

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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

Finally winter...

It was supposed to be the mildest winter in the recording of Italian weather forecast, but general weather predictions are seldom accurate. In January we saw days, where people would sit outside a restaurant in Alba to enjoy their lunch. Then February came and with that finally winter. Snow in almost all parts of Italy. A fair amount in Piedmont and Tuscany, record highs of 4 meters on the east coast. In addition it got really cold. In Grinzane Cavour, where our Barolo Campe winery is located at the foot of the vineyard we noted night temperatures of minus 20 Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit). The cold temperatures didn't bring much delight to Giorgio's horses nor to Renato, who feeds



them and who had to carry warm water to the meadow three times a day in order to provide sufficient water for the animals. But if you wonder whether or not the vineyards suffer from the cold, they don't. The plants are in their winter sleep and especially when covered by snow, the ground is insulated and protected. Melting snow in Spring then provides excellent hydration. The water gets much better absorbed by the ground, while rain often just remains on the surface. Right now we still have to keep warm, enjoy the quiet time, where vineyard work is impossible and open some good bottles of wine until March comes and vineyard growths will make most of us return to their work.

Until then however we take a rest....

Bruno, Carlo and Giorgio Rivetti and the La Spinetta Team

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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

A word from Giorgio



"A passion for wine – I am not the only one out there"....

I am currently traveling in the US and writing from Charleston, South Carolina, a very beautiful city by the way, that I can only recommend for a visit. Great food and wine, a lot of history and very friendly people.

I have been on the road, promoting La Spinetta and Contratto for nearly six weeks now. A rather long period of time, in which my travels have brought me to Michigan, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Florida, Colorado, New Mexico, Virginia, Connecticut and New York. "working in the market" is tough, but very important in our business. During my week in Michigan, I for example hosted four wine maker dinners in a row, while visiting customers and travelling throughout the day. I have to admit, that it is not easy to be in top form 4 evenings, hoping to share

some of my wine passion with others. But (and this is worth so much more) the beauty of my profession is that I come across so many wine passionate people, which impressed and touched me so much, that I decided to tell you about them in this letter. The dinners were all completely booked, with people who listened to every word I said, who paid attention to detail, who brought their La Spinetta wines from their private cellar for me to sign the bottles. People, who told me about evenings at home sharing La Spinetta with friends or their experiences with our wines on their trips. Many people stayed long after dinner sharing their love for wine. So next time, when I am travelling the world and I have to get up at the crack of dawn to catch another flight, when I went to bed late the night before and when I do not know where on earth I am the first minute I open my eyes, I will think of moments as those I had in Michigan during the dinners and know, that all of it is worthwhile. It is wonderful to have a great passion for wine, but it is far more wonderful to share this passion with others. I want to thank you all.

Keep up the passion for wine and life...

Giorgio, the farmer

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



Barbera d'Asti versus Barbera d'Alba

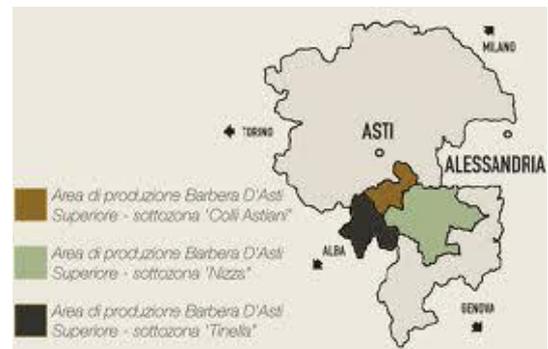
Barbera is a Piedmontese autochthonous grape variety and the town of Casale Monferrato (in the wine-growing region of Monferrato/Eastern Piedmont) is often named as the variety's birthplace. Today Barbera is the most widely planted grape in Piedmont and has been appreciated for its versatility and abundant production. Also apparent is its affinity with local family names like Barbero, Barberis or Barberi, dating back to the middle ages. For many decades the Barbera was discredited and considered as a mere 'workhorse' and blending grape. The 'people's

wine' as it was called, not only gathered families around tables but also paired perfectly with the hearty local cooking and was seen as an essential ingredient of daily life!

