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

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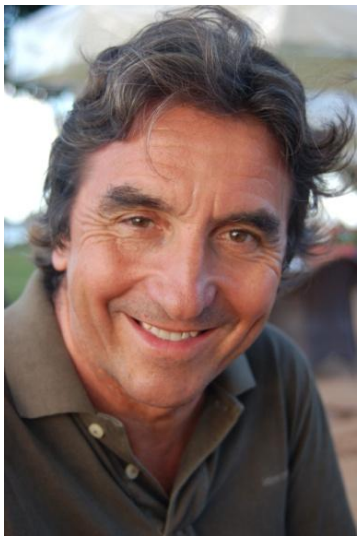
Lots of water in early Summer and a heat wave in August...

brought us a very early harvest. On Sunday, August 21st we started the 2011 harvest, picking Barbera Bionzo grapes. A very unusual early start for Barbera. The south facing steep Bionzo vineyard sight with its 45 years and older vines always requires an early harvest, but August 21st is a record. Important to us is that the fruit is beautiful. Already when crushing the grapes we could smell marvelous fruit aromas that promise an exciting harvest and vintage. We are harvesting the whites and Moscato and most likely have to start with the first Nebbiolos at the beginning of September. In Tuscany we have a similar situation. Beautiful ripe Vermentino and Sangiovese fruit, that we have been harvesting since August 22nd. The first taste of the 2011 vintage you may try with the 2011 Moscato that will go into the market at the end of September. Enjoy!

Bruno, Carlo and Giorgio Rivetti and the La Spinetta Team

A word from Giorgio



The excitement about harvest….

This is definitely the most exciting time of my work, the harvest. Hard to believe, but this is my 35th harvest and one might think that after 35 years this time of year has somewhat turned into a routine, but it has not. This time excites me as much as it did 35 years ago. Perhaps I am not as scared as I was in the beginning, yet I still get adrenaline rushes when we pick and crush the first fruit. When I taste and smell the most. Every vintage is different and a challenge. My ambitious goal is to harvest top quality fruit and to turn it into top quality wine.

It probably has been 30 years that I actually picked the fruit myself. Today all my energy goes into checking the ripeness of the fruit and to decide when to harvest which vineyard or even which section of a vineyard. My sister and her team will do the actual

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picking of the fruit and the transport to the winery. I oversee the crushing and the first fermentation. I taste and smell and decide when it is time to stop with the maceration in the roto fermentors. I make sure all logistics of harvest work and cellar work will coincide.

Whether a harvest is early as the 2011 harvest or not, between Piedmont (Moscato, Barbera and Nebbiolo) and Tuscany (Vermentino, Sangiovese and Colorino) we always have 6 weeks of picking, crushing and fermenting fruit, 6 weeks of hard work, little sleep and intense concentration, but also 6 weeks of excitement, passion and pure pleasure.

Giorgio, the farmer

Vineyard flora and fauna

At our first Hands-On Day last September, some of the hard-working One Liter Club harvest helpers showed our vineyard manager Giovanna bunches of Moscato grapes that looked like someone had nibbled at them. Not to worry, she said, that was the birds. But didn't she mind the birds eating the precious grapes? She answered with a smile: That's ok, they only take a little, and they help us a lot. That's their reward.

This sort of give and take is the reality of a healthy vineyard, and a wise vineyard management. There is more than just vines in a vineyard: a variety of plants and animals live here, too – some more welcome than others of course.

One way to deal with pests is to use herbicides and insecticides, which unfortunately is often the choice people make. But what is a pest to us, the vineyard owners, is maybe dinner to some other creature, birds or other insects. In relying on their collaboration, we can avoid the use of a large amount of chemicals, which will kill not only the 'pests' we are attacking, but also a great many other living beings of which we might not even know the name, let alone what service they provide for the balance of the local ecosystem. Assassin bugs, ground beetle, minute pirate bugs, braconids and trichogramma wasps – these are just some of the

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tiny predators that feast on the caterpillars and other creepers that might attack our vines. Also larger creatures are useful in the vineyards. Sheep are a common sight around vineyards from Alsace to New Zealand: they are natural 'lawnmowers', munching their way through the weeds and excess cover crop between the vines, as well as providing fertilizer for the soil. In areas where the birds are becoming too greedy, falcons are sometimes kept nearby that will scare off the smaller birds.

Also the flora of the vineyard plays an important role in keeping a balance. A variety of flowering and non-flowering plants may grow between the vines, helping to attract our friendly neighborhood predators by providing them with food and shelter. Roses are a common sight at the end of the vineyard rows: as they are prone to be attacked by the same pests as the vines themselves, they can serve as an early warning system – although a watchful eye on the vines themselves is definitely more useful.

Cover crops fulfill other crucial functions in the vineyard ecosystem: they improve the fertility of the soil by adding organic matter as they decay, and may even specifically invigorate the growth of the vines – certain plants such as legumes and clover are experts in converting or 'fixing' the nitrogen of the air into ammonia, which can be readily absorbed by plants through their roots. Nitrogen is of course an important nutrient, or fertilizer, for the plants.

