

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



Newsletter Winter 2012/2013

A New Year with lucky numbers...

Thirteen is a very lucky number. You might not know that, but in contrary to most countries, in Italy the 13 brings luck. So 2013 in our eyes, will be a great and lucky year! Let's see how fantastic this vintage will be, superstitious as we are, it should be the best of this century...

Let's review this prediction in the Fall. But whatever this year brings, a great vintage or not, a bit of luck we wish to all of you....

Bruno, Carlo and Giorgio Rivetti and the La Spinetta Team

A word from Giorgio



"Are we slaves of distribution"...?

Several decades ago, when I was young, very driven, crazy about making wine and rather naïve, I thought the most important people in the wine world were you and me. You, the private consumer who enjoys and appreciates great wines and me, the person behind the wine, who works hard year round in the vineyards and in the cellar to make what you enjoy.

Believing that, I founded a group of "me," called "Piccolo Produttori Piemontesi," which included small wineries like Cigliuti, Pelisero, Malvira, Sandrone and Vezza. The idea was simple: to spread together the news about Nebbiolo and its greatness. We initially traveled to markets close by, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, etc., shared our wines and made lots of fans who then came to see us and spread the news. The era of the "Piccolo Produttori Piemontesi" eventually ended, as La Spinetta and the

others were no longer small. We all grew in our own ways and searched out partners all over the world that would distribute and sell our wines and further spread the news for us. At the beginning it seemed to be a match made in heaven. All the other wine producers and I seemed to finally be able to concentrate again on what we do best, make wine; BUT while we made wine, we pretty much lost touch with you, the people who actually enjoyed our wines.

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Years went by and worldwide wine distribution grew and so did the wine production. All of a sudden the big distributors became the bosses of the wine world. Distribution telling us what wines sell, what wines don't, how they should be, what they should taste like, what they had to be priced at and how they had to be packaged.

Meanwhile I would see you come to our wineries, enjoying and buying our most precious wines but distribution was telling me that they were too expensive and impossible to sell. When I went to work in the market and traveled to countries around the world supporting distribution in their sales, more and more frequently I was asked what kind of extra benefit I could offer in order for them to sell my wine. Sadly, the benefit of making great wines, that people love, was no longer a benefit. Distribution was the boss; it was trying to influence me in what I do best and at the same time it asked me to add incentives in order for them to sell my wine and not that of "Pinco Pallino."

It was all going too far. Did I turn into a slave of distribution? It was time to go back to the roots---to the me and you, but without losing my distribution.

The One Liter Club has now over 500 members around the world; Members who care about wine and food, the regions and cultures it comes from and the philosophies and the people behind it all; Members who appreciate a great bottle of wine and know about the detailed work that lies behind it; Members who absolutely are no slaves of distribution!!!

I want to thank you all for this. Grazie mille and please keep up your passion, love and curiosity for wine and let's never be slaves of distribution...

Giorgio, the farmer

A wine legend sells part of his dynasty...

It was announced in December, Robert Parker, one of the most, if not the most, influential figures in the world of wine over the past four decades sold his majority stake in The Wine Advocate.

Mr. Parker founded the Wine Advocate in 1978 and was the first to widely adopt the 50-100 scale and use it as parallel to the American educational grading system.

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According to Lettie Teague of the Wall Street Journal, the ground-breaking and market moving Wine Advocate newsletter has been sold to a group of Singapore-based investors. Also, Robert Parker will reportedly step down as its editor-in-chief.



Given its wide readership, the TWA print edition will be phased out -per WSJ, about 50,000 subscribers pay \$75 a year for six issues, equating to about \$3.8 million per year in revenue. Though, given the rise of the tablet, and the ability to scale production at minimal (to no) marginal cost, it does make sense that TWA prepare itself for the next generation of Kindle-, iPad- and Nexus-armed wine drinker.

And, for the first time ever it is said, that management will accept advertising, so long as it's non-wine related.

Strategically, it appears that the decision to strike a deal with the Singapore group is based on the rising influence of Asian wine buyers. "The newsletter also will put more emphasis on Asia's nascent wine industry. Ms. Perrotti-Brown (Master of Wine and new TWA editor) plans to hire a new correspondent likely to be based in China," writes Teague from the Wall Street Journal.

