

## La Spinetta One Liter Club, for the real wine lover...



No rain in September and October was great for the harvest, but bad for the white truffles...

Con molto calma (without stress) we finished the 2011 harvest at the end of September. Not being rushed by forecasts of rain, all producers were able to harvest without any problems. As soon as the grapes were in the cellars the truffle hunters and gourmets were very much hoping for rain. No rain unfortunately, equals no white truffles. When the truffle market started, we worried about what they were going to offer, but miraculously the fair was full of the white root and sellers claiming that these were all locally found. Miracles or dishonesty, who knows... More important, last week it finally rained and so visitors coming in November should be blessed with more white truffle luck. Enjoy!

*Bruno, Carlo and Giorgio Rivetti and the La Spinetta Team*

### A word from Giorgio



“How long shall I age this wine?”....

Is probably the question that I get asked most frequently. It is a good question, no doubt, however sometimes I wonder what to reply, especially if the wine lover asking me is in his seventies or eighties.

I believe that great wines are great from the beginning and don't develop greatness only over years of bottle aging. A ten year old Barolo, that is already showing age and oxidation has never been a great wine, where a ten year old Barolo, that is full of fruit and flower, length and beautiful tannin structure, was already a great wine, when it was first released. Now, don't get me wrong, I am not against aging wines. In the contrary, I find nothing more exciting, than to drink a great wine over years to come, and witness its development. But I am no believer of buying a wine for it's reputation. Having never tasted it and to lay it down for ten or fifteen years to then

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discover, that this wine is long past its "peak", or actually, that it has never had the quality, that I had hoped for. I honestly want to tell the people my age or older, "carpe diem", please buy what you believe is great, but drink it also!

Life is too short to wait for greatness...

*Giorgio, the farmer*

From a grape to the bottle, a behind the scenes look at what really goes into each bottle of wine.

We thought that for once we give you the entire A to Z. From grape to bottle is a long process, yet from winter vine to grape to bottle even longer.

If you have a moment to read, then please continue. Some you might already know, but some might be new to you.

Here at La Spinetta we believe the only way to produce a high quality wine you must start in the vineyards. So we have a full time vineyard team that consists of 60 people that is led by Giovanna and Giorgio. There is a lot that goes into the management of a vineyard to insure the best possible quality of fruit.

The vineyards go through an annual cycle that needs special attention all year long. We start with the vines going dormant for the winter. During this time we will prune the vines to the required number of buds for the next growing season. Once the weather warms up in the spring the vines will go through what is called bud burst. At this time it is very important to train the buds to grow to produce a canopy will be full and open. After about 50 days the new shoots growing will start to flower. After the initial clusters appear the flowers start to grow in size to attract bees for pollination.

Next the vines will go through "fruit set" this means that after the pollination when the flower begins to make a seed the fruit is formed to protect that seed. This period will determine the potential for this year's crop. After the berries have formed and are starting to need more

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attention we go through and start to trim the unruly canopy "canopy management" so the vine will start to concentrate on the growth of the fruit. We did this work together with some of you in May during our hands on day.

We will watch over the vineyards very carefully at this stage to see what clusters are forming evenly and which ones are the strongest. This will indicate what clusters we will remove for green harvest.

Green harvest at the end of June / beginning of July (also green harvesting we did with members during our last hands on day) is done to control the concentration in the grapes. By removing most of the clusters on each vine we are letting the stronger clusters retain most of the minerals and nutrients needed to make great wine. With our Nebbiolo we will green harvest a few different times. First we will make a green harvest, going through the vineyards to pull off any of the weaker clusters. Then once we have the right number of cluster per vine we go through again and trim the bottoms of the Nebbiolo cluster. What that does for the grapes is two things: the tip or bottom of the Nebbiolo cluster is the first to ripen and usually that part we will not use because it raisins quickly. Second: it allows the grape clusters to balloon out which gives the thin skinned and very delicate Nebbiolo more air. More air means that there is less of a chance for mold and fungus.

Verasion indicates the beginning of ripening. It is the change in the berry from green to red (red varieties). Also this is the stage where the berry starts to create sugar and the harsh acidities start to mellow out.

