



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
AND HER HEIRESSES
COMPTROLLER OF THE
KITCHEN



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CORNEY &
BARROW

INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS-1780

CAVINA
CANTINALE TYPICA
SOLDIERA®
SANGIOVESE
100% I.G.R. CASE BASS

SOLDIERA

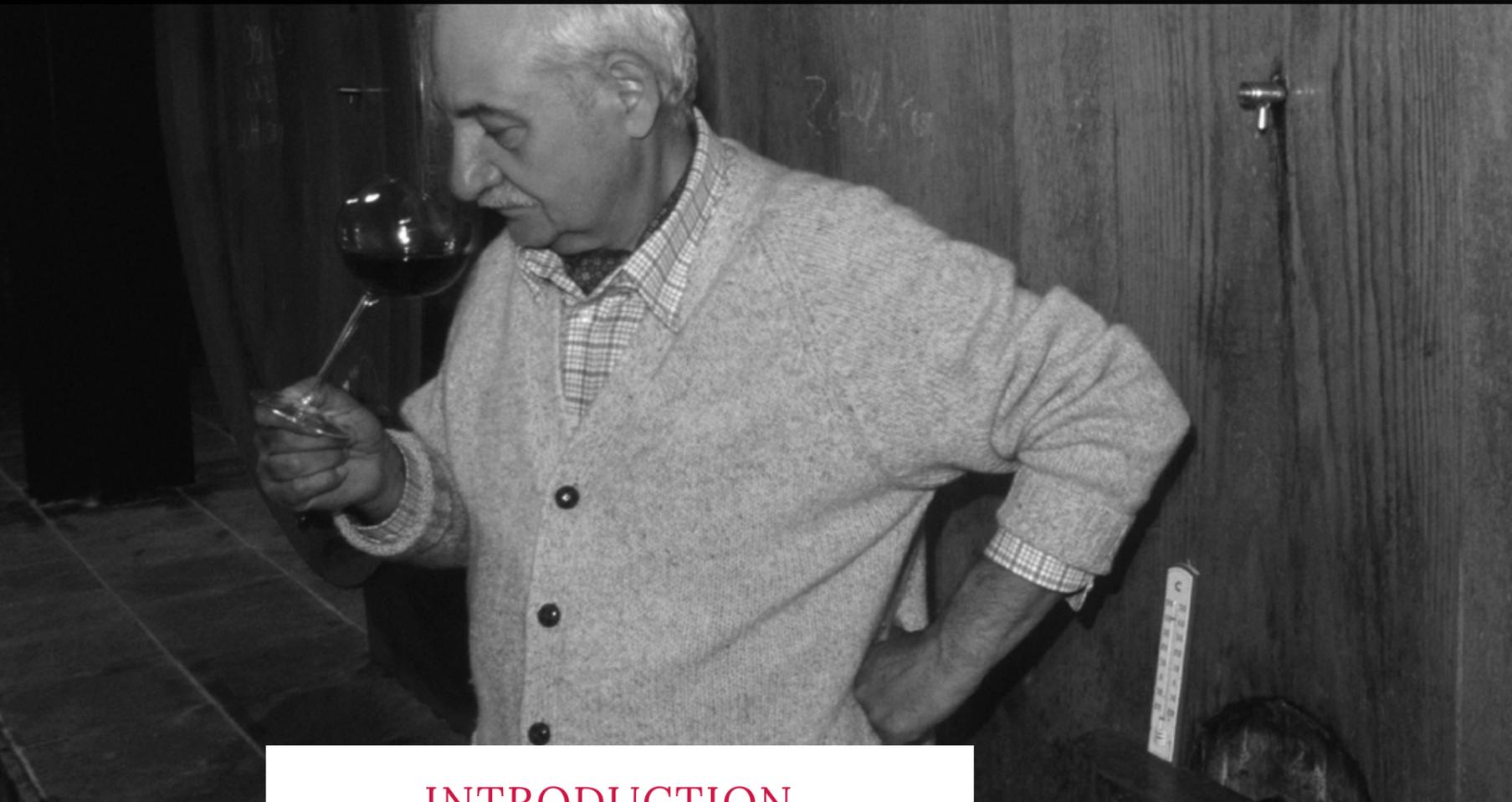
2013 VINTAGE

EXCLUSIVE TO CORNEY & BARROW IN HONG KONG, SINGAPORE,
MAINLAND CHINA, MACAU, THAILAND, MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA



“Making good wine is not easy. Making great wine is an art. It takes inspiration, passion, moderation, sense of smell and culture...”

