

For wine lovers around the world who enjoy
wine and the good life

Volume 15 Issue 2 April May June 2019

Sommelier **INDIA**

THE WINE MAGAZINE

Bordeaux

ON TOP OF ITS GAME *page 20*

Fontanafredda Winery

HOW IT MADE BAROLO FAMOUS

page 32

Indian Single Malts

CAPTURE THE INDIAN MARKET

page 54



Dindori Reserve Shiraz — **Editors' Choice**
by Wine Enthusiast 2 years in a row!



SULA
VINEYARDS



Sula_vineyards www.sulavineyards.com

from the editor

Here's another edition of *Sommelier India* for you to enjoy and savour. Read it from start to finish or begin at the end. Better still, dip into it and savour it, as you would a glass of wine.

As happens with what you read, the best way to grow your knowledge and appreciation of wine is to think about what's in your glass. What am I drinking? What sort of wine is this? How does it feel in my mouth? Where did it come from? Do I like it ... and you are well on your way from being a wine enthusiast to becoming a wine connoisseur!



Photo credit: Mala Mukerjee

SI's biggest news is that it has formed a partnership with Steven Spurrier's Academie du Vin to taste and rate wines in India and conduct wine appreciation classes under the moniker, SI/AdV. On page 12, Spurrier lists the best Bordeaux wines from the 2015 and 2009 vintages he tasted recently while the more affordable Bordeaux AOC wines in India tasted by the Panel appear on page 26. Meanwhile, Gagan Sharma unravels the intricacies of Bordeaux appellations on page 20. And, as I leave for Bordeaux to taste at the en primeurs of the 2018 vintage, Jancis Robinson offers advice on how to taste young, unfinished wines from her decades of experience, on page 14. There are many other wines we describe in these pages for you to consider. On page 11, in the wine lovers' notebook section I recommend wines from Italy and Spain. Besides what appears in print, the SI/AdV panel also tasted some impressive rosé sparkling wines which you can check at www.sommelierindia.com.

Read about "other drinks" such as Armagnac on page 36 and Indian single malts on page 54. Elsewhere there's a detailed report on Nebbiolo Prima 2019 (p 48) and interesting stories about the man who championed the syrah grape in California (p 40) and a historic property that made Barolo famous (p 32). We cover our favourite restaurants, special wine dinners and chefs making a difference at the end of the book.

Welcome to SI Issue 2, 2019. Enjoy the ride,

Reva

From a Royal Romance, a Princely Wine is Born

Michèle Shah traces the history of a famous Barolo wine from the Langhe region of Italy

In the heart of Piedmont's wine country the legend of the historic Fontanafredda winery estate unfolds to gently undulating, vineyard-covered, castle-topped hills. The estate was founded in 1858 by Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king of Italy, as a country estate and a gift to his mistress Rosa Vercellana, also known as La Bella Rosina (the beautiful Rosina). In 1870 the king bought the first vineyard of Barolo at Fontanafredda and the wines produced were labelled, "Tenimenti di Barolo e Fontanafredda". Almost 150 years later, in 2017 Fontanafredda was nominated "European Winery of the Year" by the American magazine, Wine Enthusiast.