Barbera produces luscious and fruit forward wines with a juicy, crisp acidity and notably low levels of tannins. These characteristics not only make it a perfect food companion but also create seductive wines, approachable at a younger age. Barbera has an intense deep ruby color and generally shows beautiful fruit, like sour cherry and black berry.

Considered the most widely cultivated red grape variety in Piedmont, Barbera comes in a bewildering range of styles, from the young and 'spritzy' to the powerful, fruit-intense and spicy oak-aged wines. Clearly, the wine making process and philosophy of each vintner is crucial to the style of the final wine. But here in the homeland of Barbera, soils and microclimates of the various appellations also determine the expression of each wine.

Two of the most distinctive and important appellations are the Barbera d'Asti DOCG and Barbera d'Alba DOC. These two appellations could not be more different yet alluring each in its own way.



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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

With the 2008 vintage, the Barbera d'Asti has been upgraded from a DOC to DOCG, lifting the style of wine within the pyramid of quality, whereas Barbera d'Alba remained a DOC. One of the determining factors for this development is surely the fact that the Barbera grape is the main variety in the Astigiano region and is grown on the best sites with excellent exposures. In contrast, the Barbera in the Alba region is ranked behind the Nebbiolo grape and often grown as a second or third grape on more shady sites.

The reason, for example, La Spinetta grows Barbera on the top Cru Gallina hillside is that when the winery acquired the vineyard in 1996, 3 hectares of this Barbaresco vineyard were not Nebbiolo, but Barbera. The vines were too old and beautiful to be torn out and have remained ever since in their place.

Differences in climatic patterns, altitude, soil type and microclimates also affect the types of Barbera.

The area around Asti is composed of soft, rolling hills at a lower altitude than the steeper slopes and escarpments of the Langhe hills (wine region of which Alba is the capital). Depending on the microclimate, positioning and individual features of a vineyard, there can be vast temperature differences between the two areas. In the Astigiano region grapes are cultivated on lower altitudes between 100m and 400m (320 ft to 1,300 ft), while grapes in the Langhe hills grow on altitudes between 200m and 600m (660 ft to 1,970 ft). Temperatures in the Langhe are generally lower, and thermal fluctuations are more significant.

Determining the wine style as well is the soil composition. In the Astigiano region, soils are heavier and denser with mixtures of clay, sand and a high calcareous content. Moving south to the Langhe, soils are lighter and less deep with proportions of marl, sand and sandstone which has an impact on grape ripening and the tannin structure of the wines.

Having suggested the fine distinctions between the appellations, how is all this perceived in the final wines?

The Barbera d'Asti is of a more refined structure with a lower tannin level. The higher acidity is crisp, adding to the structure and bestowing a backbone to the wine. The fruit is higher toned, reminiscent of sour cherry, black currant and blackberry. Aromas vary from violets, over herbal mintiness to peppery spiciness. It is all about the balance between the weight of fruit and the fresh acidity.

The Barbera d'Alba, when originating from a well-positioned vineyard, has more weight with a more significant tannin structure, due to the soil in the Langhe hills. The Alba version seems bigger, showing a richer and denser quality with sweeter fruit from wild forest fruits to prunes.

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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

The Barbera d'Alba is equally characterized by its pronounced acidity, which is very well integrated in its dense structure. Sweet spices, licorice and smoky notes accompany the fruity balance.

Curious?

Taste the difference between Barbera d'Alba Gallina and Barbera d'Asti Bionzo; we believe them to be the perfect expressions of the two regions.

Tell us about your experience!

An interview with Andrea Rivetti

'La Spinetta' was founded in 1977 by Giorgio, Carlo & Bruno Rivetti in Castagnole delle Lanze/Piedmont. Andrea Rivetti, the son of Giorgio was born just two years later in 1979 and grew up with the winery.

Andrea, tell us about your childhood; what was it like to grow up at a winery?

Basically I was born into the winery. When 'La Spinetta' moved to its present location in Castagnole delle Lanze, my grand-father Pin (Giuseppe Rivetti) was very proud. Every day I saw my father working in the cellar, while my uncles were in charge of the vineyard work. When school was out, I could not wait for the moment to be home to help my family. 25 years ago there was much development in the Piedmont wine world. Viticulture but also winemaking techniques were constantly being improved and old ideas being revised.