Gianfranco Soldera



INTRODUCTION



The connection to this great estate was made when Roberto Conterno, most generously, drove Adam, Alison and myself from his magnificent estate in Barolo all the way down to Brunello di Montalcino. As a lover of, obsessively so some may say, Italian wines, to find myself walking through the wonderful gardens at Case Basse with both Roberto and Gianfranco was one of those “WOW” moments.

I think it is correct to say that any cellar should contain Soldera. The excitement this wine provides is extraordinary. Simply put, this is one of the world's greatest wine estates and a wine made by one of the wine world's great men.

There is no spitting at all in the cellar at Soldera. The cellar itself is nearly 15 metres below ground, with large stones in cages, reminiscent of Dominus in Napa, allowing the walls to “breathe”. The estate is also a place of extensive CCTV surveillance. This is understandable. On the night of 2nd - 3rd December 2012, a disgruntled ex-employee opened the taps on ten large oak botti, causing two thirds of the wine held in the cellar to be lost. Six vintages, 2007 to 2012,

literally “down the drain”. If a certain aura of protectiveness pervades the estate, it is not without cause. Having said this there are several academic studies underway at the estate, surveillance of a different sort one might say. To place this in the box labelled ‘Brunello di Montalcino’ is to do it a serious disservice. This is wine at its most profound. The 2013 vintage that we offer here draws to a close the era scarred by that cruel act of vandalism.

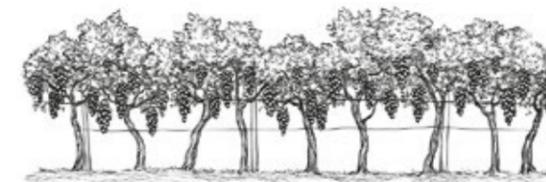
Gianfranco's children, Mauro and Monica Soldera, are the future of this great estate and are clearly cut from the same cloth as their father. Soldera is in safe hands.

William Hargrove

WILL HARGROVE
Head of Fine Wine



BACKGROUND



During the 1960s, Gianfranco Soldera was an insurance broker in Milan. There was family history in wine however: his grandfather made wine near Treviso, where Gianfranco was born, and there were winemakers on his mother's side. Having earned enough to purchase a vineyard, Gianfranco scoured Italy for land where he and his wife Graziella could produce world class wine. Importantly, it was not just wine, but world class wine which was the remit from the outset. Soon after meeting Gianfranco, it becomes clear that he would not have settled for anything less.

After looking at the Veneto, Piedmont (a region he loves) and the rest of Tuscany, they discovered an abandoned farmhouse in Montalcino. The surrounding land was considered unsuitable for vines. Gianfranco disagreed, something he is notoriously confident in doing. Absolutely convinced by the potential of the soil and the aspect, he promptly acquired the property. He started from scratch, planting only Sangiovese, a tenet reinforced by his ‘100% Sangiovese’ label inscription, which doubles as a neat dig at other producers in Montalcino who have been less than fastidious about this DOCG rule.



THE VINEYARD

One can imagine what an outsider Gianfranco Soldera must have been in the early days, an intense city boy from the north with grand ideas.



An important early alliance was with the winemaker Giulio Gambelli, “*il grande maestro del Sangiovese*”. Gambelli continued to consult at Case Basse until his death in 2012.

The two men discovered common ground, both ideologically and more prosaically on such topics as minimal intervention, no temperature control, no added yeasts, long maceration on skins and long ageing in large Slavonian *botti*. Although the estate is referred to as Case Basse, the name of the Azienda Agricola, it is composed of two vineyards, Case Basse and Intistieti, of which Case Basse is the smaller. The vineyards lie on the southern side of Montalcino, facing southwest. They are separated by some 400 metres. Case Basse, covering two hectares and planted in 1972, is about ten metres higher in elevation than Intistieti, which is twice the size at four hectares and was planted in 1973.

The planting density is around 3,300 vines per hectare, the vines being planted on limestone and schist. Gianfranco has gone to great lengths to foster a symbiotic relationship between the vines and their surroundings. The vineyards are set within eight hectares of woodlands, with Graziella's bucolic two hectare garden adjacent to the estate buildings (complete with a panoply of bees, which rise from the ankle-level lavender rather alarmingly as you brush past it).

Case Basse is constantly evolving as Gianfranco looks for ways in which to encourage a bird- and insect-rich environment. Oat straw is scattered between the vines, revitalising the soil, allowing it to breathe and protecting the roots. Totally organic, Gianfranco is convinced that foreign agents ultimately end up in the wine. The vines themselves are tended with extraordinary attention to detail. Everything is done by hand, pruning hard and short in winter, with a further green pruning during the season. The vines are cordon-trained (a mixture of single and double cordons) and spur-pruned.

