



NORTHERN PIEMONTE

ANNUAL REPORT 2026

DAVID WAY

Northern Piemonte Wine Report
First Edition 2026

© 2026 David Way

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise — without prior written permission of the author, except for brief quotations used in reviews or editorial coverage.

Published by David Way
www.winefriend.org

The author has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication. Wine availability, ownership, and production details may change over time.

Cover photo by David Way: Pergola-trained vineyards on the slope of Carema

Map of Northern Piemonte, David Way, *The Wines of Piemonte*, p. 3. Courtesy of Académie du Vin Library.

The vineyards of Gattinara, p. 15. Courtesy of Il Chiosso

Roman glass drinking cup found near Ghemme, p. 38. Photograph by José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro, via Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

New winery, Ioppa, Ghemme, p. 47. Courtesy of Vini Ioppa.

A culogna of local gneiss supporting the vine pergola, p. 75. Courtesy of Cà da l'Era.

All other photographs: David Way.

Northern Piemonte Report 2026

Nebbiolo and Erbaluce at the foot of the Alps

David Way

Author: *The Wines of Piemonte* (2023) and *I vini del Piemonte* (2026)

Sponsored by [Nebbia e Luce](#)



Table of Contents

Preface	<i>i</i>
How to use this report	<i>iii</i>
RATINGS FOR WINERIES AND WINES.....	iii
Why Northern Piemonte?	1
The potential of Northern Piemonte.....	1
The challenges.....	2
Defining Northern Piemonte	3
Four factors shaping Northern Piemonte's wines	4
Climate	4
Complex geological origins and soils	5
ALTO PIEMONTE.....	5
CAREMA, CALUSO, CANAVESE.....	6
Grape varieties and how they are used	6
WHAT DO THE LOCAL VARIETIES BRING TO NEBBIOLO BLENDS?.....	7
ERBALUCE.....	7
Winemaking in Northern Piemonte	8
The denominations and their wines	9
Gattinara	9
ANTONIOLO ★★★★★.....	10
ANZIVINI ★★★.....	10
CALIGARIS LUCA ★★★★★.....	11
CANTINA SOCIALE GATTINARA ★★★★★.....	12
DELSIGNORE ★★★★★.....	13
II CHIOSSO ★★★★★.....	14
LA STRADINA ★★★★★.....	16
MAURO FRANCHINO ★★★.....	17
NERVI CONTERNO ★★★★★.....	17
PARIDE IARETTI ★★★★★.....	19
PETTERINO ★★★★★.....	19
TRAVAGLINI GATTINARA ★★★★★.....	20
VEGIS ★★★★★.....	22
Bramaterra	23
ANTONIOTTI ★★★★★.....	23
CERUTI LORENZO ★★★★★.....	24
COLOMBERA & GARELLA ★★★★★.....	24
LA PALAZZINA.....	25
LA PSIGULA ★★★★★.....	26
LE PIANELLE ★★★★★.....	26

NOAH ★★★★★	27
Lessona	29
LA BADINA ★★★★★	29
LA PREVOSTURA ★★★	29
MASSIMO CLERICO ★★★★★	30
PIETRO CASSINA ★★★	31
PROPRIETÀ SPERINO	32
★★★★★	32
TENUTE SELLA ★★★★★	33
VILLA GUELPA ★★★★★	34
Coste della Sesia	36
CENTOVIGNE ★★★★★	36
FABIO ZAMBOLIN ★★★★★	37
VILLA ERA ★★★	37
Ghemme	38
ANTICHE VIGNETI DI CANTALUPO ★★★★★	38
CANTINA BIANCHI ★★★★★	39
CASCINA CA' NOVA ★★★	40
MIRÚ ★★★	40
PIETRAFORATA ★★★	42
PLATINETTI GUIDO ★★★★★	43
ROVELLOTTI ★★★★★	43
TORRACCIA DEL PIANTAVIGNA ★★★★★	45
VIGNETI COSTACURTA ★★★	46
VINI IOPPA ★★★★★	46
Sizzano	49
COMERO ★★★	49
LA PIEMONTESE ★★★	50
PARIDE CHIOVINI ★★★	52
Fara	53
CANTINOTECA DEI PROLO ★★★	53
DEI CAVALLINI ★★★	54
FRANCESCA CASTALDI ★★★	54
I DOF MATTI ★★★	55
LA SMERALDA ★★★	55
VIGNETI VALLE RONCATI ★★★	56
Boca	58
ANTONIO VALLANA ★★★★★	58
BARBAGLIA ★★★	59
CANTINE DEL CASTELLO DI CONTI ★★★★★	60
DAVIDE CARLONE ★★★	61
LE PIANE ★★★★★	61
PODERE AI VALLONI ★★★★★	63

