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SPECIAL ISSUE
JANUARY 11, 2005

The Soul of a Wine


An Homage to Traditionally Made Barolo

In the latter half of the twentieth century, men like Giovanni Conterno, Bruno Giacosa and Bartolo Mascarello created Barolos, based on a traditional model, that are among the most profound and revered wines ever made.

Yet, despite their lofty achievements, younger winemakers came to question the validity of their methods, setting in motion a struggle for the very soul of Barolo.

On one side of this struggle are the younger *Barolisti* who, beginning in the late 1980's, looked past the acknowledged genius of Conterno, Giacosa and Mascarello to conclude that this "old school"—with their *cappello sommerso* fermentations and long-aging in ancient oak and chestnut *botti*—produced flawed wines from their Nebbiolo grapes.

These young winemakers looked abroad for ideas

 "The top traditional Barolo and Barbaresco wines are treasures, the last of a breed that is worth preserving and even multiplying. I hope I'm not promoting the old style too much. There isn't enough to go around. That's the point." Ed Behr,
The Art of Eating

—ways of ridding Barolo of volatile acidity and "dirty" aromas, while improving its color, softening its tannins and achieving more fruit. Finding their answers in France, California and Australia, they reduced yields in the vineyards; used "roto-fermenters" to shorten their fermentations, and replaced their fathers' old *botti* with new French barriques. And with the release of their 2000 Barolos last year, we see a whole new genre of suave, fruit-driven Barbaescos and Barolos emerging.

The Old Guard

On the other side of the issue are those winemakers who believe that the new Barolos have little of the majesty that the best old-style wines have. In fact, they will argue that the new ways are robbing Barolo

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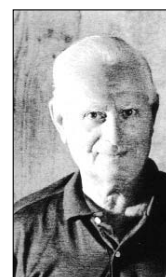
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Classic Barolo: An Homage

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of its integrity, producing wines that look, taste and smell more like Cabernet than Nebbiolo. These traditionalists argue that the region's classic long macerations are necessary to give their wines aromatic and flavor complexity, believing that the growing use of roto-fermenters has produced a sea of Barolos with plenty of color, but lacking nuance and typicity.

The traditionalists further believe that aging in new French barriques buries the delicate Nebbiolo nuances of truffles, tar and rose petals under layers of mocha and vanilla. Aging their wines carefully in well-seasoned *botti*, they say, they can make Barolos that are not only clean but *expressive*.

Learning from Both Sides

Despite the strength of both sides' views, the controversy is not without a middle ground. Two modernist superstars, Luciano Sandrone and Roberto Voerzio, both incorporate traditional concepts unacceptable to more extreme elements. And, of course, Aldo Conterno long ago incorporated modernist ideas into his otherwise traditional regime. In fact, most traditionalists manage their vineyards and cellars better today thanks to the modernists.



An old view of the Barolo town of Serralunga

Still, this 20-year-old controversy shows no signs of subsiding. Numerically, the modernists have the upper hand, since the great majority of new Langhe winemakers are following the lead of their friends, consultants and enology-school teachers. Add to this the fact that the traditionalists are mostly old men—some with no children to continue their work. They are a dying breed whose ranks thin yearly.

There is a ray of hope for the traditionalists, however: the growing support of the world's journalists, collectors and merchants who, though they may admire the modernists' best work, believe that the great traditionally-made Barolos are a singular treasure to be protected, cherished and savored.

This Offering

Our reverence for classic Barolo dates back more than 20 years, and we have long wanted to do a special issue of our newsletter devoted to it. To that end, we have over the past year purchased a number of seldom-seen, highly sought-after Barolos, putting them aside for this special issue. Some you may never see again.

Yet, given the limits of these eight pages, we could only include some of our favorite producers—and just a few of their best wines. But you can count on seeing more of both in later issues.

The Mystique of Barolo

An Important Document of Piedmont's Past & Present

Last spring we heard about a massive new English-language book on Barolo published in Italy in 2002. When our copy arrived, we were impressed with its size, the fantastic photographic portraits and long interviews of several generations of growers, beautiful vineyard shots and the kind of production for which fine Italian books are known.

