

A NEW FORCE IN BAROLO

A classic debut for Barbaresco's La Spinetta

In a little less than a decade, Giorgio Rivetti, co-owner and winemaker of LA SPINETTA in Barbaresco, has become one of the leading forces in Piedmont. He is making exciting ripe, fruit forward Nebbiolos that would give many high rated New World wines a run for their money. Now he is making waves in Barolo.

Rivetti, 47, takes a sip of his extraordinary debut Barolo, the Campè della Spinetta 2000 (98 points, \$150), and says, "Some people around here think that if a Barolo or Barbaresco doesn't punch you in the stomach (from the high tannin and acidity levels) then it is no good I don't agree. I want my wines to be structured, but approachable."

Rivetti is first and foremost a winemaker – one of the best and most innovative winemakers in Piedmont today. But he is also in tune with today's consumer, whom he believes shares his preference for wines that are more approachable on release.

"What is the point of offering the consumer a wine when it is not ready to drink?" he asks. "Sure, if a wine has the ability to age for 20 years or so that is great, but it is not the real point of wine."

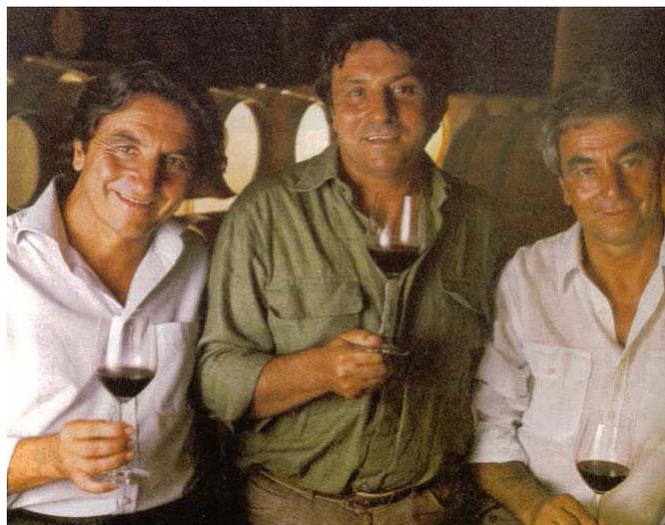
This approach has worked with the three La Spinetta single vineyard Barbarescos, which have won over consumers worldwide since their appearance on the market – Barbaresco Gallina in 1995, Staderi in 1996 and Valeirano in 1997. His most recent releases of these wines, from the 2001 vintage, each received a score of 93 points.

The roots of the La Spinetta enterprise go back to 1977, when the Rivetti family bought the original La Spinetta estate, located in Castagnole Lanze, near the town of Barbaresco. At the time, the estate comprised less than 50 acres of Barbera and Moscato vineyards, and production was restricted to wines made from these two local varieties.

But after a series of astute vineyard purchases over the years, including important stakes in the Barbaresco zone (for their single vineyard Barbaresco) and the recent purchase of the Campè vineyard in the Grinzane Cavour section Barolo, the Rivettis currently own a total of 247 acres in Piedmont.

But it doesn't stop there. 2000 was a busy (and expensive) year for the Rivetti family. They extend their territory in Piedmont, and also purchased, for around \$10 million, a 148-acres estate in Tuscany,

which produces about 2,000 cases of pure Sangiovese Toscana Sezzana.



Winemaker Giorgio Rivetti (left), along with his brothers Carlo and Bruno (right)

With his new Barolo Campè, Rivetti is entering a level of ultrahigh quality. He says that legendary Barbaresco producer Angelo Gaja, was an inspiration for the move: Gaja went to Barolo in 1988, caused a stir with his purchase of the Nebbiolo vineyard in the commune of Serralunga, and started making Barolo. With a 98-point debut, Rivetti looks to be making much noise with his Barolo Campè.

The Barolo Campè comes from a nearly 20-acres, 30 year-old Nebbiolo vineyard, extending across the south slopes of three adjacent small hills, in the Barolo designated zone surrounding the town of Grinzane Cavour. It is not considered a serious area of Barolo, but Rivetti believed that it is deeply underrated, his new wine suggests he's correct.

Rivetti and his two brothers, Carlo, 52 and Bruno 50, together with their late father Pino, an Argentinean immigrant, purchased the property for \$5.25 million in 2000 and also erected a 1.5-million winery, which was completed in 2002.

There were 2,665 cases produced of the debut 2000 Campè, a considerable production figure for a top – quality Barolo.

This is an important factor for Rivetti. "You need a bit of quality for a wine to make its presence felt in the market," he adds, "You can make the best wine in the world, but if nobody can find it, what's the point?"

By Jo Cooke

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