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INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS

Established 1780



GIACOMO CONTERNO

The Wines Of Giacomo Conterno

2007 & 2005 Vintages

The Langhe area of Italy's Piedmont region is one of the more staggeringly beautiful wine producing regions in the world. Roberto Conterno, now at the helm of Giacomo Conterno, is firmly rooted in this land as were his father, grand father and great grandfather before him. Roberto treads a wonderfully paradoxical path. There is something of the dare-devil in him – he is a keen pilot who loves cars, motorbikes, skiing and rock climbing – yet, fundamentally, he is steeped in tradition, with a palpable love and profound respect for his inherited *terroir*. Vineyard-bound for the majority of his life, it is probably healthy to let off steam in other ways.

Roberto has been the heart and soul of Giacomo Conterno, since his father Giovanni's untimely death in 2003. It cannot ever be easy to take over from an iconic figure and Roberto descends from a line of them. Giovanni Conterno, Roberto's great grandfather was a pioneer in the region, from humble beginnings, selling his wine from a small bar. With his son Giacomo, Giovanni began producing, bottling and exporting well ahead of the game and they bottled the first Barolo Monfortino Riserva in 1920. Giacomo had run the estate since 1934 and passed the reigns to his sons, Giovanni and Aldo in 1961.

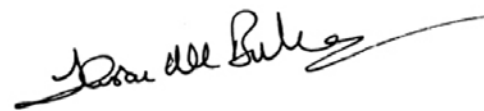
Giovanni, the elder brother, had worked with his father with the 1958 vintage and had been in charge since 1959. He elected to follow a very traditional path while Aldo was more interested in modernising Barolo. In 1969, Aldo left the family business for pastures new. Five years later, Giovanni spear-headed a fortuitous and massively courageous investment, in the 6 hectare monopole of Cascina Francia. Situated at 400 metres above sea level, this limestone and sandstone slope faces southwest – a fabulous site. Quality had always been the family's watchword and the company hallmark but, for the first time, quality would now be entirely under family control. Prior to this, they had bought in grapes and were super-selective but this acquisition took pursuit of excellence to a higher plane.

Thus the weight of history might bear heavily on the shoulders of Roberto – though all evidence points to the contrary. Even the tightest-lipped cynics would have to admit that Roberto bears the responsibility lightly. Hard work and attention to detail, allied to near fanatical traditionalism and perfectionism, has produced award winning wines year on year.

There are 14 hectares in total now, 4.6 ha of Barbera and 9.4 ha Nebbiolo. Farmed organically. Roberto is a firm advocate of organic viticulture, constantly aware of the sustainability of his land and his responsibility to past, present and future generations. The yields of Barbera d'Alba and Barolo are low, at around 30hl/ha.

In common with so many of our Principals, Roberto is very much at the centre of controls, mobile phone constantly attached to his ear. When we last visited much of the telephone activity was due to some very exciting developments. Roberto had just secured a very rare and exciting find – 3 hectares of fabulously sited *terroir*, Cerretta, in Serralunga (of which more anon.) This is the first addition to the estate since the acquisition of Cascina Francia and is hugely exciting.

There will be no Monfortino Riserva released this year. It is only produced in exceptional vintages and released when Roberto deems it to be ready. Montfortino 2002 will be offered in 2010.



Alison Buchanan
Associate Director, Buying
September 2009

2007 is one of the greatest vintages for Barbera I have ever known.

Roberto Conterno, August 2009



2007 Vintage Notes

2007 was a great year, one of the mildest and driest over the last 50 years. The winter of 2006 to 2007 was unusually dry and warm, depleting water reserves. There then followed the hottest spring for fifty years, compounding the precocious growing season. June, happily, saw some rain, in time for soaring temperatures in August. Although hot, conditions were more temperate than in 2003, particularly with cooler night temperatures. This, combined with some rain in August gradually reined back the accelerated ripening process. Even so, this was the earliest harvest in 30 years. With the exception of a very selective green harvest, work in the vineyard and in the cellar was uneventful at the Giacomo Conterno estate, often a positive sign. The grapes were brought in, de-stemmed and macerated for 15 to 20 days under temperature-controlled conditions (30°C). After fermentation the wine was transferred to enormous, old, Slavonian oak *botti* for two years maturation, prior to bottling.

Barbera d'Alba DOC Cascina Francia 2007

Corney & Barrow Score 18 plus – 19 plus

Really intense, inky-plum in colour, this presents macerated plums and cherries on the nose with an attractive, pure focus. The palate is rounded and accessible, full and ripe. Generous, this has an uplifting freshness throughout. The balance is impeccably pitched with good intensity of fruit, ripe tannins and a fresh acidity – very fine, with a persistent, rich finish. 2007 was a masterpiece for Barbera, according to Roberto.

£280/case of 12 bottles, in bond UK

£330/case of 6 magnums, in bond UK

Recommended drinking from 2009 to 2017

2005 Vintage Notes

Although slightly cooler than normal, 2005 was a rather unremarkable year, until harvest, when it rained sporadically. Timing would be key. The year had been exceptionally dry, initially causing concerns over hydric stress. At Conterno, they started harvesting Barbera at the beginning of October, before the rain, but stopped and waited before starting the Nebbiolo. Nebbiolo is a late-ripening and therefore really benefited from a prolonged season, carrying on ripening until harvest began on the 15th October. There were problems elsewhere, where the early rains caused a deal of panic and the harvest was consequently brought in rapidly, before achieving total maturity. At Conterno, the balance is very fine. The de-stemmed grapes had a prolonged maceration of 35 to 40 days under temperature-controlled conditions (30°C). After fermentation the wine was put into traditional Slavonian oak *botti* for four years maturation, prior to bottling.

Barolo DOCG Cascina Francia 2005

Corney & Barrow Score 18 to 19

The Barolo is a laudable standard-bearer both for Giacomo Conterno and for the vintage. Jet-plum in colour, this has a heady, spiced nose rich in vibrant primary fruit, laced with pepper and underscored by a fine minerality. The palate is very fresh and fragrant, violets, roses and red fruits, particularly strawberries to the fore, supported by rounded, well-integrated tannins. The most impressive aspect of Conterno's Barolo 2005 is its sheer elegance. For customers who are increasingly tired of sledgehammer oak and wines overly marked by winemaking, this address is the perfect port of call, producing exceptionally honest, traditional translations of remarkable *terroir*.

£1,075/case of 12 bottles, in bond UK

£199/case of 1 magnum, in bond UK

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2025 plus

Tasting Guide

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

14–16 A very good to excellent wine.

16–18 An excellent to outstanding wine.

18–20 An outstanding to legendary wine.

- *Wines are judged within their peer group.*
- *A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a 'spread' (e.g. 14–16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A 'plus' adds further to that potential.*
- *A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.*

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