Beside myself, my cousin Marco, son of Carlo Rivetti, was also very much involved in the activities around the winery. His passion is the grape production while mine showed to be the wine making. This way we complement each other quite well.

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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

I spent every free moment on the winery enabling me to follow its evolution.



In 1985 the first red wine, the Barbera d'Asti 'Ca di Pian' was produced; the wine which brought the winery to a more international level. My father had a huge passion for the Nebbiolo grape and wanted to produce a big wine out of a blend with this indigenous variety. This is how the PIN (Neb/Barbera, between 1994 and 2001 Neb/Cab/Barb) was born in 1989. Those were the first experiments with a Nebbiolo from Monferrato and the first Barrique barrels used on the winery. Such an exciting time!

The 1990s were full of innovations. 1993/1994 we did the first trials with the Chardonnay grape. In 1995, we had the opportunity to purchase the vineyard 'Gallina' in Neive. In 1996 and 1997 followed the two CRUs 'Staderi' and 'Valeirano' in Neive and Treiso. In 1998, we could acquire vineyard sites in the town of Costigliole d'Asti, more precisely in the 'frazione' (fraction) Bionzo; famous for its Barberas. In 1999 we produced our first Sauvignon Blanc, followed by the purchase of the property 'Campé' in Grinzane Cavour in 2000, where we produce our Barolo.

Raised in the homeland of great wine, was it a natural desire to become a wine maker? When were you seized for the first time by the desire to become a vintner?

It is wonderful to grow up on a wine Estate and it was clear from the beginning that I would become a winemaker one day. Although the work is heavy sometimes (surely more in the 1980's and slowly changed with the technical progress) and often very physical, I was always fascinated by this work.

Where did you do your formation/ studies?

In 1994 I started the enological school in Alba, which is one of the most famous in Italy (founded in 1881). After 6 years I graduated as 'Enotecnico.' The school is great and gives you the necessary basics but my real education was the winery and the everyday work and the challenges it brought.

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



Did you have the possibility to gain experience outside your father's winery and Piedmont?

No, I did not gain any experience at other wineries. Initially I was sorry that I did not have the opportunity to go away for a while, but with the fast growth of La Spinetta, I really had no chance to leave. I was needed at home. We brought in other people with wine knowledge and so I not only learned from my father, but also from them.

In 2001 we bought the vineyard 'Sezzana' close to Terricciola in Tuscany. We first vinified the wine in Piedmont and started with the construction of the winery 'Casanova' in 2002. In 2003 we produced the first 'Sassontino' and in 2004 the 'Nero di Casanova'.

Experimenting with the (to me) new grape varieties Sangiovese and Colorino, extended my knowledge significantly and was very exciting.

Today the winemaking team consists of 4 people, with your father being the head winemaker for all 3 estates. How are the responsibilities divided within the wineries, especially since your father travels a lot.

About 10 years ago, my father started to give me more and more responsibility. He started travelling the world and was glad that he had somebody at home trustworthy to keep the cellar work under control. However until today all big decisions are still being made in agreement with my father and myself. He is present during the harvest, to determine all blends, during bottling time and at other important decision times. I am responsible for the work on the three estates in Piedmont, Stefan Mazetta, who once was also my teacher is now my right hand. While in Tuscany we have Mirko Bessi who plays my part for our Tuscan winery.

How is working with your father? / Have you been given room to express your own ideas? Do you sometimes feel that you have to live in the shadow of your father's fame?

It is great to work with my father and nowadays each of us has his area of responsibility. At the beginning his influence was huge, it was my father, who introduced Barrique barrels in the winery. I slowly started taking over the production and had especially a say on the use of different types of barrels and their toasting.

What do you admire the most about your father and is there anything you would want to criticize him for?

I admire that my father is driven by the desire to constantly get better; the downside is that

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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

he rarely slows down and his time is very limited.

Is it true that you developed a passion for the production of Spumante (sparkling wines) 'metodo classico'? What is the origin of this passion?

I first tried to produce a Spumante in 2002, with grapes that go into our Chardonnay 'Lidia' production. I had chosen this vintage, as the wine was incredibly fresh, had less alcohol and a pronounced acidity (perfect for a second fermentation in bottle). The wine was aged for 6 months in barrique before we bottled it and did the 2nd fermentation.

