, toasting, etc? Do you mind being confronted with your competitors in such a way?

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



I love it. I have done that many times, for the first time 25 years ago with Robert Mondavi himself - it was great. I really think it is very important, for two reasons: one, because the barrel is an expensive product, and the most expensive is a bad barrel. Why? Because it can ruin and destroy all the work done before by the winemaker, and there is no return - I mean you cannot start again the wine aging - what is done is done! Secondly, because it shows the coopers that the barrels are evaluated, compared, tested and tasted, and are an important product for the owner.

8. Taransaud has a very long tradition and generally, when people think about barrel-making, they think about one of the most traditional handcrafts. Where today in Taransaud and your profession do we find modern technology and developments? And in the fast-paced world of wine trends...what are the values you are sticking to?

Yes, more and more the work of the cooper is less and less tough, with the help of machines, and this is a positive development. At Taransaud for example we introduced some robots a few years ago. Most of the time, a robot replaces the work of the man - at Taransaud, it is optimizing the work of the workers. Why? Because instead of transferring barrels from spot to spot for different operations this is now done by the robot and it optimizes the work of the cooper who spends less time walking around! Other machines used to croze [cut grooves], sandpaper and so on relieve the cooper from difficult and physically hard work and give him more time to spend on quality control.

9. Many times we receive e-mails from people that would like to buy used barrique. Their aim is not to make wine, but for example to cut the barrel in half and use them to plant flowers and vegetables. Sometimes used barrique end up as bar furniture. We even have a small company in Italy that makes all kinds of furniture from used barrique staves. What is the most bizarre use of barrique that you have come across?

One day I was visiting Sacred Hill, which is a very good winery in New Zealand, and in front of the office there was a beautiful CAR made from an old 225 L barrel! I am sure it is still there!

10. Do you ever drink red wines that have not aged in wood?

Yes of course. But most of the time, when the wood is perfectly integrated, superb and a part of the complexity of the wine, when it enhances the unique characters of the wine, it is a better wine than one with no wood-aging. Be careful, I am talking about wood in general - new and second-hand barrels and casks, round or oval, upright tanks - they all are fantastic tools for talented winemakers. For me the best compliment to the barrels is...when we don't talk about them!

11. And the last question, that we always have to ask: what wine will you take with

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



you, if you have to stay a year on an isolated island?

Very tough question because I tasted and love all the best wines, wherever they come from. I particularly like great Bordeaux and Burgundies, and great Italian wines. I would take several cases of wines – one year is very long - the choice is very difficult !!!!

- one or 2 cases of Petrus 1989
- one or 2 cases of Haut Brion 1989 – my two favorite wines!
- one or 2 cases of La Romanée-Conti 2005

and many cases of wines from Italy – sincerely! - especially from Piedmont, and La Spinetta of course. I am a fan of PIN (a wine with a real identity). I love the style, and I know the story and...the owner! In the wine industry, when you know the story of the wine, and you can put a face on the name of the owner and winemaker - the taste of the wine is very different!

CHEERS !

One Liter Club events in 2011...

Two "Hands On Days" instead of one

While the 2011 events are still in a rough planning stage, we would already like to announce that we have decided to hold two "Hands On Days" in Piedmont in 2011. One will be held on **Saturday, May 7th, 2011**, when we trim the vines and thin out leaves, and one at the beginning of July, when we reduce grape yields by "green harvesting". Of course both events will again be accompanied by great food and wine and lots of "hands-on" experience.

For each event we would like to invite 20 to 25 One Liter Club members. Places are given away on a first come first serve basis. Just like last year a 250,00 Euro deposit is needed to secure a reservation. The deposit will be returned to each participants on the day of the event. We will again arrange for special rates at one of our local top hotels and of course just like last year all wine and food will be on us.

We promise two very exciting, fun and educating "Hands On Days" with Giorgio Rivetti and the entire La Spinetta Team.

To sign up for the May event or to receive further information, please send an e-mail to anke@la-spinetta.com.

We look forward to having you and teaching more "behind the wine" knowledge.

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



Newsletter Winter 2010

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 a typical, yet very simple Piemontese chocolate dessert, called **Bunet**. A delicious treat that makes any chocolate mouse or cake look like diet food.

You will need: 2x50g of sugar, 100g of Amaretti cookies, 3 eggs, 30g of dark cocoa powder, 10ml of good rum, 400ml whole milk, 100ml cream. Baking dishes rectangular or round (be careful not to use a springform, because the pudding is cooked in a water bath), larger roasting pan.



