

Giacomo Conterno

The Gold Standard for Traditionally Made Barolo

For 45 years, until his death in 2004, Giovanni Conterno forged a reputation as the greatest of all Barolo producers, irrespective of style. The wines he made were the quintessence of “traditional” Barolo: rich, powerful, massively structured, and capable of long development in bottle.

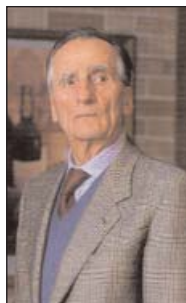
For many, his heroic Monfortino—the product of wild temperature swings during fermentation and 6 to 8 years in barrel—is the most perfect expression of the Nebbiolo grape. As for his glorious Barolo Cascina Francia, it has long been the benchmark against which other producers measure their own efforts.

Giovanni left the world many great vintages of Barolo, including 1964, 1971, 1978, 1985, 1990, 1996, 1999 and 2001. But possibly his greatest legacy was to hand over his important work to his gifted son Roberto. A talented winemaker in his own right, Roberto not only shares his father’s brilliance but is equally determined to uphold his family’s traditions. He could follow other young Langhe winemakers into modernism, but he never will. In his words, the wines of Giacomo Conterno will always belong to the generations that came before him.

The First Important Barolo

The Conterno crown jewel, Monfortino, is not only arguably the greatest Barolo; it was also the very first Barolo made in what has come to be known as the classic style.

At the time that Giovanni Conterno’s father Giacomo served in World War I, Barolo was generally sold in either cask or



At left, Giovanni Conterno and at right his son Roberto who is carrying on the Conterno family legacy.

demijohn, meant for early drinking. But when Giacomo returned from the war, he decided to create a Barolo with immense aging potential. His first wine was a 1920 Barolo Riserva, and he soon adopted the name Monfortino in honor of his home village Monforte d’Alba.

For the next 54 years, Giacomo—and then his son Giovanni—made Barolo in much the same way. Two Barolos were made, always from purchased grapes, the main distinction being fermentation technique and time in cask.

A Noble Vineyard

Then, in 1974, Giovanni acquired the Cascina Francia vineyard in Serralunga. With its fabulous exposure, the site was perfect for the powerful Conterno style, and Giovanni immediately stopped buying grapes, relying on approximately 5 hectares of Nebbiolo to produce about 600 cases of Monfortino and 1500 cases of Cascina Francia. The ownership of Cascina Francia also made it possible for Giovanni to produce a tiny amount of some of the Langhe’s finest, and most sought-after, Barbera.

Like his father, Roberto is patient in raising his wines. Consequently, the period from harvest to release is two years for his Barbera “Cascina Francia,” four years for Barolo “Cascina Francia” and seven years for Barolo “Monfortino.”

The wines of Giacomo Conterno are among the glories of Piedmontese winemaking.