The canes are allowed to grow as long as they can, unimpeded, Gianfranco believing that they should never be cut. Indeed, in the entrance to the cellar, there is a wall-mounted cane of vast proportions as a clear statement of best practice. 118 leaves and 300 grams of grapes per cane is the average.



THE CELLAR

“Everything works best when nature is left to itself”

GIANFRANCO SOLDERA

April 2018



Gianfranco is clear that great wine is made through ruthless, sometimes maniacal selection in the vineyard. In contrast, there is a total absence of intervention in vinification. The extraordinary cellar, designed by architect Stefano Lambardi, has a real beauty in its contrived simplicity. It is completely cement and plaster free, the walls having been built with stones wedged into wire netting. This is all to allow the building to breathe and the wine to mature even more slowly than in the past.

The wine is bottled unfiltered, direct from the *botti*, the absence of an intermediary holding tank meaning there may well be some variation between different bottlings. Gianfranco would not have it any other way.

The bottles, unique to Soldera, have been chosen for optimal wine conservation, dark in colour to protect against the light, long-necked in order to take supreme-quality corks. Once bottled, the wine is given time to acclimatise.

The label features a dolphin, sacred to Dionysus, god of wine and fertility, which is also to be found in statue form in the centre of Graziella's wonderful garden.



“The cobbled floor has to breathe, the ceiling has to breathe, the whole building has to be able to breathe, just like an animate being.”

Gianfranco Soldera

WHEN AND HOW TO DRINK SOLDERA

Below is something I first wrote for the 2009 offer but I feel is it well worth repeating:

I feel strongly that the many different ways in which Brunello is made can lead to some popular misconceptions that should not apply to this specific wine. Gianfranco is also very definite on how his wines should be served. The wine should always be served cool, at what one might refer to as cellar temperature, allowing time to open and evolve. It should not be decanted. If a decanter must be used for an older bottle then it should be as narrow and bottle-shaped as possible. Gianfranco has also designed his own glasses. He believes that glasses should not be too wide.

Personally, I feel the biggest missed opportunity occurs by people assuming these are bold, rich wines that have to be aged for extended time; Gianfranco believes the bottles should be upright not lying down. They do age exceptionally well but not to drink these wines in youth, as well as with age, is a fundamental mistake. A great wine is always a great wine and that is never truer than here. Soldera wines have amongst the widest drinking windows of any wines I know. I think Alison (Buchanan) summed it up very well in the 2006 offer: "Tasting these wines one can only marvel at their complexity, their ability to be luscious, weightless, elegant, refined and yet powerful. They have subliminal authority and intensity." This may seem a patronising title for a section of this offer. It is not meant to be.

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THE 2013 VINTAGE

The academic studies referred to in the introduction also extend to Gianfranco's very detailed vintage report. From bloom to harvest the 2013 growing season was a long one at 129 days. The season can be split into two distinct halves, the bloom (budbreak) to *veraison* (change of grapes colour from green to red) phase, lasting 65 days being cooler and wetter than the average. The *veraison* to harvest section, at 64 days, was cooler than average with less rainfall than usual. Both vineyards were kept under continuous inspection with the aim to eliminate, from each vine by hand, any bunches that were not perfectly healthy. The harvest was carried out on October 3rd. After the harvest the grapes were scrutinised in the cellar before full de-stemming. Both alcoholic and malolactic fermentations followed in a nice, uneventful fashion. Ageing was carried out in large Slavonian oak barrels for 48 months.

Just under the equivalent of 1500 cases (12x75cl) were produced.

Soldera 2013

Wonderful deep yet transparent ruby colour*. Decadently sweet fruited attack on the nose, bright and pure. A deliciously welcoming nose of, mostly, red fruits with a little white pepper and damson. The sweetness on the palate is kept perfectly in check with a moreish salinity. The tannic structure is there but you have to look for it, perfect in balance. Every sip brings new layers. Latterly there is a fresh wet beef element to the nose adding further complexity. Quite some wine this, wonderful. A wide drinking window as ever!

Corney & Barrow Score 18-18.5+
Recommended drinking from 2019 - 2040+

£1,550/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK
£1,600/case of 3 magnums, in bond UK

* I asked Gianfranco if the colour of his wines each year tells him anything and he simply replied "The colour is for the stupid"...at least he was smiling!



To Order

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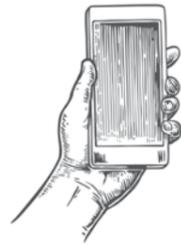
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PLEASE NOTE

These wines are released en primeur. Delivery dates to be confirmed. All prices are quoted in bond UK.





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We have offices and sales outlets in Hong Kong and Singapore.
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