Winemaker: Rosanna, Daniele, and Antonella Lequio
Generation: 4th

TRE DONNE

Langhe Nebbiolo DOC Donna Nera

Harvested at the end of October, this traditional-style Nebbiolo offers up layers of dark cherry, cranberry, and earthy forest floor. The naturally bold tannins are tamed in this instance by older vines and extremely low yields. Produced by three sisters - Rosanna, Daniela, and Antonella Lequio - this elegant big gun is single estate, picked by hand, and sustainably farmed to boot!

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

For the past 30 years, this estate in the Barbaresco DOCG has been run by women: along with their loved ones, sisters Rosanna, Daniela and Antonella Lequio do everything themselves from soil to bottle. With some of their own daughters now studying enology, this may be the family's first generation of women winemakers, but certainly not the last!

ENOLOGIST

Gianfranco Cordero

TASTING NOTES

Color	Dark purple
Nose	Black cherry, tobacco leaf, and autumnal forest floor
Palate	Powerful, linear tannins, tempered by integrated fruit and elegant earthy notes
Finish	Slightly dry, with staying power

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

	12
Vineyard Location	Langhe DOC, Piedmont
Vineyard Size	15 ha
Varietals List	100% Nebbiolo
Farming Practices	Certified members of The Green Experience in Piedmont (sustainable, eco-friendly practices with no chemical herbicides); grapes picked by hand
Elevation	260 m
Soils	Calcareous clay
Maturation Summary	Bottled for 6 months
Alcohol	14.0 %
Acidity	5.5 g/liter
Residual Sugar	2.3 g/liter

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TRE DONNE

Much as he loved his daughters, back in the 1980s, winemaker Alessandro Lequio was hesitant to hand his family's winemaking tradition over to women. "Just marry a good winemaker," he would tell them. Just as stubborn as their father, however, Rosanna, Daniela and Antonella all staunchly refuted this notion, assuring him that they would one day earn his trust. In the end – and assuming they'd concede - he agreed to turn everything over if they could pass three years of rigorous enological tests, culminating in a single vintage which he, himself would judge. To everyone's surprise, the sisters persisted. Moreover, they actually won more awards in their first year of production (1988) than Alessandro had in his entire career! Deeply impressed, and true to his word, Sandro handed the estate over to his daughters, even allowing them to initiate the "Tre Donne" brand.

While everyone in the family (yes, even the men) lend a hand with the wines, today this 15-hectare, soil-to-bottle estate continues to be run by women. Rosanna, the middle sister, manages all aspects of production (along with her husband, Piernicola, who's often the social face of the estate); Daniela, the youngest sister, runs point in the cellar and is assisted by her two daughters, Alice and Elisa (ages 17 and 15), both of whom are studying enology in Alba; Antonella, the eldest sister, keeps everything ship-shape and oversees the company's finances. Even Donna Bruna, their mother, is still going strong at 80 years – among other things, she still supervises the harvest!

To clarify, Tre Donne owns 15 hectares in Neive and have long-term contracts to lease a few additional hectares outside the Barbaresco zone, allowing them to also produce Barolo and Gavi di Gavi. Altitudes on their hill, Serragrilli, range from 190-300 meters, and they have a significant rotation of old vines. Their youngest Barbera vines are 30 years old, for example, and the Nebbiolo for their cru Barbaresco was planted in 1951! While non-certified, vines are cultivated organically, and the estate is officially part of Piedmont's "Green Experience" program. (Certification requirements are similar to those for the EU's "bio" label, and also include maintaining habitats for various birds and the protection of pollinators. For more information, you can visit this website: https://www.thegreenexperience.it.

REGION

PIEDMONT

As the name might suggest, Piedmont (trans. 'foot of the mountain') lies in the NW corner of Italy, with Alps shielding it on two sides. 40% of the region is in fact mountainous, and an additional 30% covered in subalpine hills. Borders are shared with Switzerland to the north and France to the west, with the Mediterranean coastline just 90 minutes south. This dual proximity lends itself to bold, structured wines that stand the test of time: ice-cold air from the Alps blows down at night, replacing the warm afternoon temperatures afforded by Mediterranean breezes. These significant diurnal swings allow grapes to develop over longer periods of time, often deepening their natural tannic structure.

Often described as the "Burgundy" of Italy, few would fail to place Piedmont among the world's very finest wine regions. This reputation has been earned in part thanks to its numerous small-scale, family-operated wineries and a near obsessive focus on quality. With entire villages dedicated to the production of wine, it's not unusual to hear stories of winemakers who "sleep amongst their vines", or profess goals such as "making better wine than the French".

Importantly, the region is home to more DOCGs than any other in Italy. Barolo and Barbaresco (accounting for just 3% of Piedmont's production) are just the tip of the iceberg. The Nebbiolo grape alone makes up 13 DOC/DOCG certified wines, and, thanks to topographical variation, the differences between one tiny town and the next can be astounding. With their different altitudes and expositions, for example, the Langhe hills around the town of Alba are Italy's answer to the Côte d'Or. Even though Nebbiolo has a reputation for big tannins and long-term aging, many of the sub-regions (i.e. Langhe, Alba) produce softer styles with a similar weight to whole-cluster Pinot Noir. Single vineyards in close proximity can produce very different wines, which is also why we see so many single-vineyard bottlings.

LANGHE DOC

Large by Piemontese standards, this DOC was created in 1994 and includes a host of famous sub-regions including Barbaresco, Barbera d'Alba, Barolo, Dolcetto d'Alba, Nebbiolo d'Alba, and Roero. In fact, it canvasses 54 communes in the provinces of (mainly) Cuneo and Asti. Importantly, however, nearly 90% of the vineyards in Langhe qualify as DOC and DOCG! With this particular designation, varietal rules aren't as strict, so producers can offer a wide array of red, white and rosé wines. A few international varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay are even allowed, making the DOC attractive to winemakers looking to innovate. Similarly, winemakers may elect to use the Langhe DOC to lower the cost of a fine wine - or simply to have it stand out in a crowd. To include the varietal on a label, that wine must be verified at 85%.

Langhe - which is the plural of 'langa' in the local dialect, meaning a long, low-lying hill - is a subalpine area just a morning's drive away from the towering Alps. Slopes rise up to 600 meters and enjoy predominantly clay and marl soils. (Like much of this region, the area was prehistorically under water and the term 'blue tufo' is a nod to those oceanic beginnings.) Fog banks tend to roll in during early autumn, allowing high-acid, slow-ripeners like Nebbiolo the chance to reach their phenolic peaks.