However, it was only recently that we began to understand the book's importance, for it is in fact an irreplaceable oral history of the winemaking revolution that has transformed Barolo over the past quarter cen-



ture. Thirty-five producers are interviewed—both modern and old-style—and in their own words we can read their stories, their philosophies and how these times have affected them.

The book is almost impossible to find even in Italy (where it sells for \$100 or more). We can offer a few copies for \$79.95 plus shipping.

The Mystique of Barolo

Maurizio Rosso & Chris Meier

published 2002 — 10" x 12" — 288 pages

\$79.95

Conscience of the Langhe

Bartolo Mascarello's Fight to Preserve Barolo's Traditions

"The single finest Barolo made." Sheldon Wasserman

"An icon in the area for his modesty and talent, Bartolo Mascarello issues a wine simply labeled 'Barolo' ... great wine." Decanter

"The bastion of traditional winemaking in Barolo."
*The Piedmont Report**



With the passing of Giovanni Conterno last year, Bartolo Mascarello now stands alone as Barolo's Grand Old Man. In his eighties and confined to a wheelchair, he continues to produce some of Barolo's most majestic, classically styled wines.

Apart from the marvelous quality of his wine, Mascarello is famous for his traditionalism—and his didactic opposition to many of the recent changes in Langhe winemaking.

The son of the legendary Giulio Mascarello, there

still are no barriques in Bartolo's cellar (he calls barriquet Barolo "a clown with rouged cheeks") and until recently there wasn't even a telephone. In the 1950's and 1960's, he was making consistently monumental Barolos—rich, supple, intensely aromatic, deeply colored—that have stood the test of time. Over the years, he's hardly changed a thing: he makes his wines today as he did 50 years ago, from low yields and aging in immaculate old *foudre*.

He has even resisted the trend towards single-*cru* bottlings. Though he controls key sections of the great Cannubi *cru*, he makes just one wine called "Barolo."

Today, with the help of his daughter Maria-Theresa, Mascarello continues to make wines that are benchmark examples of how the great '50's and '60's Barolos were made. The wines he made during the the 1996-2000 period are some of his finest Barolos ever—each destined for long life. And, of course, his great 1990 is already legendary.

2000 Bartolo Mascarello 92 Tanzer \$69.95



Tanzer: "Complex aromas ... sweeter and fatter in the mid-palate, with more texture and depth but less thrust than the '99. Offers a near-decadent sweetness that carries through on the back end, where the tannins are similarly sweet and broad ... According to Maria-Theresa, this wine was higher in dry extract than the '99. \$110."

**The Piedmont Report.* Last month, the first issue of an important new newsletter on Barolo and Barbaresco was published by Boston's Antonio Galloni. The first issue focuses on 2001 Barbaresco as well as selected producers' 2000 Barolos. In later issues, he expects to probe issues like traditional versus modern winemaking, the long running debate over single-*cru* wines versus blends, and the influence of factors like the weather, yields and clones on the changing styles of Barolo and Barbaresco. The first issue is available as a pdf file free of charge by going to www.piedmontreport.com/PiedmontReportIssue1.pdf.

1999 Bartolo Mascarello 91+ Tanzer \$69.95



Tanzer: "Highly perfumed aromas of cherry, raspberry, wild strawberry and camphor ... A cooler, more energetic and perhaps finer wine than the '98, not to mention more backward. This has more precision and brighter acids ... I would not be surprised if this ultimately merited a considerably higher score."

1998 Bartolo Mascarello Barolo67.50

Tanzer: "93+ rating. Powerful redcurrant, camphor and mint aromas, with some dried flower high tones. Very ripe and rich ... with captivating licorice and raspberry notes. This already displays a broad range of Barolo perfumes."

1997 Bartolo Mascarello Barolo 75.00

1997 Bartolo Mascarello Barolo *Magnum*150.00

Parker: "94 rating. An impressive, old style, heavyweight effort that will age for three decades ... a striking bouquet of cinnamon, balsam wood, roses, tar, minerals, and cherry liqueur ... Powerful and long ... a classic from the old school of Piedmontese winemaking."

1990 Bartolo Mascarello Barolo179.95

Parker: "96 rating. Massive ... and a fabulously fragrant nose ... this extremely concentrated, well-integrated wine is a monumental Barolo."

