

# primavera

– S E L E C T I O N S –



**LOCALITY:** Neive,  
Barbaresco

**WINEMAKER:** Francesco  
Versio



PIEDMONT

## FRANCESCO VERSIO

We first came to know Francesco Versio during his time as oenologist with the legendary Bruno Giacosa. Hailing from the hamlet of Albesani (situated between Neive and the town of Barbaresco, though a little further north), Francesco joined Giacosa from a brief tenure at the local co-operative after completing his studies in Turin. Bruno saw a kindred spirit in Francesco, who benefited greatly from working with the renowned and highly talented Dante Scaglione. Having the opportunity to work under the tutelage of both Bruno and Dante proved invaluable in shaping Francesco's approach to this day. In 2017, Francesco once again joined Dante at Figli Luigi Oddero, excited to work with such esteemed crus as Vigna Rionda and buoyed by his new employer's encouragement and support to forge on with his own project.



There is no question that this young man (still only in his mid-thirties) is one of the budding superstars of Piedmont, and his wines seem almost destined to command the same sort of respect and even cult following of those of his illustrious former employer. It is a great honour to represent Francesco's wines in Australia, as they are right at the forefront of the next wave of sought-after and sophisticated yet classic wines from this great region, with the potential to be right up there with the very best. Quantities, unsurprisingly, remain very small.

### THE VINEYARDS

Francesco was fortunate to gain access to fruit from his grandfather's plots of mature vines in the esteemed commune of Neive, also home to Giacosa. One holdings in the vineyard of San Cristoforo, the other in Curra, and both with a favourable south-west exposition. Although contiguous, they show a distinctive individual character. San Cristoforo has more limestone and offers freshness and perfume, while Curra, on sandy alluvial soil, imparts warmth and richness. In fact, it is not unusual for producers to hold back wines from this cru for a year longer than other single vineyard releases, as they tend to be bigger and more 'backward' on release. The combination of the two then is only natural. In April 2015, it was necessary to replant almost the entirety of Curra. As such, fruit from the nearby Cotta vineyard was used to supplement the 2016 vintage. In 2017, hail damage in San Cristoforo necessitated bottling an alternate Barbaresco from the Rombone vineyard in Treiso, a vineyard that Figli Luigi Oddero release a single cru wine from each year.

Prior to the 2017 vintage, Francesco gained access to a 25-year-old Dolcetto vineyard in Dogliani (close to Belvedere Langhe) that he shares with a friend. Sitting high on an east-south-easterly facing slope at 450–500 metres, the vineyard is composed of clay and limestone though the wine is marked especially by the limestone component, offering good structure while maintaining elegance and great fruit expression.

### WINEMAKING

It comes as no surprise that winemaking is influenced by Giacosa's 'enlightened traditionalist' approach and fits squarely in the classical Barbaresco style: long, slow fermentations and macerations in stainless steel before ageing in 20 hl botte. Sulphur is kept to a minimum and all wines are bottled unfiltered. Interestingly, Francesco has opted to use the Stockinger large-format oak crafted in Austria, and notably more and more becoming the choice of discerning, cutting-edge European winemakers.

### THE WINE

#### 2018 Dogliani Dolcetto

Mouth-watering acidity and taut tannins support the crunchy, fresh cherry that is both upfront and juicy. Terrific perfume on the palate with great carry and length. A product of its high (450–500 metre) site in the Borgato Pamparato, with vitality, drive and terrific depth of colour.

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## **THE WINE CONTINUED...**

### **2016 Barbaresco**

Primarily San Cristoforo with some purchased fruit from Cotta replacing Curra, which was replanted in 2015. Cotta adds flesh and depth to the sinewy San Cristoforo. 2016 offers great structure and complexity while maintaining elegance and finesse. Brambly, blueberry hints on the nose and a palate redolent of pure, lithe red fruits. Perfect skin, tannin and phenolic ripeness from the season allowed for Francesco's preferred long maceration of around 35 days, almost double that of 2015. Ageing in 20 hl Stockinger botte.