Now it is time for us to wait until the ripening process is finished. Close to harvest time, we will go through all the vineyards everyday tasting the grapes to see when they are fully ripe. From that is when we decide to harvest.

Harvest time, probably the most exciting time of the year. It is a time of year where your 90 year old grandmother has more energy than the youth of today and you cannot beat them to the vineyards. Once our grapes have been harvest from selected areas of the vineyards that are ready first, then we take the grapes directly to the cantina.

The grapes are brought in cassette (small plastic baskets) this is very important to insure that the grapes have no damage to them so there is no chance of a spontaneous fermentation and oxidation during transporting the grapes from the vineyard to the cantina. The grapes are immediately de-stemmed and crushed. Once we de-stemm the Moscato it is immediately placed in the bladder press. The juice will be pressed delicately for 5 hours in the bladder press until the skins from the grapes are literally as dry as multch. For our red wine we put the grapes in the Rotor fermenters these are temperature controlled vats that will mix the juice

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with the skins using timed paddles. From this we can control the length of fermentation and when we wish to stop it to get it at the right level or alcohol, acidity, and sugar.

Once the juice has spent enough time in the Rotor Fermenters we will move the red wine to the bladder press to get it off the skins and seeds. Once that has been pressed we move the wine to finish its alcoholic fermentation in stainless steel tanks. All of our red wines are barrel aged for at least one year, so once alcoholic fermentation is finished we move the wine to barrels to go through a second fermentation. Malolactic fermentation it is called and this is when the harsh Malic acid is changed to Lactic acid. What this does is it softens the wine so you no longer have any harsh acids from the malic acid. All of our barrels we use are French oak that have a medium toast and we use about 65% new every year. To give you an idea each barrique costs us 1200 euro a barrel. In the room that we use to house the barrique we have about 1,200 barrels. The barrels that are re-used are only one year old and we only use the barrel twice. Once the barrel has been used twice we then sell them to other larger wineries in Italy.

After the wines have spent enough time in barrique we then set them up for bottling. The bottling line is a really wonderful machine. The bottles are placed on a conveyor belt and are washed, filled, corked, labeled, and ready to be packaged. With the help of this machine we are able to bottle 10,000 bottles in 8 hours. The bottles that we use for our wines come from Saint Gobain Glass. Saint Gobain is the world's leading glass production company. They specialize in everything from glass bottles to the windows of the Louvre. They are known for having the best quality and as a result they have made bottles that are hard to break. By this for example in 2009 there was a very large earthquake that happened in L'Aquila Abruzzo. The whole city was destroyed except for one bottle of Pin 2000, if you come to visit us in Castagnole you can see this bottle that survived. After the bottles are labeled they are packaged and ready to ship. As you can see there is a lot of care and hard work that goes into making a delicious bottle of wine. We hope that you enjoy one soon, and we wish to see you soon here at La Spinetta.

### Méthode Champenoise vs. Charmat Method

We find ourselves asking the same question, how do you get the bubbles in the bottles of Champagne? And a good one at that, there are many different ways to get the bubbles in your wine and we are would like to talk about the two major ways it is done.

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The Charmat method was invented in Italy but perfected by a Frenchman Eugène Charmat who took the idea from wooden tanks that were once used and made stainless steel ones. The Charmat method is the most popular method used in the world. One of the most popular wines made in this style is Prosecco. The reason being is that it is much less labor intensive and faster to get a finished product. The juice first goes through it's the alcoholic fermentation, then you add a special select yeast and sugar to the wine. Transfer this to a pressure controlled tank and let the second fermentation happen. When the wine is fermenting in a pressure controlled tank the carbon dioxide that is created has nowhere to go but into the wine. Resulting in a light and fresh style of a sparkling wine. Once the wine has finished it's fermentation in tank it will go into bottle.

are harvested earlier to keep acidity high and sugar levels low. Once the first fermentation is finished in tank the alcohol level is only at 11%. The wine is blended and a special selection of sugar and yeast is added and then the wine is bottled immediately and sealed with a metal