What impact the change in ownership will have has yet to be seen. We hope that Mr. Parker will continue to play an important role in the world of wine and that Antonio Galloni will continue to judge the wines of Italy for TWA.

We know you love wine, but perhaps you are also familiar with Italian Vermouth? If yes, great, if not, no problem, but you need to try it...

With over 100 year old recipes, passed on by generations of Contrattos, we are very excited to now announce the reintroduction of Contratto Vermouth Bianco, Vermouth Rosso, Americano Rosso and Fernet. Last December and for the first time again since the 60th, Contratto released four historic products, high on demand as they currently are fashionable revival ingredients for classic and contemporary cocktails. They are wines, (except of the Fernet, which is a spirit) fortified with Italian brandy and 30 to 50 delicately-infused premium natural herbs, spices, roots and seeds.

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Vermouth was originally created approx. 125 years ago, as a way of "improving" bad or off wine. If wine was starting to oxidize, turning it into "vermouth" was a way of extending the wine's life and hiding the fact that it was going bad. Nobody at that time dared to throw away off wine.



Especially in the production of traditional method sparkling wine, when degorging, taking out the yeast manually, a lot of wine was collected, that no longer was useable for sparkling wine production, yet was too precious to throw away. All wine sediments and residuals of the *dégorgement* were collected and then the yeast and solids were filtered out. One would take this "off" wine and fortify it with distilled spirits and add some herbs and spices to cover up the "off" flavor.

Today of course no "off wine" is being used, simple and good white or red wine is the base for Vermouth production.

While the process to make Vermouth is rather simple the right recipe for the herbal extract is essential as well as the quality of such herbs and spices. For example up to 50 different herbs and spices can be used to make a Vermouth Bianco. Very common are cloves, cinnamon, ginger, star anise, citrus peel, coriander, sage, basil, thyme, chamomile, quinine, juniper berries, and licorice. Other herbs like gentian, mugwort, wormwood as well as rhubarb and bitter orange peel have been used in vermouth to provide some bitterness. Many eastern medicinal herbs are being used, because vermouth by nature has a slightly medicinal flavor.

The first Contratto Vermouth recipes date back to the 1890s. They were the base for a Vermouth that was only consumed locally. In the 1920s the Vermouth production was extended and recipes were modified. Most of the Vermouth was exported as Vermouth became

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the in drink of the epoch. Contratto Vermouth di Torino was the in drink in the 1930s, allowing the winery an annual production of 100.000 bottles.

After World War II the popularity of Vermouth had somewhat diminished , but it was still consumed in Europe and overseas. In the 1960s Vermouth became out of fashion, especially in Italy and the Contratto family decided to cease production entirely.

If you like to know, how exactly today Contratto Vermouth is being made, please read on, if you are just curious and would like to try it, please jump to the end of this article.

The process to make Vermouth and Americano is, as mentioned before, simple...

As a first step, the base white wine is stored separately in a temperature controlled steel tank. Contratto uses Cortese, a local indigenous white variety.

Preparation of herbal extract:

This important step can be considered the real art of making Vermouth & Co: the preparation of the herbal extract. Herbs and spices are mixed together according to the ingredient list of the recipes. To know which herbs to use and in exactly which quantity is the real challenge of making these fortified wines. With recipes as old as 100 years, modified to achieve perfection, Contratto has developed a fantastic mixture and balance of flavors. As with all great products, it is important to use quality organic herbs and spices, rather than industry pre-mixed powders and flavors.

Preparation of herbal solution and maceration:

This step extracts the flavors from the herbs and spices and passes the flavor into a hydro alcoholic solution. What sounds very complicated, is in fact a simple process: Water is mixed together with Italian brandy in a steel tank. Afterwards the herbal extract is added, which is kept separate by strainers within the tank. A process similar to tea in a tea strainer. A two week maceration process starts at cold temperature, which is the traditional method of making Vermouth. Without heating the mix,



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the flavor extraction is much slower, but also much more intensive, as no heat will damage the herbs and spices. Regular pump-overs support the maceration.

Mixing of base wine and herbal solution in one tank:

After the maceration period the herbal extract is removed from the solution and the base white wine is finally added.

Adding of further ingredients:

Sugar and more Italian brandy are added according to the recipe.

First filtration:

As a result of the cold maceration certain herb solids and quite an amount of essential oils have also been extracted. A first filtration separates the solids and thick oils from the product.