The Father of Barolo

The Legacy of Giovanni Conterno

"The wines produced by Giovanni Conterno are monuments to Nebbiolo as well as to the glory of Piedmont." Robert Parker

"If I was given a choice of one bottle of Barolo before I die, I would choose Monfortino." Nicolas Belfrage

"Great, powerful, long-lived Barolos ... the respected maestro for all the Langhe's vintners, whether innovative or conservative." Gambero Rosso



For 45 years, until his death last year, Giovanni Conterno forged a reputation as perhaps the greatest of all Barolo producers, irrespective of style. The wines he made were the quintessence of "old style" Barolo: rich, powerful, massively structured, and capable of long development in bottle.

For many, his mythic **Monfortino**—the product of wild temperature swings during fermentation and 6 to 8 years in barrel—is the most perfect expression of the Nebbiolo grape. As for his glorious **Barolo Cascina Francia**, it has long been the benchmark against which other producers measure their own efforts.

Giovanni began making the wine at his family domaine in 1959, taking over from his father Giacomo Conterno. These were large shoes to fill, as his father was arguably the leading Langhe winemaker of his day. [Continued next page]

Bruno Giacosa

"If I said his top Barbarescos and Barolos can rival a great vintage of Pétrus for richness and complexity, few, I suspect, would believe it. However, his wines are on that level" Parker



Since 1955, Bruno Giacosa has made some of Piedmont's greatest wines. Through ruthless grape selection and brilliant winemaking, he has for nearly 60 years produced both Barolos and Barbarescos of breathtaking quality, always extracting the essence of each vineyard's *terroir*. Along with Giovanni Conterno and Bartolo Mascarello, Bruno Giacosa belongs to the Holy Trinity of traditional Piedmont winemaking.

Until 1993, Giacosa made monumental Barolos from Serralunga's Collina Rionda *cru*. But since then, his only Barolos have come from another famous Serralunga vineyard, Falletto. He produces two Barolos from this site: "Falletto" and "Rocche del Falletto," the latter cuvée created in 1997 to isolate the vineyard's best fruit. Situated at the top of the Falletto slope, Rocche has the vineyard's best *terroir* and oldest vines.

Giacosa's 1999 Rocche del Falletto has won raves from journalists since it was first tasted in Barolo several years

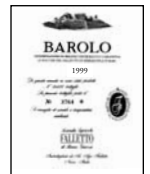
ago. When Tanzer tasted it in 2002, he reportedly asked Giacosa "why he won't be labeling this as riserva. He deadpanned: 'I need to sell wine early to get money.'"

Released last year, the '99 Rocche is already scarce, selling for nearly \$170-\$200 a bottle. We recently snagged a pristine parcel that we can sell for \$195 per magnum. We also have a limited number of bottles that are seductively priced, too. Don't miss out.

**1999 Bruno Giacosa Barolo
"Rocche del Falletto"**

94+ Tanzer

\$110.00 bt. \$195.00 mag.



Tanzer: "Deeply pitched, superripe aromas of redcurrant, tar, marzipan, tobacco and underbrush. Sweet, lush and explosively perfumed in the mouth. Less dense and structured than the 2000 but more elegantly styled. A real essence of Barolo aromatics. Finishes very long, with broad, serious tannins"

1978 Bruno Giacosa Barolo "Pugnane"245.00

In the 1970's, Giacosa made a highly regarded Barolo from the *Pugnane cru* in Castiglione Falletto. We recently purchased a case of the superb 1978 that had been perfectly cellared since release by a serious European collector. Rich, powerful, with classic sweetness of mature old-style Barolo at its best.

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But Giovanni made Barolos *at least* as profound as his father's—thanks in part to his 1974 purchase of Serralunga's Cascina Francia vineyard. With its fabulous exposure, the site was perfect for the powerful Conterno style, and from 1974 on it became the sole source for his Barolos.

Giovanni's son Roberto is sure to continue the family's legacy of monumental Barolos. But for now, we are fortunate to experience the following Giovanni Conterno masterpieces, several of which we have never before been able to offer.

