



# primavera

- S E L E C T I O N S -



**LOCALITY:** Gattinara,  
Alto Piedmont

**WINEMAKER:** Enrico  
Fileppo and Roberto  
Conterno



**PIEDMONT**

## NERVI-CONTERNO GATTINARA

One of the advantages of visiting our producers in Italy each year is the opportunity to taste wines that are some time out from release, giving an early indication of the quality and personality of upcoming vintages. 2016 as a vintage for Nebbiolo has long impressed, be it from those early barrel tastings, or tracking the releases through Langhe Nebbiolo, Valtellina, Barbaresco and now Gattinara. Following on from the strong 2015 vintage, with its plush core of sweet red fruits and round tannins, 2016 benefitted from terrific skin thickness, allowing for long, slow fermentations and macerations. A balance of fruit concentration, firmer tannins and more pronounced acidity combine for classic structure for the ages.

Roberto Conterno's admiration for the Nebbiolo wines from the tiny (65 hectares) Gattinara appellation has been given dramatic illustration by his recent purchase of the original Gattinara producer, Nervi. Having spent a great deal of time in this north-western Piedmont region over recent years, Roberto has become very familiar with the lay of the land and its lean, minerally soils.

Nervi's production of Gattinara started in the first few years following 1900, and it is regarded as the oldest cantina in the area. Over the years, Nervi have learnt how to tame the typically high-acid, high-tannin grapes of the region's clone of Nebbiolo, Spanna – long-term ageing is the key, with maturation (often much longer than the mandatory DOCG regulations) in large format Slavonian botti.



Luigi Nervi, Borgomanero 1923

Nestled in the foothills of Monterosa, Gattinara was established as a DOC in 1967, and gained DOCG status in 1990, although Gattinara has mainly been a wine for those in the know. If you've tried a Nervi or Antoniolo Gattinara from superior vintages, like 1961, '64, '78, '96 or '97, for example – and they have occasionally been seen here – you will know they clearly rival Langhe Nebbiolo. Roberto Conterno certainly thinks so. In fact, Conterno's recent purchase (last year) is a 90% share in Nervi, and in his typical wisdom, he's keen to retain existing local contact and expertise, encouraging previous owners the Astrup family and the winemaker Enrico Fileppo – with his experience of 30 plus Gattinara vintages – to remain. Vineyard man Ettore Bornate, at Nervi since 1973, is staying on as well. It's important to note that although the sale occurred earlier this year, Roberto has had a close relationship with the Astrup family for many years, having assisted and given them advice since 2011.



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

While the DOCG allows up to 10% of Uva Rara or Vespolina in the blend, only the odd vine of these would still be mixed amongst older plantings, and most of Gattinara's vines are now Nebbiolo. These, an array of up to 13 different Spanna clones, chosen to ensure vine health and diversity and to maintain local identity, are grown at 300–420 metres. Soils are a mineral-rich gravel, with a stony mixture of red volcanic porphyry and granite, with a lot of clay underlay, making it somewhat similar to the Serralunga profile, but with better drainage due to the high proportion of volcanic gravel.

Four plots, totalling nearly 29 hectares, or getting towards half of the DOCG's total area, make the three main Nervi-Conterno wines. The vintage Gattinara, effectively the normale, is comprised of the four plots, Casacce, Garavoglie, Molsino and Valferana, and is fermented and macerated in steel at controlled temperatures for 20–30 days, followed by 30 months in large wood. The two cru, or individual vineyard wines, come from Valferana and Molsino, and are elevated in large conical wooden tini for a similar 3–4 weeks, then spend another 40 months in various large wood formats. Valferana is the more austere, often considerably so, reflecting the nervous, tightly wound core gifted by Gattinara's gravel, a disciplined symphony of mineral, graphite, cranberry and citrus. Molsino is lush by comparison, still fiercely underpinned by structure and tang, but more generous, with cherry, plum and balsamic (herb) over the above as almost secondary notes. These hardly need comparison with Barbaresco or Barolo; they are fabulous wines in their own right.



While the character of the 2015 vintage clouded the individual personas of Nervi's two crus in Molsino and Valferana, leading to the decision to blend these wines into the Gattinara, 2016 saw a return to business as usual with the trio of 'Gattinara', 'Molsino' and 'Valferana' produced. As such, we have just the one wine to offer this year, (plus a final parcel of stunning 2014 'Molsino' that we managed to snaffle), and it will be another 12 months before we see the release of the 2016 cru wines. Additionally, quantities are tighter in 2016, so swift action is advised to avoid disappointment.

## THE WINE



### 2016 Gattinara

100% Nebbiolo. With the single crus produced again in this vintage, fruit from all four crus has gone into this blend: Molsino, Valferana, Garavoglie and Casacce (though with a lesser proportion of the first two than in 2015), ranging from 290–420 metres altitude. After gentle destemming and crushing, a 15-day fermentation/maceration in steel takes place, followed by a little over 3 years ageing in large Slavonian botti. The final stage is an additional 6–12 months in cement vats before releasing to the market. Bright red/cherry fruits, candied orange with hints of liquorice and violet florals; textured and with exceptional structure, while the tingling acidity and focused tannins drive through the finish.

Available in 750ml and 1500ml



### 2014 'Molsino' Gattinara

100% Nebbiolo. Sitting on the western side of the Gattinara commune, Molsino, along with good altitude (350–420 metres), has arguably the best exposure, being pre-dominately south due to its natural amphitheatre shape. Fermentation and maceration are essentially the same as the Gattinara but for an additional 5–6 days. Oak maturation for both single crus is a little over 4 years, with an additional 12 months in cement vats before release. Chubbier, with a greater depth of dark choc/raisin fruit than 'Valferana', yet still tensile and focused. History would tell us that this is the cru for long term cellaring. In saying that, with a decent amount of airing and a decant, it shows its power and potential.