Cover crops also keep erosion in check (a vital issue on steeply sloped vineyards) through holding the soil together with their roots and reducing the velocity of raindrops splashing on the ground, which also helps to keep the soil loose and aerated. Even for the farmer this is more practical: walking on a rain-sodden patch of cover crops is still feasible, while doing the same on naked wet clay soil would be very difficult. And during dry spells, there will be less dust. A well-kept vineyard is a small community of plants and animals where a little generosity towards the neighbors will yield the great reward of healthy grapes, fit to make wonderful wine.

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One Liter Club events in 2011…

Hands-On Day July 7th 2011

It may seem as if La Spinetta has a direct line to the weather gods: also the latest La Spinetta One Liter Club Hands-On Day on July 9, 2011 was held in glorious sunshine. Twenty-one One

Liter Club members came to our winery on a beautiful July weekend to help with the green harvest, and join us for a day of celebration.

The green harvest is done in midsummer when the grapes are still unripe, hard, grass-green berries, though already filling out into bunches. We were working in our *Campe* Barolo vineyard, where the Nebbiolo grapes were already hanging heavily in their characteristic shape of a long middle strand with two smaller side bunches or 'ears'. Green harvest is a method to control – meaning reduce – the yield of a vine and a vineyard. At this point in the growing season, if some of the fruit is removed, the vine will not be able to produce more bunches, and so it will concentrate all of its efforts into the remaining

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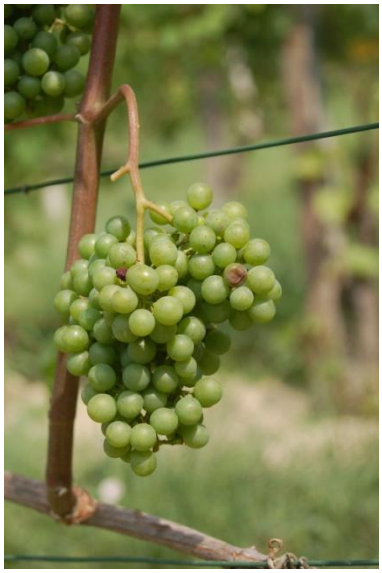
fruit, resulting in more flavourful grapes. Simply put, a vine plant can only process a certain amount of nutrients and produce a certain amount of flavour compounds. Having more fruit means distributing this amount of flavour between more grapes, which are then plumped up with more water. This in turn will mean diluted grape must to produce wine from – more, but more insipid and weak wine. Not the sort of quality that La Spinetta is aiming for.



At La Spinetta, we are happy to produce a smaller amount of wine of greater quality, and therefore, doing a rigorous green harvest is an important step in our winemaking process. We realized just how strict our yield control actually is when one year, a fellow winemaker in the area asked us if we could help out with their green harvest, as they were short a few hands. We were happy to do this favour to our neighbors, and sent over a few of our skilled vineyard workers for a couple of days. To our surprise, they came back to us on the second day: used to the La Spinetta way, they had trimmed the grape bunches in the same thorough manner as they would in our Barolo and Barbaresco vineyards, resulting in a far greater yield reduction as our neighbours were used to…

Green harvesting is indeed an activity that requires skill and good judgement. The actual cutting of the grapes is a simple task, the only necessary thing to remember is not to touch the grapes that are to remain on the vine: these are covered with a fine layer of silky dust that protects the fruit a little from the sun's UV-rays. What is difficult with the green harvest is to decide how much to cut, and where. Simply counting the bunches is not enough, one must also consider the size and vigour of the vine for example: a hunched, gnarly grandfather of a vine will naturally have a limited production, for example. This is quite a lot of information to consider before making a decision – and quickly. But it is made for every single vine in the La Spinetta vineyards, because the work in the vineyard is the most important, and is only enhanced, but never replaced by the work in our cellars.

So we worked with Giovanna and her team along the lines of tall green vines until the sun was hot up in the sky, and it was time for lunch. Like the vineyard workers of old, we had our lunch

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at the *ciabòt*, the little stone hut up in the vineyard that is a typical sight in the Langhe hills.

We refreshed ourselves with delicious Piemontese snacks and of course, La Spinetta wines, and enjoyed the good company and conversation, before taking a deserved afternoon break.

As the sun started to set, we met up again, this time at the new winery of La Spinetta, the Contratto cellars at Canelli. After taking a tour of the beautiful historical cellars, where the new *spumante* wines of the La Spinetta portfolio are resting like sleeping beauties until their full

day with a festive dinner in the winery.

maturation, we concluded the elegant dining rooms of the

Another wonderful opportunity to meet our One Liter Club members – we are already looking forward to the next one!

The next La Spinetta One Liter Club Hands-On Day will be held after the busy harvest and quiet winter season, in the Spring of 2012. For more information please contact alessandra@la-spinetta.com

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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: **peperoni arrostiti ripieni al tonno** (tuna filled roasted bell peppers).