Méthode Champenoise, or in Italy it is called Metodo Classico, is a very labor intensive process. The grapes used in this style

capsule to help keep in the pressure. The wine now starts



a second fermentation in the bottle itself and depending on the style of the wine, it must rest on the lees (the dead sugar and yeast cells) for a minimum of a year and a half. Once the wine has rested the amount of time the winemaker intends, the bottles are placed in racks called pulpits. These racks are specially designed to hold the bottles on an incline so the riddling process can happen smoothly. To riddle a bottle of wine takes some skill, you turn the bottle in a clockwise rotation of 1/8th and at the same time lightly pushing the bottle in more of an incline to help the lees move



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to the neck of the bottle. This process is repeated every day for 20 days. Once the riddling process is finished and this takes 3 weeks, the bottle is in an almost upright position and now it is ready to be disgorged. In order to disgorge, the lees in the neck of the bottle are frozen and the capsule is popped off and the frozen lees burst out from the pressure of the bottle. The bottles are topped off with a secret recipe of still white wine, Armagnac, and sugar this is called liqueur d'expédition. After the liqueur d'expédition the bottle is corked and caged and is ready to be sold.

### Cooking Piemontese with Giovanna Rivetti

Giovanna Rivetti was born in 1947. She is our "vineyard manager" and our "in-house chef". She learned the work in the vineyard from her father and the work in the kitchen from her mother. Both parents taught Giovanna skills that until today are great assets to La Spinetta. In each newsletter Giovanna shares one of her secret recipes with us. Today she is teaching us how to make another typical, yet very simple Piemontese antipasto that is called: **torta di ricotta** (ricotta cheese cake). By the way, Giovanna claims that all her recipes are simple and when you ask her about the preparation of one of her dishes, she always starts her explanation with the words: "facile-easy".



#### **You will need (recipe for 8 people):**

3 whole eggs, 250 gr of Ricotta, 70 gr of cream, 100gr of graded Parmigiano cheese, salt, pepper, herbs (sage, marjoram, thyme, etc.) and for the crust: 1000 gr white flower, 400 gr butter, 250 gr water and 15gr of salt.

First prepare the crust. Make a "volcano" out of the flour and add butter, water and salt in the middle. Work the dough with your hands and eventually form a ball. Let the ball sit in a cool place for a minimum of two hours. After flatten and roll out the dough, as if you were preparing a pizza. Fill out a round oven pan with

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the dough, covering also the sides of the baking pan. For the filling: Take a bowl and mix eggs and cream well together, add the graded Parmigiano and then slowly mix the Ricotta under. Cut herbs real fine and add together salt and pepper. Pour the Ricotta filling over the spread out dough and bake everything at 160 degrees Celsius for about 20 minutes. Before serving let cool off a bit and decorate with some rosemary and thyme.

"Torta di Ricotta" goes very well with Lidia Chardonnay or Barbera Ca di Pian.

**Buon appetito!**

### What are Truffles?



Truffles are under the classification of "tubers" a relative to the mushroom family. They are a fungus that spores like mushrooms but they are ectomycorrhizal and are dependent on the root systems of trees. The white truffle is typically harvested using dogs and is characterized by the whitish interior, and potent aromatics. Don't be fooled by the potency of these aromatics, the white truffle is very delicate so it should never be cooked. Mostly it is shaved on top of a hot dish or blended in carne crudo.

The Langhe is most known for its white truffle or "trifola d'Alba" here it is king. Usually found growing in oak, willow, or poplar these precious golden nuggets are hand harvested from October until December.

Alba White Truffle International Festival  
Every year from middle of October to middle of November  
Saturdays and Sundays from 9 am to 8 pm

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What we will look forward to tasting from such an early harvest.

Since this year was consistently warm and dry in the months of July and August. We harvested our fruit 2 ½ weeks early. What that means is in a typical year when there is a bit of rain and a bit more change in the temperatures we will harvest about 18 hectoliters of fruit, this year we only got 14 to 15 hl of fruit. So our yields are smaller but the fruit is much more concentrated in flavor.



beautiful and classic wine.

We finished our alcoholic fermentation at 14° this year which is great. Our wines are all in barrique and are waiting to undergo malolactic fermentation. This year was a beautiful vintage, the difference was there was a lot of rain in June so the vines did not suffer, acidity is balance and will make a great wine for aging. We have been spoiled in Piedmont with a run of classic and stunning vintages. This has been good for us because it has given us the chance to really hone in on our skills in the cellar to make