Cold Stabilization, Decanting and Bottling:

In addition a cold stabilization further clarifies the Vermouth & Co. from more oils and sediments. The entire mixture is cooled down to minus 8 degrees Celsius for about 8 hours and then gradually re-warms to room temperature. A ten day decanting period allows perfect natural settlement.

The Vermouth & Co is removed from its settlements and sulfites as well as caramelized sugar to give color (for Vermouth Rosso and Americano Rosso only) are added.

A final filtration before bottling makes the product ready for consumption.

Curious to try the CONTRATTO Vermouth? Well, we do ship the Vermouth & Co. 84.00 Euro is the price for a sample kit of all four products. Unfortunately we cannot ship in the nice wooden box, as bottles will brake and shipping costs become too excessive. Countries, where Fedex shipping is reasonable are: Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Luxemburg, Austria, Netherlands and France. Of course you can also always pick up a box or two or three, when you visit the winery.

Interested, please e-mail to Nadine@la-spinetta.com



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Cooking Piemontese with Giovanna Rivetti

Giovanna Rivetti, our "vineyard manager" and our "in-house chef", was born in 1947. 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 remain treasured assets of *La Spinetta*. In each newsletter, Giovanna shares one of her secret recipes with us. Today she is teaching us how to make something so simple and so delicious, that anyone can make it: Friciule (Free Chew Le), an ideal Piedmontese aperitif snack, that goes hand in hand with a chilled glass of Contratto bubbles...



Following you will find the preparation for 6 people:

Ingredients needed:



1 kg of white flour
 25 g of conventional yeast, that is also used for making bread
 0.25 liter of cold milk
 0.25 liter of cold sparkling water
 Good quality sunflower oil (to fry)

The preparation is simple and does not take more than 15 minutes (if one does not count the time the dough has to rise).

In a bowl melt the yeast and the cold milk, then add the flour and the cold sparkling water little by little. Mix everything and knead to a good dough. When the dough is ready cover it with a cloth and leave it for a minimum of 6 hours to rise in a warm environment.

When the dough is ready, raised and fluffy, divide the dough in little round pieces (around 5 cm long and 0.5 cm tall)

Heat sunflower oil in pan to hot temperatures and then add the pieces of Friciule dough. Fry for one minute, turn around on other side and fry for another minute until both sides are gold

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brown. Lift pieces out of the oil and let them dry on paper towel to absorb excessive oil. Add salt to taste and serve warm.

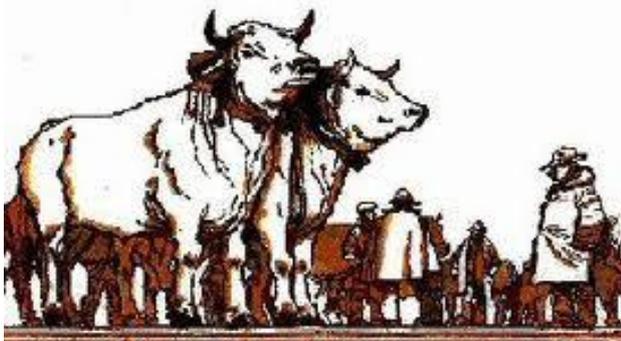
Buon aperitivo!

Sua maestà il Bue Grasso – Your majesty the Fat Ox

Ever heard about an Italian fair that celebrates a fat ox? Probably not, but 'the fat ox' plays an important role in the agriculture, tradition and kitchen of Piemonte. Around this mighty but gentle animal entire feasts, fairs and family reunions are held. Most notorious and famous for their beast markets are two towns Carrù/Cuneo and Moncalvo/Astigiano.

By tradition the fat ox fair takes place on the second Thursday before Christmas.

Ever since 1910 (although there is evidence that ox markets and fairs were held weekly from as far back as 1473, and in 1635 when Duke Amedeo the 1st gave permission to the Carrù village to have its yearly fair), the Fiera del Bue Grasso in Carrù has been an irresistible event—a living mix of local traditions, excellent food, competition, good wine, colorful people from bull breeders to bull buyers, markets and emotions.



Part of the fair is a fat ox competition. Only the specific breed of Piedmont Fassone oxes are admitted and the prize, a hand-made ornamental drape called gualdrappa, is given to the best and most beautiful animal. The decision is made by a professional jury that includes veterinarians, butchers and breeders. Once the winner is declared, there is a parade to show the ox to the visitors. Winners usually weigh around 1,300 kilos !!