First you need to caramelize 50g of sugar in a Teflon pan. While the sugar is liquid, fill the sugar into the baking dish so that it generously covers the bottom of the dish.

Then crush the Amaretti cookies into little crumbs. Beat the eggs with the other 50g of sugar. Add the cocoa powder, the Amaretti crumbs and the rum. After thorough mixing add milk and cream and stir once more.

Fill the mass into the baking dish with the caramel and heat the oven to 160 degrees Celsius (320

Fahrenheit). Cook the pudding dish in a hot water bath until the pudding turns solid. A good way to prepare a water bath is to put your baking dish with the pudding into a bigger roasting pan, place the pan into the oven, and add enough hot water to reach halfway up the dish. Do not overheat the oven, the pudding should at no time rise and make bubbles. After removing from the oven, let the Bunet cool off and afterwards refrigerate for a minimum of 6 hours before turning the dish over on a large plate and serving.

A Bunet goes very well with a chilled glass of Moscato.

Buon appetito!

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



Newsletter Winter 2010

The orto “Italian vegetable garden”

Taking a regional train through town and country gives you a sort of backstage glimpse of life, not of the representative front doors and welcoming patios but the back of the houses, with the laundry drying on the line and the children’s toys scattered on the lawn. Residents along the train lines naturally turn their back to their noisy neighbor and, if they can, add an extra buffer between them and the tracks with their gardens. In Italy, rather than a manicured lawn it is more likely to see an *orto* or kitchen garden behind the house, with tomatoes and beans ranking up cross-legged bamboo stalks, round cabbages growing next to wispy heads of fennel, and a table and a few chairs set in the shade of a fruit tree, or under a bower ranked over by vines.



The *orto* is an important part in the Italian culture. Every family lucky enough to have a patch of earth to themselves will use it to plant their own vegetables and herbs. City dwellers often resort to allotments scattered around the urban outskirts, or at the very least, try to grow their own fresh herbs in pots on the balconies and window sills.

The food trends of the 1970s and 1980s, when modern convenience food including canned and frozen vegetables became popular and trendy, also took hold in Italy. But as in many other countries, the recent decade has seen a return to fresh, unprocessed flavors – and there is nothing fresher than herbs and vegetables picked outside your kitchen door.

The Italian cuisine abounds with the use of fresh herbs – basil, sage, parsley, rosemary and even thyme and oregano are preferably used fresh rather than dried. Vegetables play also an important role in Italian cooking, fresh or cooked, baked, fried, stuffed, braised or boiled, and not least in the now ubiquitous tomato sauce. It is very common still that families preserve their own tomatoes and tomato sauce, as long with a great variety of other vegetables *sott’olio* or *sott’aceto* – pickled in olive oil or vinegar. In the Winter, these will be used for *antipasti* or as an ingredient for other dishes, from pasta to meat sauces.



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



Newsletter Winter 2010

All around town, little shops and also the larger supermarkets follow the horticultural calendar: with the first warmer days of Spring, houseware and garden shops put racks of seed envelopes outside, a little later also trays with tender young seedlings ready for planting. As the summer draws to a close, the supermarkets offer pickling jars, pickling tongs, funnels and vacuum seals at their changing display section, between the fresh produce and the dairy fridge. Many food magazines and the weekend sections of the newspapers offer tips for how to preserve the homegrown bounty.

Tomatoes are certainly one of the most common crops of the *orto*, as well as lettuce. Other favorites – according to season, region, and available space – range from peas and beans, carrots and cauliflower to pumpkins and potatoes. For many Italians, the link to growing most of their own food is only perhaps a generation away – the great waves of urbanization and internal migration from the poorer South to the industrialized North happened in the 1950s and 1960s, and usually, part of the extended family stayed behind in the countryside, supplying the migrants with their home foods and keeping alive a desire for the flavors of the home garden.



Tending a garden is rewarding, and educational in the best sense: That is why there are also popular school garden programs in Italy, as a way of teaching children about seasonality and the dynamics of Nature, as well as responsibility and prudence – and all efforts are rewarded with flavorful produce.



A homegrown vegetable may look smaller, more unshapely and less shiny than its colleagues in the grocery store, but it will most certainly taste better. Why? Because a homegrown vegetable can be left to ripen to full maturity, getting the most out of sun and soil, and developing its flavor to the maximum. Many vegetables in the grocery stores on the other hand have to travel several, if not hundreds or *thousands* of kilometers from the field to their point-of-sale. It follows logically that they will have been picked before their peak of ripeness, so that they do not spoil before they arrive. Besides, slightly underripe produce is less fragile and travels better.

slightly underripe produce is less fragile and travels better.

