



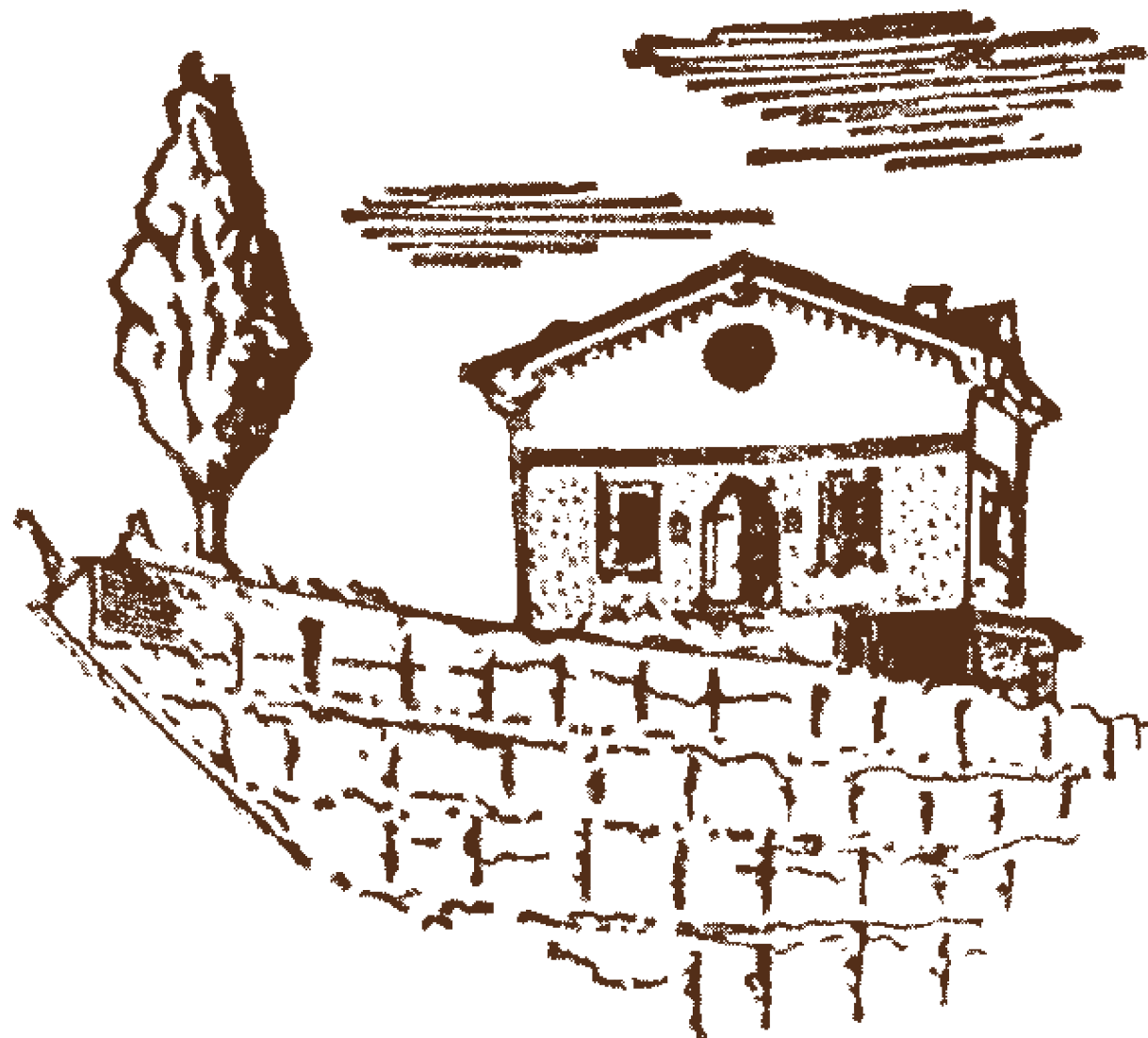
BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
WINE MERCHANTS
CORNEY & BARROW LIMITED
LONDON



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HIS MAJESTY THE KING
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INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS-1780



NERVI

2014 & 2015 VINTAGES



“For Gattinara, the arrival of the most prestigious producer in Italy is clearly a huge positive.”