I always liked high end sparkling wines. Piedmont sparkling wines have actually a long tradition. Today the Asti Spumante is produced in pressure-controlled tanks, but in old times the Moscato grape was also going through a second fermentation in the bottle.

'La Spinetta' recently acquired the winery 'Contratto' in Canelli, the very first estate in Italy to have produced a sparkling wine after the 'metodo classico' in 1867. This is a venture inspired not only by your father, but also largely by yourself. Where did you gather all your knowledge to make Champagne-style wines?

I learned the theory in school and from books. But the practical part I just learned on a trial and error base; I did what my father is famous for as an autodidact 'learning by doing'. When we first discovered that Contratto was for sale and had a look at the cellars, we immediately fell in love. Also, my father has a big passion for Champagne and that helped to make the decision to buy Italy's oldest "Champagne" house.

Would you consider yourself as being lucky, to be grow up in a region, deeply steeped in tradition and wine making culture?

I consider myself very lucky!

Where do you see La Spinetta and Contratto in the future?

Well, I think 'La Spinetta' is in a very good position, and it is our goal to maintain the high quality of the wines.

For 'Contratto', which we only recently bought, the situation is a bit different. The winery is known as the oldest producer of sparkling wine in Italy. In fact, the "Metodo Classico" 1919 Contratto Extra Brut was the first vintage sparkling wine ever made in the country. But the winery was sold to the Bocchino family in 1993, who had switched the focus on a red wine production.

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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

Our goal is to restore the brand name, greatly improve the quality and complement the portfolio with additional sparklers.

For example at the beginning of the year we released a new Moscato, called 'De Miranda' METODO CHARMAT which is kept on its lees for 18 months; a traditional product with an experimental touch of higher quality.

The last question that we always like to ask: If you had to go to a deserted island, which wines would you take with you?

I really love Barbaresco Staderi; it is a very structured wine. I enjoy the typical hard lines of the Nebbiolo---its spiciness and notes of black pepper. So yes, Staderi would be my choice!

Cooking Piemontese with Giovanna Rivetti

Giovanna Rivetti, our "vineyard manager" and our "in-house chef" was born in 1947. She learned the work in the vineyard from her father and the work in the kitchen from her mother. Both parents taught Giovanna skills that remain treasured assets of *La Spinetta*.

In each newsletter, Giovanna shares one of her secret recipes with us. Today she is teaching us how to make another typical, yet very simple dessert, which we all know quite well: **Tiramisu**

Though we are sure that each of you have enjoyed this famous Italian dessert and know where to get your favorite version, you might not know what Tiramisu actually means. "Tira" comes from "tirare" and means "pull." "Mi" means "me" and "su" means "up." So on a cold and bitter winter day, nothing can "pull you up" better than a **Tiramisu**, especially when made by Giovanna with Moscato or De Miranda Asti!



You will need (recipe for 4 people):

- 3 egg yolks
- 135 gr. (4-3/4 oz.) of Moscato/De Miranda Asti plus 80gr (3 oz.) to dip the lady finger cookies
- 45 gr. (1-1/2 oz.) sugar
- 150 gr. (5-1/4 oz.) Mascarpone cheese
- 100 gr. (3-1/2 oz.) Lady Finger cookies
- 40 gr. (1-1/2 oz.) cherry liquor or brandy or grappa

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



To make the cream, also called Zabaglione, you will need to whip up the yolks with the sugar. Heat up the 135 gr. (4-3/4 oz.) of Moscato (or De Miranda Asti) and add it hot to the egg and sugar; continue mixing these ingredients together in a bowl that is cooking in hot water (Bain-Marie*). When creamy, remove it from the stove and let it cool down.

**The French call this cooking technique “bain marie.” It consists of placing a container (pan, bowl, soufflé dish, etc.) of food in a large, shallow pan of warm water, which surrounds the food with gentle heat. The food may be cooked in this manner either in an oven or on top of a range. This technique is designed to cook delicate dishes such as custards, sauces and savory mousses without breaking or curdling them.*

When the Zabaglione cream has cooled completely, add the mascarpone cheese.