TENUTE GUARDASOLE ★★★★★	64
Colline Novaresi	65
COGO ★★★	65
ENRICO CROLLA ★★★	66
FEDERICA BOVASSI ★★★	66
FRANCESCO BRIGATTI ★★★★★	67
IL ROCCOLO DI MEZZOMERICO ★★★	68
RICCARDO RINALDI ★★★	68
TIZIANO MAZZONI ★★★★★	69
VIGNAIOLI BONIPERTI ★★★★★	69
Valli Ossolane	71
CANTINE GARRONE ★★★★★	71
EDOARDO PATRONE ★★★	72
LA CANTINA DI TAPPIA ★★	73
CÀ DA L'ERA ★★★	74
DEA VALDOSSOLA ★★★	75
Caluso and Canavese	77
Erbaluce di Caluso	78
CANTINA DELLA SERRA ★★★	78
CIECK ★★★★★	79
COOPERATIVA PRODUTTORI ERBALUCE DI CALUSO ★★★	80
DONNALIA ★★★★★	81
FAVARO BENITO ★★★★★	82
GIACOMETTO BRUNO ★★★★★	83
KALAMASS ★★★★★	83
LA MASERA ★★★★★	84
LE MASCHE ★★★	85
ORSOLANI ★★★★★	85
ROBERTO CROSIO ★★★★★	86
TAPPERO MERLO ★★★★★	87
TENUTA ROLETTO ★★★★★★	88
Carema	90
CANTINA PRODUTTORI NEBBIOLO DI CAREMA ★★★★★	90
CANTINA TOGLIANA ★★★★★	92
CELLAGRANDE ★★★★★	92
FERRANDO ★★★★★	93
MONTE MALETTO ★★★★★	94
MURAJE ★★★★★	95
SOPRAVVENTO ★★★★★	96
SORPASSO ★★★★★★	96

Preface

Italy has many faces, cuisines, and innumerable styles of wine. I began my exploration of Italian wine in the south, then spent many years in Tuscany, and ultimately dedicated four years to researching *The Wines of Piemonte* (Académie du Vin Library, 2023). I quickly discovered that the region boasts numerous native varieties and 60 denominations, forming a small universe of wine in its own right. Consequently, it is now a pleasure to focus more narrowly on Northern Piemonte, home to many expressions of Nebbiolo, supported by its star white grape variety, Erbaluce.

My thanks go to the producers who work the land and make wine, with each bottle presenting technical, environmental, and financial challenges. They have appreciated the attention typically given only to the southern part of the region, and have been hospitable and eager to share their expertise.



Vineyards and abandoned vineyards in Boca and tasting at Proprietà Sperino, Lessona

This report is based on tasting the wines of 90 wineries from November 2025 to January 2026. This included the two-day [Taste Alto Piemonte](#) event in beautiful Stresa on Lake Maggiore. I also made several visits to Gattinara as my base for Alto Piemonte, with thanks to the [Enoteca Regionale di Gattinara e dell'Alto Piemonte](#) for providing a tasting room to meet producers and to those who welcomed me to their wineries. For Carema, Caluso, and Canavese, many thanks to the consortium for [Caluso, Carema, and Canavese](#) for organising three days of tastings with the producers and to the [Enoteca Regionale](#) in Caluso for providing a tasting room. Finally, a special word of thanks to the wineries that sent samples to me in the UK.

I am also grateful to [Nebbia e Luce](#), specialist importers of mature, ready-to-drink wines from Piemonte, who provided sponsorship for this report while leaving me entirely free to form my own judgments. For the sake of transparency, I record that I have previously undertaken freelance work for Nebbia e Luce, preparing detailed profiles of the regions they cover and the wineries they import. However, this report was written entirely independently.

Hopefully, this report—and its successors in the coming years—will elevate the profile of Northern Piemonte to the level it truly deserves.

How to use this report

Why Northern Piemonte?