ANTONIO GALLONI

INTRODUCTION

There aren't many more exciting occasions in wine for me than hearing of Roberto Conterno buying a parcel, a vineyard, or better still, an estate.

With Roberto having expanded the great Cantina Giacomo Conterno estate in Serralunga, by acquiring a part of the Cerretta vineyard (in 2008) and then Arione (in 2015), he has clearly been on the lookout for opportunities. An analogy can be drawn here between a man of Barolo buying in Alto Piedmont and the Burgundians who are now looking to Mâcon and Beaujolais. Those of you who know Roberto will understand that detail is his thing whether it is in the vineyard, in the winery or now, adding to the family's holdings, the acquisition of **Azienda Vitivinicola Nervi**.

Nervi was very much on my radar, from the two previous occasions I had tasted. Both times I was sufficiently intrigued and impressed to do a write-up on my own blog. I liked the wines very much but that crucial, human link just wasn't there – YET.

Adam and I then visited Gattinara back in May this year. Roberto drove us the 90 minutes it takes from Monforte d'Alba to Gattinara – or rather, that is the time it takes the notoriously fast-driving Roberto! We went straight to the vineyards. It is becoming something of a cliché these days

to say that great wines are “grown and not made” but it is clearly the case here. Getting up to Molsino was a job only remotely possible in a four wheel drive vehicle. The five of us – Stephanie Flou and Claudia Simion, two crucial parts of the Conterno team – joining Roberto, Adam and I were packed in tightly. The combination of the soils, the aspect, the light and the altitude is something of a delicious cocktail for the Nebbiolo grape.

Ordinarily there will be three wines, all from the Nebbiolo grape. Gattinara itself is joined by two single vineyards – Valferana & Molsino. Roberto, however, doesn't really do “rules” as you may know so he has already made a bold decision in blending the single vineyards with the Gattinara for the 2015 vintage.

This means that this offer is something of a gem. We are offering Valferana 2014 and Molsino 2014 – the single vineyards – alongside the Gattinara 2015 which has been “supercharged” with the single vineyards' 2015 fruit. In the pages that follow you will find history and geography as well as information on the crucial human elements.



WILL HARGROVE
Head of Fine Wine



HISTORY

A history of the Gattinara region

The history of **Azienda Vitivinicola Nervi** dates back more than 100 years. The history of wine in the area goes back further still. The 10th century tower, *Torre della Castelle*, that still stands prominently above the town, was built to guard the vineyards. The Valferana vineyard, more about which below, can be traced back to 1242 in Gattinara's municipal deeds.

In 1787, Thomas Jefferson stayed at the Hotel Tre Re in Vercelli and drank his first Gattinara. The wine made a lasting impression and was the beginning of his passion for Nebbiolo. From the evidence in his journals, it has been deciphered that this wine was most likely a sparkling rosé: *"There is a red wine of Nebiule made in this neighbourhood which is very singular. It is about as sweet as the silky Madeira, as astringent on the palate as Bordeaux, as brisk (sparkling) as Champagne. It is a pleasing wine"*. Things have moved on since then!

Until the end of the 19th century, Gattinara was held in far higher regard than Barolo and Barbaresco. Phylloxera savaged the vineyards, reducing the area from over 600 hectares to just over 100. In 1872, a relative of Luigi Nervi's, Pietro Giovanni



Nervi, helped establish Italy's second oenological research station in Gattinara. The analysis performed at the centre resulted in the 1875 quality classification of North Piemonte's terroirs. Gattinara was placed first, followed by Lessona, Grignasco, Ghemme, Cossato, Sizzano, Boca and Briona. The head of the research station, Giovanni Battista Cerletti commented:

"The best wines of North Piemonte enter into the category of Grand Vins d'Italie and match the great wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy, particularly the latter to which the North Piemontese wines are similar. This conclusion is supported by the prices obtained by a good Gattinara or Ghemme."