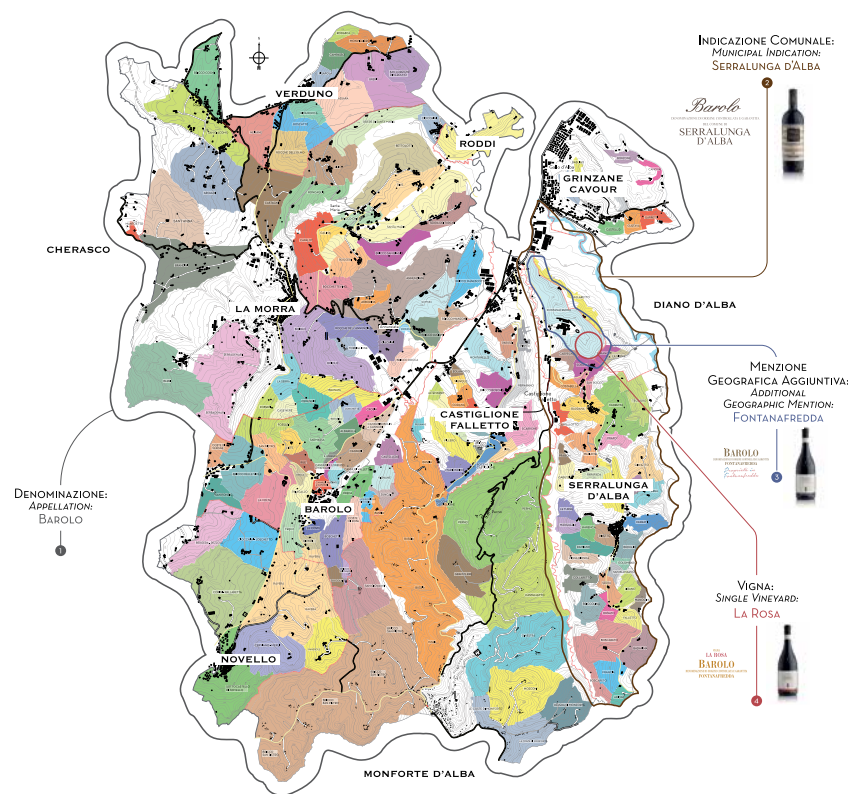
Aerial view of the Fontanafredda estate in Serralunga d'Alba in the Langhe region of Piedmont

Fontanafredda's nomination was commented on by Kerin O'Keefe, Italian editor of the magazine, who emphasized the excellent quality of the wines, lauding their quality as "higher than ever". He also mentioned the "extraordinary beauty" of the estate, which has recently expanded to incorporate an excellent hospitality centre, offering "a wonderful park for visitors with an enchanting lake" (the Storytelling Village), and "fabulous restaurants" like Ristorante Guido in the Royal Villa, featuring the Michelin-starred chef Ugo Alciati, and the more casual, Disguido Osteria in the main complex. And there are two 4-star hotels, Foresteria nelle Vigne and Hotel Vigna Magica, both featuring a total of 25 finely furnished rooms. And to top it all, there's a Cultural Foundation with a congress centre.

The Fontanafredda estate is situated in the commune of Serralunga d'Alba, considered one of the best sub-zones of Langhe's famous Barolo wine, which is also arguably one of the most famous DOCG wines produced in northern Italy. The vineyard landscape of the Langhe, especially the hilly area to the south and east of the river Tanaro in the province of Cuneo in Piedmont is unique and so perfect, that in 2014 it achieved the ultimate honour of being added to the list of Unesco World Heritage sites.

Let us turn back in time to Fontanafredda, which owes its origins to the passionate love story that developed between the king of Italy and la bella Rosina, a woman of humble origins, upon whom Vittorio Emanuele II conferred the title of Countess of Mirafiori and Fontanafredda. The estate was later handed down to their children, Maria Vittoria and Emanuele Alberto, who became Count of Mirafiori and Fontanafredda. Count Emanuele Alberto, like his father, was a man of vision. He began his adventure in wine with over 300 hectares (741 acres) cultivated directly by salaried, specialized workers, a unique approach at the time. Fontanafredda

LANGHE & ITS SUB-ZONES



estate was considered a model winery with its own housing for the workers, its own church and a school for the children.

Thanks to Emanuele Alberto's passion for wine, Barolo became a legend, which still holds strong today. Back in 1928 the estate prospered, boasting some 200 workers and over 40 families residing within the estate. However, this prosperity did not last because soon all European vines were hit by phylloxera, an almost microscopic insect related to aphids which originated from eastern North America and fed on the roots and leaves of grapevines, resulting in deformed roots and secondary fungal infections that gradually cut off the flow of nutrients and water to the vine.

Shortly after this disaster came the Great Economic Depression which had repercussions throughout Europe, causing the estate to be

Thanks to Emanuele Alberto's passion for wine, Barolo became a legend, which still remains strong today

Oscar Farinetti's vision was to create a food "wonderland" open to all, selling genuine, artisanal food products, a food happening, celebrating's Italy's biodiversity

sold in 1931 to one of Italy's most important banks, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, and the brand to be sold to the Gancia family, one of today's main producers of Asti Spumante. Taking a leap forward to 2008, Fontanafredda's roots returned to Piedmontese ownership under the leadership of Oscar Farinetti, its current owner and founder of Eataly, possibly today's fastest growing and most successful worldwide chain of high-end temples dedicated to Italian food and wine.

