Winemaker: Damiano Sicca
Generation: 3rd

PRODUTTORI
IN CLAVESANA

Langhe Nebbiolo DOC

When we first tried this Nebbiolo in Italy, what struck us was the combination of its clean, traditional style combined with a really fantastic price point - in other words, Piedmont at its accessible best. With its vertical tannins, firm fruit, and well-managed acidity, this Langhe DOC reveals a wine grown at higher altitude in rich, marly clay soils and deftly managed in the cellar. Only a small portion of the juice spends time in wood, allowing the dark fruit, tobacco elements, and pleasant dry tannins to shine through. 90 pts JS

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

Against a backdrop of snow-covered Alps, this collective of 150 small, sustainable farms focuses their efforts squarely on the Dolcetto grape, and most especially the Dogliani DOCG. Clean and correct - yet highly accessible - wine remains their mantra!

ENOLOGIST

Damiano Sicca

TASTING NOTES

Color	Ruby with garnet edge
Nose	Dark cherry, plum, and tobacco
Palate	Admirable typicity and structure, with balanced fruit and tannins
Finish	Pleasant, with dry tannins

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

	12
Vineyard Location	Langhe DOC, Piedmont
Vineyard Size	30 ha
Varietals List	100% Nebbiolo
Farming Practices	Sustainably farmed, including dry-farmed; grapes picked by hand
Elevation	250-400 m
Soils	Marly limestone
Maturation Summary	In 20% large neutral barrels for 6 months, in Steel 80% 6 months and bottled 3 months
In Steel	80% 6 months
Alcohol	14.0 %
Acidity	4.5 g/liter
Residual Sugar	1.9 g/liter
Annual Production	150,000 bottles

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CANTINA CLAVESANA

With 150 members and roughly 320 combined hectares under vine, this hard-working, multi-generational co-operative is based in the town of Clavesana – in turn located just south of Monforte d'Alba in the province of Cuneo. Here, plants typically enjoy more altitude than the next-door Barolo district (the co-op's vines span 280 to 600 meters), and while Nebbiolo exists, Clavesana's focus lies firmly on their beloved Dolcetto grape. While the average member's farm is tiny (less than 2 hectares), as a collective, Cantine Clavesana has positioned themselves as the largest producer of Dolcetto in the Langhe. Beyond this, small amounts of Nebbiolo, Arneis, and Pinot Noir are also grown – and in true Piemontese form, they also count honey and hazelnuts amongst their agricultural products.

Despite the geographic proximity to Alba, Clavesana's hilly sub-zone has a cooler, fresher mesoclimate and is known for its streak of white clay which contributes to the acidic and tannic structure of Dolcetto. (Overall, the Dogliani DOCG is considered to be ground zero for more substantive, complex expressions of the small, tannic grape.) In a landscape of increasingly expensive Piemontese wines, we found theirs to have a fantastic cost-to-quality ratio, and we applaud their tendency to create wines of a clean, traditional style.

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.