Separately, mix the 80 gr./3 oz. of Moscato with the cherry liquor (brandy or grappa) and quickly soak the lady finger cookies into the Moscato liquor mixture. Take a large square bowl (10 cm./4 inch height): first place a layer of soaked cookies on the bottom of the bowl, add Zabaglione and Mascarpone cream on top and then start with a second layer. Continue until the bowl is filled with layers of cookies and cream.

Let the Tiramisu cool/rest for 8-10 hours in the refrigerator.

Before serving, decorate by dusting with dark chocolate powder. Tiramisu pairs beautifully with *La Spinetta Moscato* or *Contratto De Miranda Asti*.

Buon appetito!

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



Contratto's NEWEST ADDITION

The winery, Contratto, in Canelli is officially in the devoted hands of La Spinetta since June 2011, and some exciting innovations have already been introduced by the Rivetti family.

Contratto, located in the heartland of Asti Spumante, has always been focused on the production of sparkling wines modeled on the greatest and age-worthy, traditional sparkling wines of the world.

Nevertheless, the cultural heritage of the Astigiano region has had an influence on the grapes used and the style of sparklers introduced to the market. So in addition to the 'metodo classico' styles produced by Contratto for nearly 100 years now, a delightfully sweet Moscato called 'De Miranda' is new to the product line; an exceptional, high-end Moscato which undergoes a fermentation in the bottle and remains on its lees for 4 years. This translates into tradition paired with the sophisticated production of Champagne!



Since the 'De Miranda' Metodo Classico has had huge success, and the Rivetti family loves to experiment, a NEW 'De Miranda - Asti Spumante DOCG' was launched in January 2012. Classed as an Asti Spumante DOCG, the 'De Miranda' METODO CHARMAT is vinified in pressure-controlled steel tanks and finishes its fermentation with 8 % alcohol and a residual sugar of 130g/l.

When one thinks of a typical Asti Spumante, automatically he or she has a mental picture of a fresh, aromatic and uncomplicated wine which pairs well with light desserts. The 'De Miranda - Asti Spumante' instead is aged for 2 years in tanks on its lees (exceptional ageing period), and is described as a blend of the much-loved grapey aromatics of a Moscato with the complexity of the ageing on the yeast.

This exuberant style of Moscato not only pairs well with desserts but also accompanies beautifully the richness of foie gras; rounds off savory cheeses; and is delightful with an afternoon cake shared with friends.

Enough technicality... these tasting notes will make your mouth water...

...an alluring potion of a medium lemon color with rich, golden hints. The creamy mousse consists of small and lively pearls.

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



Newsletter Winter 2011/2012

...its lush bouquet is seductively fruity with an earthy depth, lifted by its stony minerality. The perfume of fruit when just opened is fresh and reminiscent of grape, honeydew melon and apricots. The wine further reveals an array of ripened fruits like raisins, banana and pineapple. The nose is intensified by its floral hints of orange blossom and wisteria, sweet spices and the notes of biscuits (derived from the ageing on the lees).



...the palate is medium-sweet to sweet, balanced by its mature acidity and, delicate, silky texture. The fruit is opulent and ripe, revealing notes of mango, pear and orange peel. This richness is enhanced by the creamy perlage streaked with a vivid minerality. The palate shows itself brighter with less autolytic notes of yeast than the bouquet.

The alcohol is medium-low and very well integrated. The mid-palate makes way for a fresh and floral finish, which lingers....

New partner in the US - VinConnect

VINCONNECT

This might be interesting for those of you living in the US. We are excited about a new partner and service that we are able to present to you. In collaboration with VinConnect, a new US-based company specializing in private customer sales of fine European wines, we're now able to offer our **non** One liter formats direct from the winery to your home.

If you sign up for the La Spinetta mailing list, you'll have the first opportunity to purchase new vintages, as well as special access to library wines or other special formats. We've partnered with VinConnect to offer better and more economic logistics.

We'd like to invite you to share this new endeavor with us.

To sign up for the La Spinetta mailing list through VinConnect, simply click [here](#) and check the La Spinetta box.

or visit the website <http://vinconnect.com/wineries/la-spinetta/>.

For any questions, please feel free to contact us or VinConnect: laspinetta@vinconnect.com.