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



Home gardeners are also less likely to use great amounts of chemicals on their plants. And not to forget the sweet taste of eating, literally, the fruits of your own efforts!

We at La Spinetta love our ortos and among the Rivetti siblings we hold competitions of who has the best orto with the bigger melons, cauliflowers, egg plants and the better tasting tomatoes or broccoli.

From food to literature: Peasants and partisans: literary portraits of the Langhe...

A contemporary traveller through the Langhe will certainly enjoy the picturesque surroundings. The roads wind through pretty hills, striped with vineyards and dotted with wineries. Little towns nestle on the hilltops, their brick church steeples visible from afar. The terraces of La Morra, Serralunga d'Alba and Dogliani offer stunning views over the undulating landscape, serpentine roads and vine-covered slopes, and on clear days, to the majestic snow-topped Alps encircling the panorama on three sides. In the Fall, the fog wraps its soft fingers around the neat rows of vines, giving its name to their most famous fruit, the nebbiolo. It's a pleasant afternoon's drive through the wine towns of the area, stopping off for tastings at one's favourite wineries, and maybe a lunch of fresh pasta and truffles, when the season is right.

The wine and culinary treasures, and not least the diligent work and dedication of the people of the Langhe, have brought material wealth to the region, mainly through wine business and tourism. It is easy, for today's motorized visitor, to overlook what this geography and climate meant before the economic boom of the 1960s, which brought widespread access to cars and modern technology. Wine, so the saying goes, has to 'work' – it often does better in difficult climates, on poor soils and steep slopes, as it develops character and doesn't ripen too quickly, giving in to the easy temptations of sugar and alcohol. Yet poor soils, steep hillsides, and frequent fog, rain and snow made for harsh living as little as two generations ago. The story of the Langhe in the old days has been described by two important Italian writers, both native sons of the region: Cesare Pavese (1908-1950) of Santo Stefano Belbo, and Beppe Fenoglio (1922-1963) of Alba.

Pavese and Fenoglio are considered part of the Italian Realist literary and artistic movement, which is internationally most widely known through the neorealist cinema – films such as Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945), Vittorio de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) and Giuseppe Santi's *Bitter Rice* (1949). Among the best-known Realist writers of Italy are Carlo Levi (*Christ stopped at Eboli*, 1945) and Giovanni Verga of Sicily, whose book *I Malavoglia*

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



Newsletter Winter 2010

(1881) was made into the film *La Terra Trema* (*The Earth Trembles*, 1948) by Luchino Visconti.

The defining characteristic of Realism in both literature and cinema is a preoccupation with the everyday and banal, an attempt to show life and society as they are, without romanticizing or stylizing them. Realist writers and artists were particularly interested in the life of those people for whom living meant a continual struggle – against destiny and the hardships of life, but also against social circumstances. Thus, the Italian Realists portrayed the peasants of Southern Italy, the working poor of Rome and Florence, and the sharecroppers of Piemonte. To make their depictions even more life-like, their characters often spoke in the local dialect.

A strong influence on Italian Realism was certainly the contemporary American literature. William Faulkner, John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos wrote about the lives of ordinary, hard-working people, sketching such famous heart-rending portraits as Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Both Pavese and Fenoglio studied English literature at the University of Turin and worked as literary translators, and so were intimately familiar with these authors.

The two writers found ample material for this theme of a simple, harsh existence in their native land. Daily struggle was not a strange concept to the peasants of the Langhe in the first decades of the twentieth century. Rather than growing wine, the land was divided among many sharecroppers trying to grow their own food and to eke a living out of the difficult soil. At that time, without motorized transport, the villages that now overlook the best vineyard sites in the heart of the Langhe were quite isolated, a long walk away from Alba over the hills and through the woods, even more difficult in the fog and snow of the bitter winters here at the foot of the mountains. Cesare Pavese tells about these everyday hardships in his first two books *Lavora stanca* (*Hard Labor*, 1936) and *Paesi tuoi* (*Your Villages*, 1941).

