



primavera

- SELECTIONS -



CONTERNO GIACOMO

LOCALITY: Serralunga,
Barolo

WINEMAKER: Roberto
Conterno

conterno.it



PIEDMONT

CONTERNO GIACOMO

If you ask most sommeliers, influencers, collectors, wine geeks or the like, “Who is the number one producer in Italy?” chances are they’ll nominate Giacomo Conterno. It’s the most famous Barolo of all, ‘Monfortino’, that people usually have in mind. Usually that is, unless they mean the remarkable ‘Francia’. That this ‘regular’ Conterno Barolo is also a contender for the best, just attests to the widespread appreciation of the Conterno approach to everything they do. Nothing is, or ever was, left to chance, or in the control of others, in the quest to make the best Nebbiolo and Barbera from the family’s Serralunga vineyards.

Until Giovanni Conterno purchased the 16 hectares of ‘Cascina Francia’ in 1974, their wines had been made from purchased grapes, but selected with a singular eye for pedigree and quality. The known original ‘Monfortino’ (1920), as an example, was made from Monforte grapes, hence the name. The estate’s founder, Giacomo, was famous as much as anything else, for his legendary coverage, mostly by foot, of vast swathes of Barolo, tasting and observing at harvest time, for the prime fruit. Today, 4th generation winemaker and current custodian Roberto still cites his own taste as his fundamental ‘technology’ at every stage of harvest and production.

Roberto keenly appreciates what being the benchmark for Barolo can mean in a commercial world that makes such a rarity of his wines. In the laboratory and in production, Roberto has adapted and refined equipment – like his utterly unique de-stemmer – to operate at heightened levels of sensitivity. Back in the vineyard, continuous trials like the massal selections have to pass sufficient time to satisfy Roberto’s fastidious expectations for inclusion in the wines. This helps explain why wines from the ‘recent’ acquisitions of theoretically superb parcels of Serralunga crus, Cerretta (2008) and Arione (2015), have taken so long to be seen under a Conterno label.

A LITTLE ABOUT THE CRUS...

Cerretta is situated in the northern section of the commune and divided into approximately 14 landowners. Roberto’s parcel sits on top of the ridge, the highest point, at a touch under 400 metres – Cerretta Piani. Although this cru has a wide variety of exposures, his site faces west/south-west and has a higher portion of clay compared with his other two crus. Conterno grows both Barbera and Nebbiolo here – the same as the other two crus.

Francia is one of the more southerly crus and has the highest altitude of the three estate landholdings, sitting at 440 metres. Here, the majority of the cru is facing classic south-west. The soil here is generally less fertile, with higher levels of calcium

carbonate (a purer limestone) making the soil chalkier and lighter in colour. This cru is entirely owned by the Giacomo Conterno family.

Arione is the latest acquisition for the family (2015), which is adjoined by the southern border of Francia and is the most southern cru in the commune. Arione rolls around to the south-west from Francia and has a more southerly aspect. The soil profile and altitude are very similar to Francia and in turn makes a more mineral, austere wine, which is similar to 'Vigna Francia'.



TOP: Nervi-Conterno, Gattinara, BOTTOM: Enrico Fileppo

Conterno remain, at heart and in practice, traditional Barolo makers. There is little deviation from the long macerations for both 'Francia' and 'Monfortino' and the long time spent in large oak (these days exclusively Stockinger), around four years and up to seven (but sometimes even 10 or 15) respectively. The results, while dark, layered and concentrated, always have a magical energy about them. When we have been lucky enough to taste these wines, in barrel or finished, it is only with Roberto. If the wines tell him it's time to bottle, nothing stands in the way of total attention to that task. You'll need to try for an appointment at another time. This is Conterno.

These are very rare and extremely limited wines. Please speak to Peter, Andrew or Georgia regarding a possible allocation.