Monfortino

1996 Barolo "Monfortino"
96 Wine Advocate
\$245.00



Daniel Thomases in *The Wine Advocate*: "... a brooding, backward behemoth, which reminds me of the 1978 in its youth. An unusually dark garnet for a completely traditional Barolo, its fabulously fresh aromas, plummy and spicy and redolent of roses, violets, graphite, and road tar, give way to a super-concentrated palate ... explosive on the development and finish, both mouth-coating and chewy yet nobly austere and with the length and kick which characterize the greatest of Barolo."



1995 Barolo "Monfortino"
94-95 Parker
\$199.95

Parker: "One of the great Barolo Monfortinos ... Significantly concentrated, it represents a tiny crop because of hail damage. The wine reveals the essence of licorice, kirsch, smoke, red currant and cherries, as well as the tell-tale rose petal and licorice notes. It is ripe and full-bodied, with sweet fruit, copious glycerin, and a seamless finish that lasts for nearly 45 seconds."

1990 G. Conterno Barolo "Monfortino" 345.00
Parker: "96+ rating ... Surreal ... profound ... another exhilarating effort in a succession of great Monfortinos."

1987 Barolo "Monfortino"
\$179.95



Parker: "Unquestionably the Barolo of the vintage. Its saturated dark color and huge nose of truffles, tar, and sweet tobacco tinged with black-cherry fruit are followed by a wine with gobs of glycerin, amazing power and richness, and a monstrously tannic finish. A great wine"

Cascina Francia

1999 Barolo
"Cascina Francia"
92 Wine Advocate
\$75.00



A majestic Cascina Francia, described by Daniel Thomases in *The Wine Advocate* as "substantial and enveloping ... the epitome of classic Barolo." This profound 1999 looks to be a replay of the great 1985, offering lavishly rich fruit even at this relatively early stage. Conterno was among the last to harvest in '99, producing a wine of great purity and texture.



1998 Barolo
"Cascina Francia"
94 Tanzer
\$59.95

Tanzer: "Multidimensional nose of rose petal, redcurrant, plum, mocha, minerals and spices. Wonderfully silky and spicy, with lovely harmonious acidity giving it near-perfect balance ... distinctly Burgundian in style ... Finishes with sweet tannins and ineffable perfume. A real essence of Barolo"

1995 Barolo
"Cascina Francia"
92+ Tanzer
\$79.95



Tanzer: "Superripe aromas of raspberry, cherry, redcurrant jam, strawberry, camphor and tartufo. Tightly wound and vibrant, with compelling density and clarity of red fruit flavor. Firm acidity and toothcoating tannins give this Barolo terrific structure and grip. Very long, vibrant aftertaste."

1990 G. Conterno Barolo "Cascina Francia" 189.95
Parker: "92-95 rating. A huge, blockbuster of a wine that may turn out to be one of the most concentrated wines of that great vintage."

1964 Giacomo Conterno Barolo265.00
Piedmont Report: "98 rating ... Incredibly fresh, delicate and perfumed nose that continues seamlessly onto the palate ... inviting and refreshing beyond words ... truly exceptional and unforgettable. Made from a blend of grapes the estate purchased from the Ginestra zone in Monforte, and Serralunga."

Monprivato

Mauro Mascarello's Legendary Barolo

When one talks about staunch traditionalists in Barolo, the name of Mauro Mascarello is sure to come up.

Since 1967, Mauro has been the winemaker at Giuseppe Mascarello, the family domaine founded by his grandfather in 1881. Astonishingly, in 123 years there have been just four winemakers, all directly descended from Giuseppe.

Mauro's winemaking is essentially the same as his father's and grandfather's, except that his fermentations are shorter than his predecessors: 22-25 days compared to about 65 days for his father. But a three-week fermentation on the skins is still well into traditional range and enough to give his wines their powerful aromas and structure. As for wood-aging, he continues to use the large Slavonian oak *botti* his father bought in 1956.