Italo, the only son of Margherita and Luigi Nervi, was largely responsible for obtaining the official DOC classification for Gattinara in 1967, with the higher-quality DOCG classification obtained in 1990. The wines must contain at least 90% Nebbiolo, known locally as Spanna, with up to 10% Bonarda di Gattinara and no more than 4% Vespolina. Ageing is in oak for a minimum of one year, two years for Riserva, plus two years in bottle.



NERVI – a brief history

Azienda Vitivinicola Nervi - Founded by Luigi Nervi in 1906, Nervi is Gattinara's oldest operating winery. Luigi's son, Italo, grew the company by purchasing vineyards and expanding their cellars. Italo passed away in 1975 with no direct heirs and left his shares in Nervi to relatives.

The company was then sold to Germano Bocciolone in 1991, a steel manufacturing entrepreneur, who embarked on a massive investment programme, including a stainless steel vinification plant, 40 new Slavonian oak barrels and the replanting of the Molsino vineyard. His sons sold the majority share to the Astrup family in 2011.

Erling Astrup had asked Roberto Conterno for his opinion before buying, and after tasting older vintages, Conterno said it was wholly impossible not to make great wine here. In April 2018, Roberto Conterno, acquired 90% of Azienda Vitivinicola Nervi.



THE VINEYARDS

Geological Background

A series of seismic events has given the area of Gattinara a unique soil structure. 280 million years ago, volcanic rocks were created when the Valsesia super-volcano erupted. Then, when Africa collided with Europe to form Monte Rosa 60 million years ago, these rocks were forced to the surface as gravel. Most of this was washed away over time except for that of Gattinara's higher slopes. This has created a unique mineral-rich terroir. The gravel is rich in iron, manganese, zinc and copper. In addition, the high clay content - paralleled by Serralunga d'Alba - and an absence of chalk give rise to acidic soil conditions, perfectly suited to Nebbiolo. Nestled in the foothills of Monte Rosa, the vineyards are protected from northerly winds.

The vineyards

There are currently 28 hectares (ha) under vine.

Molsino, at 12ha, is Alto Piedmont's finest south-facing amphitheatre. 7-8ha would ordinarily be considered for the Vigna Molsino bottling. The altitude is 350-420m.

Valferana is 8ha in size and is particularly high in iron and manganese, up to six times that of other Nebbiolo producing regions. Around 3-4ha would, at the moment, be considered for the Vigna Valferana bottling. The remainder is for the Gattinara. The altitude is 320m.

Garavoglie is 7ha and was replanted in 2015 with thirteen different Spanna (local name for Nebbiolo) clones, ensuring the original Nebbiolo clones of Alto Piedmont remain an integral part of Nervi vineyards.

Casaccie is the last site, at a minute 1ha.

Pruning and harvesting at all sites is carried out by hand.

THE WINERY

Enrico Fileppo is the chief oenologist and has been with the winery since 1983.