You will need (recipe for 6 people): 3 nice and big bell peppers (ca. 500 gr each), 2 eggs, 250gr top quality canned tuna fish in oil, 2 anchovy filets , 1 table spoon of fresh lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil, 10 gr of parsley and 10 capers

Roast the bell peppers for 40 minutes at 180 degrees in the oven. Remove from the oven, let the vegetable cool off. Remove skin and all seeds inside. Dry peppers a bit and cut each in 4 equal pieces. Place all 12 pieces on a serving platter.

For the filling (ripieno): cook 2 eggs and use the yolk only to mix with the tuna, capers and a bit of parsley. Use olive oil to smoothen the paste. Fill the pepper with the "ripieno" and garnish with more parsley. Add olive oil, if desired.

"Peperoni ripieno" go very well with our Vermentino.

Buon appetito!

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Bicycle wine tours… a great way to see the area and to burn a bit of the calories…

Cycling is a popular sport in Italy, and not only in the cities of the flat Po plain like Parma and Ferrara, where old ladies are cycling to the market across flagstone pavements, immaculately turned out in fur coat and high heels. The competitive cyclists indeed prefer the more demanding tracks that wind across the hillsides, from the Northern girdle of the Alps all along the mountainous spine of Italy. The varied terrain of flat plateaus and ascents and descents of various degree make for interesting and challenging tracks that Italy's sport cyclists are delighted to explore. To say nothing of the beautiful views that greet the cyclist time and again along his route.

Italy is also the site of the Giro d'Italia, the second-most important event in the calendar of the cycling sport world. It has been running for over 100 years now, and was first organised as a publicity event in a competition between two major Italian newspapers, the *Corriere della Sera* and the *Gazzetta dello Sport*, whose trademark color pink (it is printed on pink paper) is taken up by the pink jersey that is awarded to the leading cyclist during the competition. The Italians took to the competition so much (and might have been in good shape from all the everyday cycling among the beautiful hillsides) that they were winning the competition for over four decades, before the first non-Italian was able to take home the victory.

It is no surprise then that Italy has long been a favorite destination for cycling enthusiasts. And now, this is also catching on among other holiday makers. More and more people nowadays are seeking to go on trips that will allow them to not only enjoy the particular climate of a destination, or maybe see the major sights, but to meet the local people and get a real taste of the country they are visiting.

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Cycling is of course a great way to do that. On a bicycle, the landscape does not simply zip past you outside the window of the car, almost as if it was a TV screen. You feel the weather

(and the terrain – in your legs!), you hear the sounds and even smell the smells of the landscape, and it is much easier to take in the scenery, or stop along the way. The roads will lead you through the towns and villages instead of past them on a fast highway bypass. Not to mention the healthy appetite and guilt-free indulgence of the delicious Italian food and wine after a day of hearty cycling! There are even some tour operators that specialise in wine and cycling tours, a winning combination especially here in the Langhe, where the many wineries scattered along the hillside roads, and the pretty hilltop towns such as La Morra, Monforte, Barolo, Serralunga, Dogliani and Verduno – and not least our Grinzane Cavour – are inviting cycling and wine enthusiasts for a well-deserved rest after a day on the bicycle.

Anything new at La Spinetta

What's new at La Spinetta? – New Contratto website

www.contratto.it

Have a look and check it out. Anybody visiting La Spinetta in Piedmont should not miss to visit

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the marvelous old cathedral cellars of Contratto winery in Canelli. Part of the Unesco world heritage, this cellar is unique in Italy and nicely represents almost 150 years of wine making.

To book a visit, please e-mail to Alessandra: alessandra@la-spinetta com.

Next One Liter Release:

Wine	Vintage	Number of bt made	Release
Barbaresco Gallina	2007	300	now
Barbaresco Gallina	2008	600	September 2011
Barbaresco Valeirano	2007	300	finished
Barbaresco Valeirano	2008	600	September 2011
Barbaresco Starderi	2007	300	now
Barbaresco Starderi	2008	600	September 2011
Barolo Campè	2006	300	now
Barolo Campe	2007	450	September 2011
Pin	2007	600	now
Pin	2008	1200	September 2011
Barbera Gallina	2007	600	finished
Barbera Gallina	2008	1200	September 2011
Barbera Bionzo	2007	600	now
Barbera Bionzo	2008	1200	September 2011

Example of Fedex/UPS or DHL shipping costs

OL	BE LU, DK	France	D	AT NL	SE ES	FI	CH NO	UK	IE	HK, AU JP, SG	USA
1	36,00	36,00	34,80	36,00	42,00	42,00	40,00	40,80	42,00	84,00	50,00
6	50,40	54,00	49,20	50,40	81,60	86,40	108,00	67,20	84,00	186,00	186,00
12	72,00	78,00	66,00	72,00	90,00	94,80	180,00	78,00	93,60	300,00	200,00
18	78,00	92,40	75,60	78,00	120,00	134,40	240,00	102,00	120,00	420,00	300,00
24	86,00	110,00	82,00	86,00	150,00	164,00	280,00	120,00	150,00	400,00	400,00

For questions or reservations, please contact alessandra@la-spinetta.com