Compounded by their geographic isolation, social life in the Langhe villages was strictly governed by the old customs and traditions of inheritance, marriage and servitude. Younger sons who could not inherit a share of their father's land, as there was not enough to support several families, had to work as farm-hands on other farms, unless they were smart enough to enter the seminary at Alba to become priests. Daughters that were not lucky enough to be married with a good dowry spent their lives as servants. Fenoglio paints a vivid portrait of this life in his first two books: *I ventitrè giorni della città di Alba* (*The twenty-three days of the city of Alba*, 1952) and *La Malora* (*Ruin*, 1954).

The turning point for the social and economic situation came with the upheavals of the Second World War. In his book *La luna e il falò* (*The Moon and the Bonfire*, 1950), Pavese captures the zeitgeist through the story of an emigrant returning from America to his native village in the Langhe, where he grew up as an orphan with a poor farmer.

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



The war added another chapter to the history of the Langhe: due to their isolation and difficult terrain, the hills became an ideal hiding spot for the anti-fascist partisans. Beppe Fenoglio, who himself spent some years as a partisan, took this experience as the starting point for several of his books, among them his most famous: *Il partigiano Johnny* (Johnny the Partisan, 1968). Incidentally, the book was received with mixed responses by his contemporaries, as Fenoglio refuses to simply glorify the partisans. Instead, true to his Realist forebears, he shows also these local heroes in their banal existence and everyday humanity.

Anything new at La Spinetta

Two new releases: Piedmont Barolo Garretti 2006 and Tuscany Chianti Riserva 2007...

We expanded further our line of wines in Tuscany and Piedmont. With the 2007 vintage La Spinetta releases its first Chianti Riserva. With 100% estate-grown Sangiovese fruit from Casanova, this delicious and exciting full-bodied red will make people redefine their idea about Chianti. This is a definite must-try for any Brunello and Sangiovese lover. Quality and price speak for themselves as this wine retails around 18,00 Euro and 20,00 – 22,00 \$.



The second new release is Barolo Garretti, a Barolo that equals in quality and price our Barberasco Bordini. Whereas for Bordini we actually bought a new vineyard, for Garretti we simply divided our Barolo Campe production. Garretti is made of "younger vine" Nebbiolo (average age 30 years). These grapes used to go into Campe, now they go into Garretti, which gives us the possibility to offer a middle market priced Barolo and at the same time increase the quality of Campe. Garretti is the younger brother of Campe, that overwhelms with

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



Newsletter Winter 2010

structure, length and pure fruit class. Don't miss to try.

Your opinion on...

A traditional wine cellar is something of the past?

A lot of people are getting used to buying wine to drink immediately, especially since the New World Wines have become so popular and widely available. ***Is the traditional wine cellar becoming a thing of the past?***

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 the last Newsletter:

Many people say, that Burgundy and Piedmont have as much in common as Bordeaux and Tuscany and they are referring to single vineyard, single grape wines for the first two and blends for the second.

What is your opinion, which region makes the greater wines? The one that stays with the single vineyard, single variety? Or the one that aims for a perfect blend?

Am I the only one who wonders how much of a blended wine is manipulation versus nature? Making wine from a single vineyard involves substantial trust in nature. In Piedmont, without the hierarchies of Burgundy – which are already complicated – the consumer must rely even more on knowledge of the area and the vintage as well, of course, as the wine maker. But what a thrill it is to learn such things through trial and error, experience and education. A blended wine has more to fall back on – Too hot? Less Merlot. Too Cold? More Cabernet Sauvignon. Unsure? Some Cabernet Franc to enhance the perfume. When you compare a Barolo from Cannubi against one from Campe you are comparing soils, elevation, localised weather as well as the wine maker; when you compare Lafite versus Latour you are, perhaps, comparing those same things but in reverse order. There is, of course, pleasure in all wine, whether single vineyard or blend, but something in me relates more to the idea of being transported to a place – the very place the wine has come from – when I drink a single vineyard wine, especially if I have been there, if I have walked the hills, surveyed the scenery and sampled the grapes. What greater pleasure could there be?

Alan Mather, UK

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



I'm in favor of single vineyard, single grape wines. My love and enthusiasm for Italian wines originally triggered by the vast variety of indigenous grape varieties and the unique areas in which they were grown. This gives us an endless voyage to discover the characters of the grape and the soil that vary by the vintage and the climate conditions. The perfect blend idea, in my opinion, gets its driving force from creating a consistent and same level quality each year and is thus less intriguing to me. There are sides to back up both arguments but to me perfect wine has a life and a personality, and this personality becomes more evident in one variety vines.

And, if you'd ask for an opinion on Burgundy versus Piedmont – naturally Piedmont!

Rikkka Sukula, Finland