A successful entrepreneur and a native of the Langhe, Oscar Farinetti's vision was to create a food "wonderland" open to all, selling genuine, artisanal food products, a "food happening" and a celebration of Italy's biodiversity. Eataly's philosophy is, "Eat well and live better", an all-encompassing experience from shopping to eating to learning, where "each product carries a story and a tradition".

Wine has always been at the centre of Farinetti's life, which is dedicated to investing time and money to promoting Italian wine globally. Farinetti believes that Italian wines have a vast role to play and an enormous potential to succeed in the international arena. His recent acquisition of 10 wineries, all located in northern Italy, has spurred his crusade to engage with current issues of production and sustainability.

"Fontanafredda has completely changed in the last ten years," says Roberto Bruno, CEO and spokesman for the Fontanafredda estate. "The evolution began with a change in the approach to environmental sustainability issues and consumer and community well-being.



A native of Langhe and founder of Eataly, Oscar Farinetti, the current owner of Fontanafredda is also called, "a merchant of utopias". Below: Entrance to the Fontanafredda estate





Distant view of Fontanafredda winery on a clear morning

It became the main focus of all research and experimental projects both in the vineyards and the cellar,” explains Bruno. “This avant-garde attitude is once again concrete evidence of the social and educational role played by Fontanafredda in the Langhe region, whose unique vineyards and landscapes, must be carefully preserved, particularly in the interest of future generations.”

Farinetti’s new venture is “Vino Libero” (free wine), a campaign for wine to be produced completely free of the use of chemicals in the vineyard and the cellar, with the aim of bringing the soil back to its natural fertility. Some of his role model producers can be found in his book “Storie di Coraggio”, (Stories of Courage). It

is thanks to Farinetti’s constant drive for excellence, innovation and sustainability that led to Fontanafredda’s being nominated, “European Winery of the Year” in 2017.

The initial step was the implementation of the Vino Libero certification for the reduction of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and sulphites. This began in 2016, thanks to an investment of two million euros and provided a concrete base which made it possible to start the process of conversion to organic agriculture, incorporating the entire 120 hectares of property. Fontanafredda thus became the largest certified organic winery in Piedmont, beginning with the 2018 harvest.

Farinetti’s new venture is “Vino Libero” (free wine), a campaign for wine to be produced completely free of the use of chemicals in order to bring the soil back to its natural fertility

“It signifies the culmination of 10 years of work during which we converted to organic farming and spent a great deal of effort in respectfully interpreting the wonderful fruits that the Fontanafredda estate and hills offer us,” says Farinetti.

With his bright, smiling eyes, drooping mustache and loads of charisma, Oscar Farinetti likes to call himself a “merchant of utopias”.

TASTING NOTES

Fontanafredda’s Barolo Serralunga is imported to India by Hema Connoisseur along with their Gavi di Gavi white wine, also from the Piedmont hills.

SERRALUNGA D’ALBA BAROLO DOCG

The colour is garnet-red with ruby highlights that take on a slightly orange tone over time. It has a clear-cut, intense nose with overtones of vanilla, spices, roses and underbrush. The taste is dry, but soft, full-bodied, velvety, well balanced, and persistent.



Ageing: One year in barriques from Allier and one year in larger oak casks of 2000 litres. After clarification the wine is bottled for a further period of maturation depending on the vintage, but never less than 12 months. The wine will reach its peak 6 to 8 years after the harvest, but its life can vary considerably.

Pairing: Ideal with red meat dishes and medium or mature cheeses, it can also make for pleasant after-dinner company.

GAVI DOCG

Intense straw yellow, with greenish highlights. On the nose, the bouquet conjures up exotic fruit, ripe pears, hawthorn blossom and acacia honey. Soft, sweet and nicely mouth-filling on the palate, with a crispy fresh and flavoursome finish.

Ageing: The wine refines in steel for 4 to 5 months at a low temperature. It is left on its lees to increase its aromatic complexity and fullness on the palate. Then after cold stabilization, it is bottled.

Pairing: Served chilled, it is a great aperitif and ideal with fish appetisers, light starters, risotto and pasta.