This first section makes the case for the wines of Northern Piemonte before outlining the essentials of the region: climate, geology, grape varieties, blending traditions and typical winemaking styles.

Organised by denomination

Each section of this report begins with an overview of the denomination in question. Wineries are then grouped alphabetically under the denomination in which they are physically located. As there are many small denominations in Northern Piemonte, each winery may produce wines from multiple denominations.

The detailed Table of Contents below gives access directly to individual wineries.

Focus on the wineries

As noted, the main focus in this report is on the wineries, rather than on individual wines.

RATINGS FOR WINERIES AND WINES

I use a five-star system to rate both producers and individual wines. The producer rating is the more important, as it reflects the overall level and identity of a producer's range and its contribution to the character of the region.

Producers are rated on a five-star scale reflecting overall quality, the coherence of the range and the degree to which their wines capture the distinctive character of their denomination(s).

Individual wines are rated separately on the same scale. Wines included in the report meet a minimum threshold of quality and regional expression, and therefore, no wines below two stars are included. Occasionally, a wine may attract an extra star in brackets, indicating that it has the capacity to age positively, taking it into the next category.

Ratings for wineries

★★★★★	An exceptional producer, consistently delivering outstanding wines that capture the distinctive character of its denomination(s).
★★★★	An excellent producer, consistently delivering wines of a very high standard that clearly express the character of the region.
★★★	A very good producer, making well-crafted wines, some of which show clear regional character.
★★	A good producer, producing sound wines, though quality and regional expression may vary.
★	A competent producer, producing correctly made wines that may lack distinctive regional character.

Ratings for wines

*****	A truly exceptional wine of outstanding quality, with a compelling sense of place.
****	An excellent wine of a very high standard, with clear regional character and a strong sense of place.
***	A very good wine showing balance, character and clear regional expression.
**	A good wine with some expression of place.
*	A sound, well-made wine.

For reference, these star ratings correspond approximately to the following ranges in the 100-point scale: ***** 95–100, **** 93–94, *** 90–92, ** 86–89, * 83–85.

A note on barrel sizes:

- *barrique* (225 litres)
- *tonneaux* (in local usage, 500-700 litres)
- *botte* (plural *botti*), any larger cask from 5 hectolitres (i.e. 5 x 100 litres), but more typically 10, 20 and up to 50 hectolitres, occasionally larger still.

Why Northern Piemonte?

When wine lovers say they love Piemonte, nine times out of ten, they are referring to Barolo and Barbaresco, the highly esteemed Nebbiolo-producing areas in the south of the large region. In the nineteenth century, Northern Piemonte, 150 kilometres north of Barolo, was far more important than the Langhe. Estimates suggest there were up to 40,000 hectares of vineyards on the hills around Gattinara and Ghemme, nearly as many as there are across Piemonte today. However, bad times followed. New vineyard diseases, devastating widespread hail in 1904, two World Wars, and mass migration to the cities resulted in widespread abandonment of vineyards.

Today, Northern Piemonte is regaining its former glory. The 1960s marked the creation of the first DOCs, with DOCG status being achieved by Gattinara (1990) and Ghemme (1997). Wineries such as Travaglini and Antoniolo in Gattinara, Proprietà Sperino in Lessona, Le Piane in Boca, and Ferrando in Carema have built a reputation for producing high-quality wines sold in export markets. In 2018, Roberto Conterno of Giacomo Conterno, the renowned Barolo producer, purchased Nervi in Gattinara. He constructed a new grand winery, signalling the area's potential as a whole. As Northern Piemonte regains its momentum, it deserves more detailed exploration. There are numerous excellent books and countless magazine articles devoted to Barolo and Barbaresco. Yet, with the honourable exception of Giorgio Fogliani's *Nord Piemonte. Tra Gattinara e Carema* ([Possibilia Editore](#), 2020) and a scattering of magazine features, Northern Piemonte remains underrepresented in contemporary wine literature.

