Winemaker: Damiano Sicca
Generation: 3rd

PRODUTTORI
IN CLAVESANA

Barbera d'Alba DOC

Centered in its namesake town in the southern Langhe, Cantina Clavesana devotes much of its time and expertise to the Dolcetto grape. That said, 6 or 7 small, independent growers spread across Monforte, La Morra, and Novello have combined their Barbera vines to create this pleasant everyday affordable. Dark cherry, plum and earth spice repeat on both nose and palate, and a year in large Slovenian casks add to the wine's overall warm-hearted character and sweeter finish. Perfect for that mid-week pasta night! 92 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	Dark ruby
Nose	Dark cherry and plum with hints of dark earth and floral spice
Palate	Warm-hearted, with dark fruit repeating
Finish	Food-friendly

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

	12
Vineyard Location	Barbera d'Alba DOC, Piedmont
Vineyard Size	7 ha
Varietals List	100% Barbera d'Alba
Farming Practices	Sustainably farmed, including dry-farmed; grapes picked by hand
Elevation	250-300 m
Soils	Marly clay
Maturation Summary	In large neutral barrels for 12 months, in Steel 6 months and bottled 3 months
In Steel	6 months
Alcohol	14.5 %
Acidity	4.5 g/liter
Residual Sugar	1.9 g/liter

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PRODUTTORI
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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.

BARBERA D'ALBA DOC

Located on the steep, subalpine slopes of Alba and the surrounding Langhe hills, this DOC overlaps both the Barolo and Barbaresco zones (where most vintners producing the "big B's" also grow Barbera). With its naturally low tannins and high acidity, Barbera thrives in the same chalky, limestone-rich soils, and winemakers often plant it anywhere the more finicky Nebbiolo refuses to thrive. To qualify for the DOC, wine must be at least 85% Barbera (the only other variety it can legally contain is Nebbiolo) but there are no aging requirements. (Except for the Superiore label, which mandates a minimum of 4 months in the barrel.) While similarities abound, Barbera d'Alba is generally considered a bit bolder and more age-worthy, while Barbera d'Asti is viewed as more delicate and elegant. In part, this is due to lower altitudes and less dramatic swings in diurnal temperatures.

Historically used as a blending grape to help soften the tannins of bulk wine, Barbera has only more recently started to come into its own. As winemakers began upgrading their viticulture and craftmanship in the 1990s, a wider audience began discovering how delightful Barbera could be, particularly when made in the hills around Alba and Monforte d'Alba (in the province of Asti). Specifically, producers began thinning bunches, leading to much lower yields, and some began experimenting with French oak barriques, leading to more global recognition.