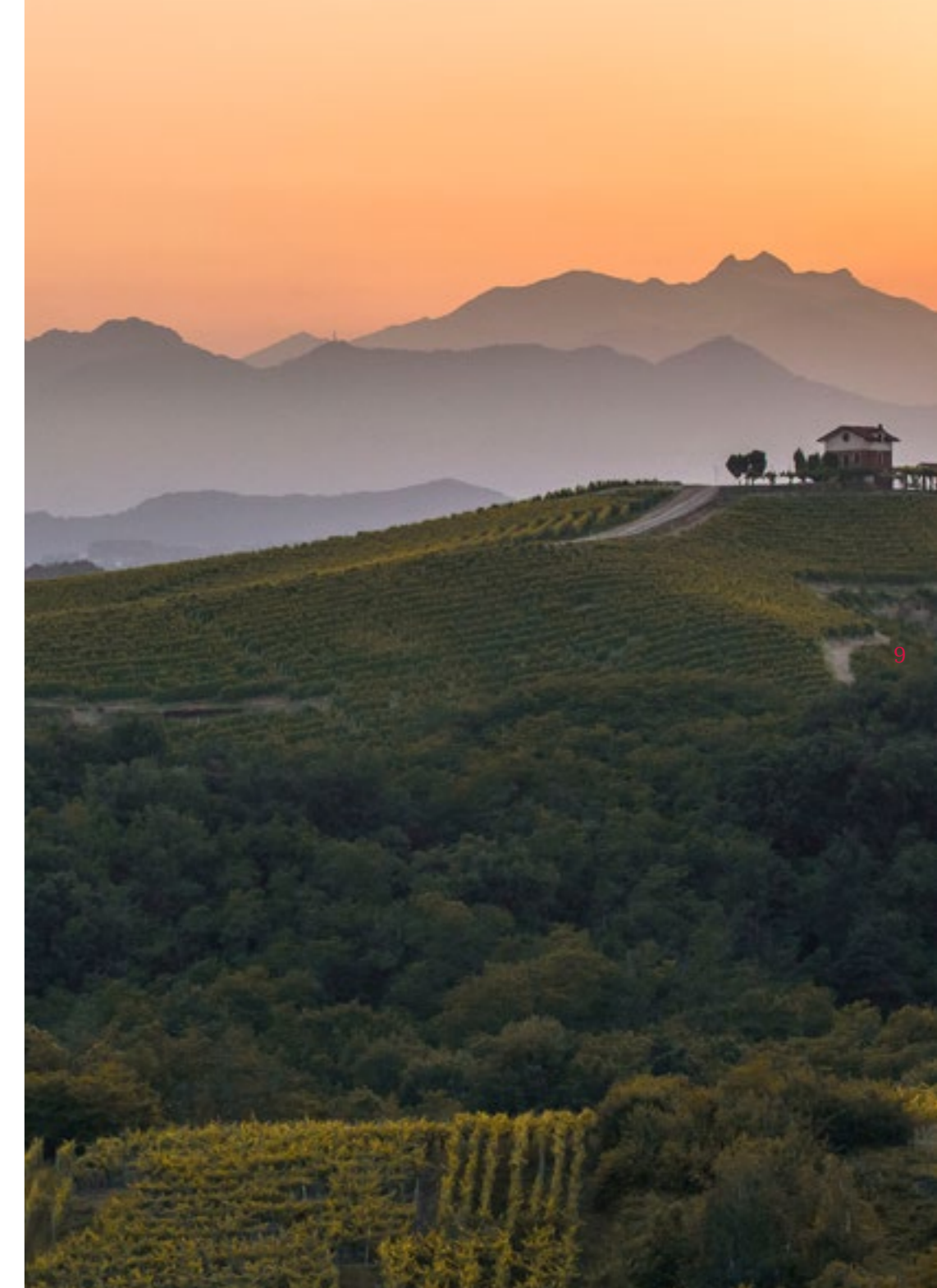
In the cellar, native yeasts are used. Roberto is now incredibly hands-on here, as one would expect.

For the single vineyard wines - **Vigna Valferana** and **Vigna Molsino** - there is gentle destemming and crushing. Fermentation is in truncated conical oak vats, at controlled temperatures. Maceration lasts 3-4 weeks. The ageing that follows is for a minimum of 40 months in old wood. The sizes of that old wood varies from 10hl to 76hl; it is an extraordinary cellar.

For the **Gattinara**, similarly, destemming and crushing is very gentle, followed by fermentation in stainless steel vats, again at controlled temperatures. The ageing here is for 30 months in large old wood. The typical production levels are Molsino - 1,325 cases (12x75cl), Valferana - 575 cases and Gattinara - 7,085 cases. The alcohol levels are typically 13.5%.

Large oak casks, or *botte*, are used for ageing and are made of Austrian, French, German and Slavonian oak. More than 100 years of wine production have shown that only through a long and controlled ageing process can the high potential of Nebbiolo tannins be transformed into a well-balanced wine. For this reason, in the Nervi cellars, ageing time is lengthened to more than that required by the Gattinara DOCG.

The minimum aging required by the Gattinara DOCG is three years, two of which must be in cask. The wines of Nervi age, as above, for four years, at least 2.5 years of which are in oak. This explains Luigi Nervi's motto: *Nectar in tempore*, which implies that patient ageing in the cellar transforming the Nebbiolo grapes into the precious elixir which made the Roman gods immortal - just in case you were in doubt.