THE POTENTIAL OF NORTHERN PIEMONTE

The pioneers from Ghemme to Carema have shown that excellent Nebbiolo wines can be produced here. However, there is still much more potential for the future:

- A cooler, fresher climate than the Langhe. Cold air from the nearby Alps cools the entire region. As the climate continues to warm, this will become a crucial advantage.
- Large areas of land that were vineyards are now wooded. These could be recovered. By contrast, Barolo and Barbaresco are fully planted.
- Prices for good hillside sites are relatively inexpensive. By contrast, land prices in Barolo and Barbaresco have rocketed.
- A remarkable variety of soil types across the region results in diverse expressions of Nebbiolo: volcanic soils in Boca, Bramaterra, and Gattinara; a mixture of alluvial and glacial soils in Ghemme; marine sand in Lessona; sand and pebbles with clay and silt in the morainic hills of Caluso; and shallow sandy soils over metamorphic rocks in Carema.
- There is a long tradition of growing Nebbiolo across Northern Piemonte, a well-known grape variety with high-quality potential.
- Numerous young, dynamic producers are leading the renaissance.
- In a world that is increasingly consuming white wine, Northern Piemonte boasts its own native variety, Erbaluce, which shows outstanding quality potential. The variety is remarkably versatile, producing excellent still wines, traditional method sparkling wines, and sweet wines.

- Wine prices tend to be lower for buyers and consumers compared with wines from the Langhe. Gattinara or Ghemme are typically 15–30 per cent cheaper than Barolo or Barbaresco, while lesser-known denominations can be even more affordable.

THE CHALLENGES

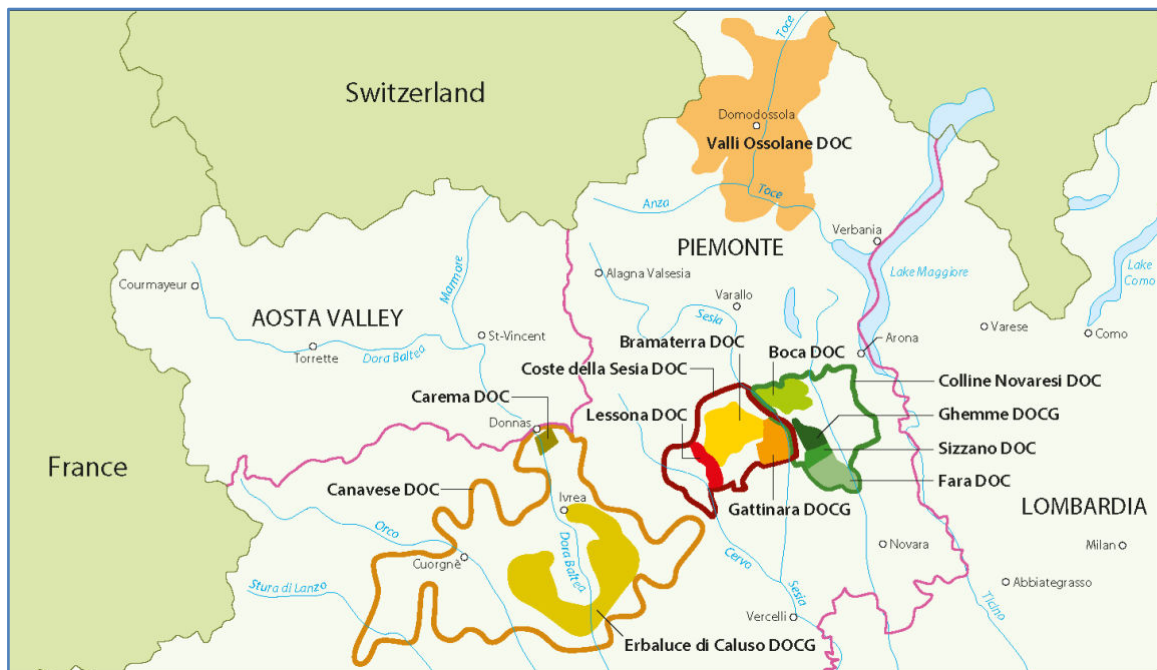
- Lower name recognition than the denominations in the Langhe.
- Northern Piemonte is divided among numerous small denominations, each covering only a modest vineyard area. Alto Piemonte alone has ten denominations for a vineyard surface barely a quarter that of Barolo, with a further three to the west.
- This fragmentation makes promotion more difficult.
- With a few exceptions, Northern Piemonte has tiny wineries with up to five hectares of vineyard each. This reduces the possibilities for promoting the wines. It also limits the amount of technical expertise in the vineyards and the wineries.
- The longstanding tradition of families retaining their small vineyards as part of their heritage makes buying land challenging and limits the opportunities for established wineries to expand.