Barolo Monprivato

Mauro was also the first in his family to produce a single-*cru* Barolo. A century ago last year, his grandfather bought 2.5 hectares of Castiglione Falletto's great



Mauro Mascarello & Monprivato

Monprivato vineyard, but for more than 65 years the fruit was used only as a base for blending. In 1970 Mauro ended that tradition, creating Barolo Monprivato, one of Piedmont's most illustrious single-*cru* *cuvées*. And in 1980 he completed his acquisition of the vineyard's

remaining parcels, making Monprivato a monopole.

We hope to make a major Monprivato offering in the coming months. But for now, we are honored to offer a small amount of the legendary 1990 Monprivato.

1990 Barolo "Monprivato"
\$149.95



Parker: "Gloriously, up-front, decadent, and hedonistic ... The opulent 1990 Barolo Monprivato is splendidly concentrated, full-bodied, and amazingly mouthfilling."

Tanzer: "Offers compelling volume and exotic sweetness in the middle palate; fat and seamless. Large-scaled, spicy and very long on the aftertaste, with smooth tannins buried by the wine's lush fruit."

Vietti Rocche

One of the Great Old-Style Barolos

At the start of his career in the late '50's, Alfredo Currado was a traditionalist. But he soon became a leading innovator—among the first to make a single-*cru* Barolo (1961) and to depart from traditional vinification techniques (1982).



Alfredo Currado & Rocche

made traditionally—to capture the magical perfume that Castiglione Falletto's Rocche *cru* gives. Currado calls Rocche "the first vineyard to truly inspire me," and his version has, for more than 20 years, been among the greatest of all Barolos.

Yet, Currado believes that, in many ways, the old school had it right all along. In 2000, he was quoted as saying: "I think we need to turn backwards for a while ... we need to return to the idea of tannic Barolo, one which best represents our Piemontese tradition ... I don't agree with the idea of 'new' Barolo."

Today, Currado's son Luca makes the wines and most Vietti wines are fairly modern. A notable exception is the fabulous Barolo Rocche, which has always been

2000 Vietti Barolo "Rocche"79.95

Wine Spectator: "95 rating. Silky and seductive, with roses, berries and raspberries. Full bodied, with wonderfully integrated tannins. Great length. A super wine. Like sleeping in silk sheets."

1996 Vietti Barolo "Rocche"89.95

Tanzer: "92+ rating. Perfumed, classic aromas of dried fruits, dried rose, tar and eucalyptus. Rich, dense and unforthcoming ... the tannins are in balance with the wine material and the finish is impressively long. Will require at least six or eight years of patience."

Giuseppe Rinaldi

A Mythic Producer of Great Barolos

On most informed lists, Giuseppe Rinaldi is counted among the top three or four old-style producers. In Europe, the name is spoken with reverence, and the wines are a cornerstone of most serious Barolo collections. Yet Giuseppe Rinaldi is almost unknown in the United States and the wines nearly impossible to find.

Until his death eleven years ago, this venerable estate was run by Battista Rinaldi—regarded along with Bruno Giacosa and Giovanni Conterno as Piedmont's finest winemaker. With prime parcels in Brunate, Cannubi and Le Coste, he made many great Barolos, including legendary wines in 1958 and 1971.

When Battista died in 1992, and his forty-ish son Giuseppe ("Beppe") took over, the domaine might

"Rinaldi's wines offer near-magical retention of mouthfilling, velvety fruit to back up their Barolo perfume."
Steve Tanzer



well have joined the ranks of the modernists. But it didn't. Beppe Rinaldi makes some of the Langhe's most majestic old-style wines—and he does so exactly as his father had for decades, with fermentation in open-top *tini*, punching down daily by hand and aging in large oak casks for three or more years.

This Offering

Beppe Rinaldi produces two equally great Barolos. The most famous is Brunate-Le Coste, a blend of 80% Brunate and 20% Le Coste. Much less well known is the Cannubi San Lorenzo-Ravera, a 60/40 blend. If you've never heard of the Cannubi, you can be forgiven. It is not normally imported into the U.S., and the production is tiny. Yet in Europe, it is just as coveted as Brunate-Le Coste.

2000 Barolo "Brunate-Le Coste" 59.95

While some think of 2000 as a modernists' vintage, Beppe Rinaldi made two of the year's finest Barolos—regardless of style. Beppe's Brunate's are often stubbornly backward, but his 2000 borders on opulent, with deep, luscious black fruits and truffles. The finish reminds us, however, of the wine's potential longevity of 20 years.