THE VINTAGES

2015

2015 began with a mild winter and spring, both with a good amount of rain. A very warm summer followed. From the second half of June throughout the month of July, there was no rain. This changed in August when they received 140mm. The temperatures during the summer were above-average maximums of 22°C in June, 27°C in July and 23°C in August. The harvest started on 7th October and finished on 15th October.

In Gattinara, the vines suffered a little from the heat and the lack of water during the summer. At a certain point the phenolic maturation of the vines was blocked (a natural vine response in order to protect themselves): as a result, ripening was slowed. It then restarted in August thanks to the rainfall. Ultimately the distinction between Molsino and Valferana was less clear than it often is. This is the sole reason Roberto has decided to make one blend of Gattinara in 2015, rather than to release the single vineyards.

2014

In 2014, spring sprung a little early in Gattinara. The beginning of summer saw average temperatures, meaning that progress remained ahead of schedule. The rainfall during June, July and August was a little above average. This was in terms not so much of the number of days as of its intensity. During the summer, the average temperature was 21°C, whereas in September it was 19°C.

In September and October there were many sunny days. The harvest started on 16th October and finished on 23rd October. Despite the challenges of the season, Nebbiolo and its astonishing capacity to adapt won the day. As is so often the case, the lovely weather in September and October encouraged a gradual and consistent maturity.

&



NERVI
G A T T I N A R A

THE WINES

A word on serving - as with so many red wines made from the thinner-skinned varieties - Pinot Noir, Grenache, Nebbiolo etc - these wines reward being opened early when possible, though not, in my view, decanted.

GATTINARA 2015

As mentioned above, Roberto has decided to blend in all of both the Vigna Molsino and Vigna Valferana fruit to make this one wine from 2015. To use a good but slightly lazy analogy, this would be the same as a Burgundian producer choosing to combine *premier cru* with *village* fruit and bottle it under the *village* label, Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé being a fine example.

This wine has a lovely pure red fruited nose with a good dash of salinity. The structure is in the wine, by which I mean the tannin is integrated and whilst there, it does not dominate. The palate continues with the red fruit but is joined by a light pepper and a tangy savoury component. I see this giving a lot of joy from the off, but ageing very well. A fine Nebbiolo and a superb introduction to what can be done in Gattinara. Bravo Enrico and Roberto.

Corney & Barrow Score 17
Recommended drinking from 2019 - 2027+

£225/Case of 6 bottles, in bond UK
£245/Case of 12 halves, in bond UK
£490/Case of 6 Magnums, in bond UK
£180/Case of 1 Double Magnum, in bond UK

VIGNA MOLSINO 2014

Cherry fruit here, a really alluring nose which sucks you in. This manages to be both "proper" and yet lush and overtly appealing at the same time. Good tannins frame the wine but do not dominate - this is sensitively done. The finish, fruited again but ultimately savoury, is special and defined by that most crucial of attributes - moreishness!

Corney & Barrow Score 17.5 - 18
Recommended drinking from 2020 - 2032+

£395/Case of 6 bottles, in bond UK
£830/Case of 6 Magnums, in bond UK
£295/Case of 1 Double Magnum, in bond UK

VIGNA VALFERANA 2014

Very pure, sweet red fruits, strawberry and raspberry. Real poise. Again, on the palate there is a redness of fruit which is counterbalanced by a little white pepper. The tannins are refined, meaning there is both a genuine nature to the age-worthy Nebbiolo fruit as well as an appeal for drinking now. Delicious.

Corney & Barrow Score 17.5
Recommended drinking from 2020 - 2030+

£395/Case of 6 bottles, in bond UK
£830/Case of 6 Magnums, in bond UK
£295/Case of 1 Double Magnum, in bond UK

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. For the benefit of simplicity, wines are scored out of 20. We will often use a range of scores (e.g. 16.5 to 17) to indicate the potential to achieve a higher mark. When a '+' is shown it adds further to that potential. Wines from lesser vintages will, inevitably, show a lower overall score.

Wines are judged, in a very broad sense, against their peers. Why? Well, you cannot easily compare a Ford with an Aston Martin, other than they are both cars and have wheels. It is not that different with wine. A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes and, as always, speak to our sales team.

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