The aim of the fair is to safeguard and promote the Piedmontese breed of cattle and to give consumer protection guarantees. To be called a bonafied "fat ox", the ox must be Piedmont Fassone, castrated when 2/4 months old, adult (with all the teeth in his mouth, which are 8), born and bred in the Langhe region, slaughtered when older than 4 1/2 years old. This docile animal has loads of muscular mass yielding not only a good quantity but also great quality of meat.

By being castrated, the ox gets stronger, so in the past these animals were used for work (they were called the "Langhe tractors") and then when old enough, they "retired" and they

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were fed for some months in a special way to make them fat and to make their meat soft and delicious, ready for Christmas. There is also an auction before the fair takes place.

Who wants to experience it all, needs to get up early. The fair starts at 5AM and you can find people already lining up in front of the restaurants, waiting for their opening at 6AM, to get their bollito misto (different cooked parts of the beef served with rich sauces and vegetables) and tripe as breakfast. It would not be an Italian event, if it wasn't accompanied by great food and wine. Nothing for vegetarians, but certainly a one of a kind experience for those who love traditions and meat.

BUON APPETITO!

Opinions and feedback from La Spinetta "ambassadors around the world..."

Grazie mille to our ambassador in Sweden:

Cari Anja, Giorgio and all at the La Spinetta team,

Thank you so much for organizing the One Liter Club event in Stockholm last Tuesday 25th September. It was so interesting and listening to Giorgio was a real pleasure !

When Giorgio talked about respect with all things about working and treating the vine and the wine you can really feel that when drinking a La Spinetta. Not all wines today are produced with respect and that is one thing which differs La Spinetta from others. To meet the other members at the event was also very nice.

You can also count on us to start a wave when the Contratto wines will be in the stores in Sweden later this year. We have already started to inform all our friends about it as we have also done with the other La Spinetta wines when we tried them for the first time some years ago. We are both working in a branch where we meet a lot of people and where it's easy to start "a wave" !!!

We know that the response from us earlier has not been the best but you should know that it's a great moment every time when the Newsletter comes in the mail from you. Reading this Newsletters about what's going on at La Spinetta is for us like going back to Piedmont which we try to do as often as we can.

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Just reading the recipes by Giovanna is very nice reading and good inspiration and we learn something new about Piedmontese food every time. To try this food together with some of your wines is like being back !!

We just also would like to mention about 2 years ago when we visited La Spinetta in Castagnole Lanze for the first time. We just couldn't dream about the hospitality we met when Manuela showed us around at your winery and we had wine tasting afterwards. That moment will never be forgotten. Once again send our thanks and regards to her !

Until next time, Saluti da due La Spinetta ambasciatori

Where you can find us (Giorgio) this year...

Here are some dates and events around the globe, where you can run into Giorgio and our wines. For further information please contact Anja: anja@la-spinetta.com

- February 5th to the 8th Colorado, USA
- February 16th, Boston Wine Expo, USA
- March 7th and 8th, Wine & Dines Stuttgart, Germany
- March 13th to 15th, Zurich, Switzerland
- March 20th, Wine Society Tasting, Stockholm, Sweden
- March 24th and 25th, Piccolo VinItaly, Duesseldorf, Germany
- April 7th to 10th, VinItaly, Verona, Italy

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One Liter Club Hands on Day 2013...

So many of you sent already an e-mail to us, wanting to know about the dates and details for this year's Hands on Events. We feel so honored to hear, that some of you are willing to make your travel plans around our event. The 2013 Hands On Day, we decided on one bigger one rather than two for this year, will focus on Piedmont harvest of Moscato and Barbera. We are looking at a day (most likely Saturday) of the first or second week in September, which we soon will confirm.

This time members can chose, if they would like to participate in the OLC harvest or in the OLC hardcore harvest, for those who actually like to experience the physical exhaustion the harvest brings with. Interested? Well plan a trip to Piedmont in September and join us on that day of hard work, great food and wine and lots of fun. Maximum group size: 40 people, no charges for the event, 150,00 Euro deposit required, that will be refunded at the day of the event or can be used for wine purchases...



More information Nadine will provide, if you contact her.