2000 Barolo "Cannubi San Lorenzo-Ravera" 59.95

Less ready than the Brunate-Le Coste, but with perhaps even greater potential. The focus is brilliant, the palate is packed, and the complexity takes you to another level. Should be great in another 5-8 years.

1999 Barolo "Cannubi San Lorenzo-Ravera" 65.00

Beppe's 1999's should challenge his monumental 1996's and 1989's. In fact, his '99 Cannubi very much reminds us of those wines in their youth: closed, backward, even imploding. The material is there to develop into something special.

1999 Barolo "Brunate-Le Coste" 65.00

A great Rinaldi Brunate in the making. Gorgeous Nebbiolo aromas of *tartufi bianchi* and roses, and a majestic palate—profoundly structured, yet packed with fruit. Sure to be a classic.

Teobaldo Cappellano



For European collectors of old-style Barolo, the ultimate cult producer is Teobaldo Cappellano. Part winemaker, part philosopher, in 1983 Cappellano put journalists on notice that he did not want ratings published for his Barolos—a request all have honored. His wines have also been virtually unobtainable in the U.S. for years.

Yet, each fall and winter scores of European collectors line up outside his cellar door to purchase his new releases: the **Barolo Rupestris**—produced from an extraordinary plot of 60-year-old vines in Gabutti—and the **Barolo Franco**, a sublime rarity made entirely from ungrafted vines.

Having long known of the Cappellano legend (his grandfather was a towering figure in early 20th-century Barolo), we visited Teobaldo last fall and secured a small, but precious, allocation of his superb 1999's. We hope to offer them later in the year.

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The Quiet Man

The Beautiful Old-Style Barolos of Francesco Rinaldi

At eighty years old, Luciano Rinaldi is a charter member of Barolo's old school. He still makes his great Barolos from Cannubi and Brunate much as he did in 1938—except that he doesn't tread the grapes by foot himself, as he did back then. He still racks his wines as little as possible and always in accordance with the moon.

Luciano's family started its own winery, Francesco Rinaldi, in 1906. But like his famous cousin Giuseppe, Luciano can trace his winemaking roots even earlier, to the legendary Barale-Rinaldi label that reigned supreme in Barolo in the late 1800's.

Luciano Rinaldi owns vines in six different Barolo *crus*. But his most important vineyards—producing his greatest wines—are in Brunate and Cannubi (which he calls by their ancient names, Brunata and Cannubio).

His Barolos from these sites are classic. The wine-

"Luciano Rinaldi's wines are rich in color and extract, yet gentle and elegant ... superb wines."
Sheldon Wasserman



making is impeccable; he is careful to eliminate any young lots of Nebbiolo that are too high in fixed acidity or that reveal any volatile acidity. With lengthy macerations, and long aging in *botti*, his Barolos are consistently powerful, yet fine, and capable of long development in bottle.

This Offering

As any lover of old-style Barolo knows, 1996 was a great year, possibly the best since 1989. For the first few years in bottle, Rinaldi's 1996 Brunata and Cannubio were predictably backward, but recently they have blossomed, acquiring the sweet richness that is the hallmark of mature, classically made Barolo. Yet, the structure is clearly there for another decade's development.

This modest man sets modest prices for his wines. Consider his 1996 Cannubio and Brunata nothing less than a gift.

1996 Francesco Rinaldi Barolo "La Brunata" \$49.95



Simply ravishing. Exquisite ruby color; awesome nose of truffles, tar, leather and black fruits; and a long, velvety palate that goes on and on. The texture is amazing for a wine this young, and particularly for a wine from such a highly structured vintage as 1996. So, as great as it is to drink now, have no doubt that it will increase in grandeur in the years ahead.

1996 Francesco Rinaldi Barolo "Cannubio" \$49.95



A beautiful 1996, offering great richness on the palate, and intense flavors of ripe black cherries, with nuances of truffle and road tar. The color is lovely and the texture is pure velvet. Like the Brunata, you can enjoy it now or cellar it for another 10 to 20 years. A fantastic bottle of young, classic Barolo.

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