Northern Piemonte produces high-quality wines from excellent grape varieties, offering a remarkable range of expressions at reasonable prices. Although there is a learning curve for wine lovers and buyers, the region's potential far outweighs the challenges.

The aim of this report is to raise the profile of Northern Piemonte and its wines, helping wine buyers and wine lovers alike to discover the quality, diversity and value that make the region worthy of far greater attention.

Defining Northern Piemonte

Northern Piemonte includes the ten denominations of Alto Piemonte in the east of the region, as well as Carema, Caluso, and Canavese to its west.



Map of Northern Piemonte and its denominations
Reproduced courtesy of Académie du Vin Library

Here is the full list of denominations:

Carema DOC

Caluso DOCG or Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG

Canavese DOC

Alto Piemonte:

- West of the River Sesia: **Coste della Sesia DOC, Lessona DOC, Bramaterra DOC, Gattinara DOCG**
- East of the River Sesia: **Colline Novaresi DOC, Boca DOC, Ghemme DOCG, Sizzano DOC, Fara DOC**
- To the north: **Valli Ossolane DOC**

'We should have promoted northern Piemonte as a whole — one great white variety, Erbaluce, and Nebbiolo expressed in its many shades and nuances.'

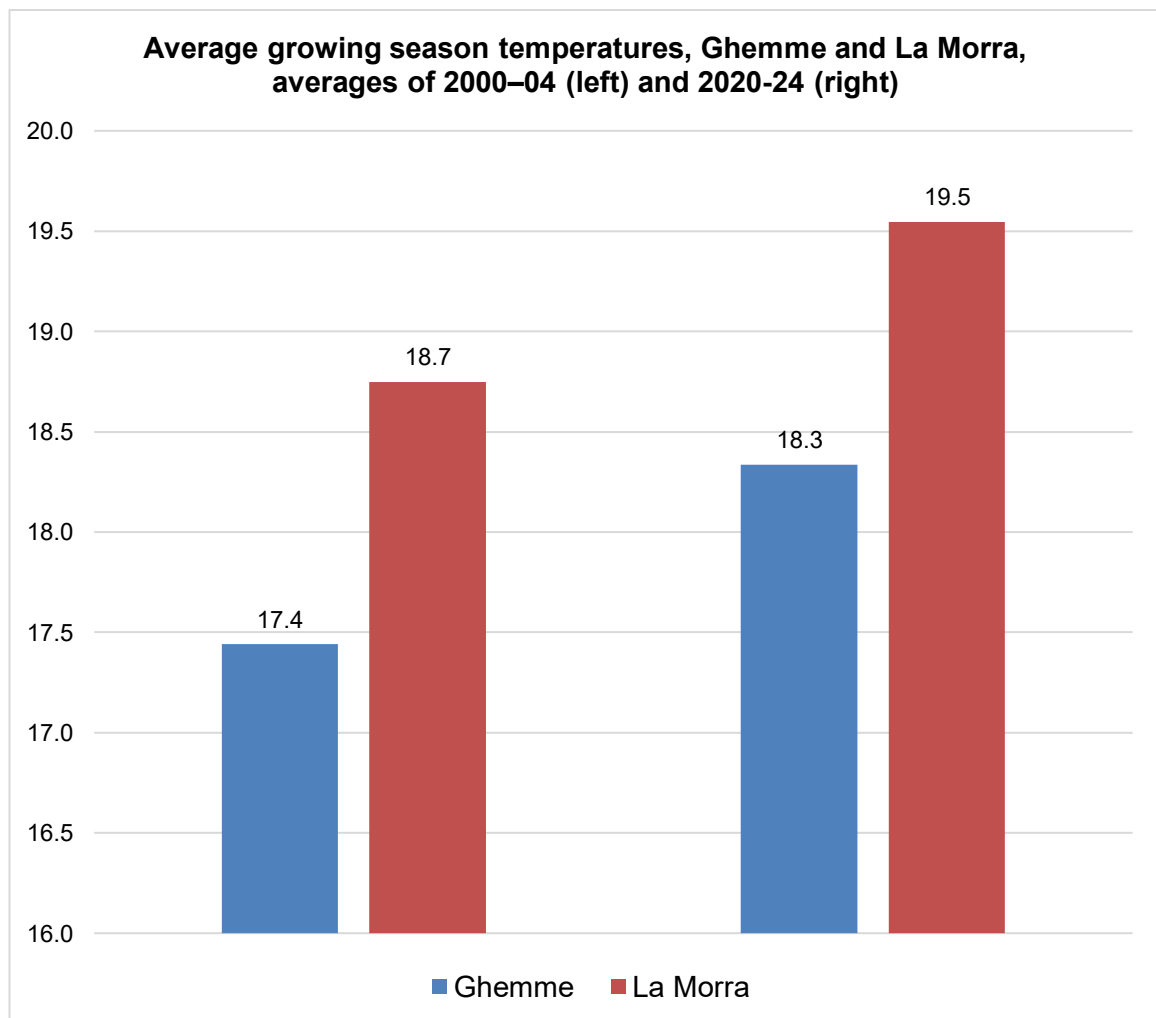
Roberto Ferrando of Ferrando Vini

Four factors shaping Northern Piemonte's wines

There are four key factors that contribute to the character of the wines of Northern Piemonte: climate, geological origins and soils, the grape varieties and the way they are used, and winemaking traditions.

Climate

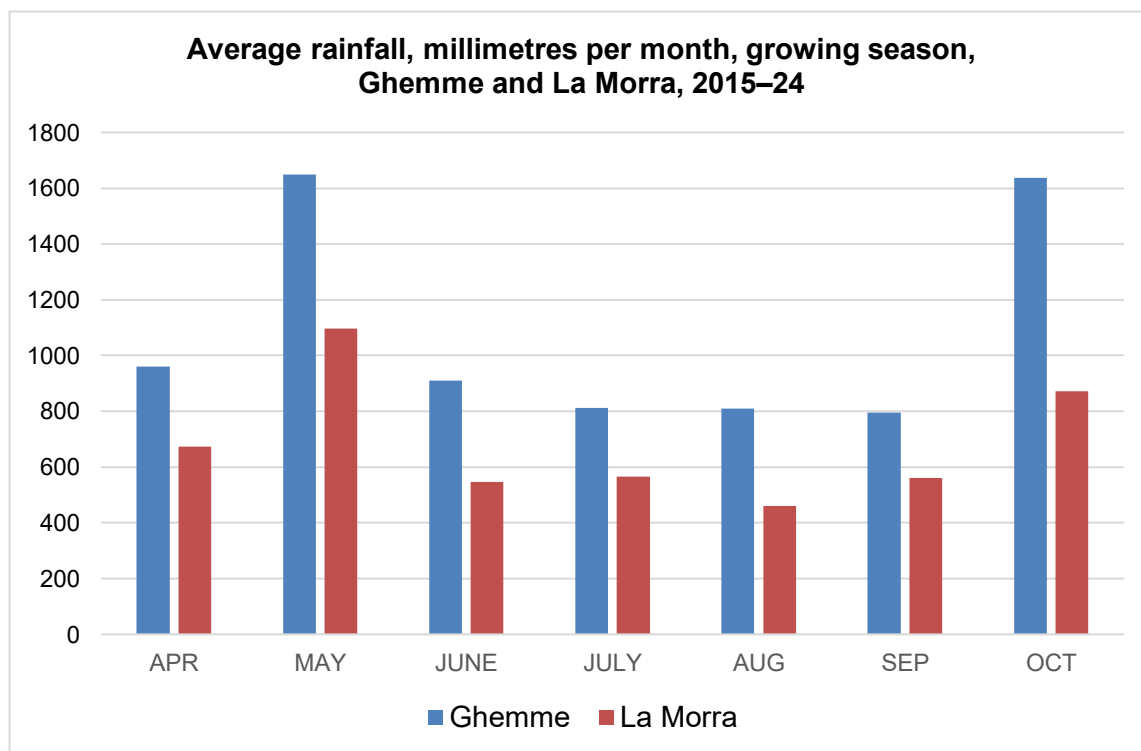
To the north, in the Alps themselves, Monte Rosa at 4,634 m is the second-highest mountain in Europe. The Alps protect the region from cold northern winds and storms. While these denominations are sometimes described as Alpine, in fact, the elevations are very similar to Barolo, 200–520 m. Perhaps it is the proximity of the Alps towering above the region that created this misunderstanding, or just journalistic flights of fancy. However, the Alps do have a profound effect on the climate. Cold air descending from the mountains meets warm air from the plain of the Po River to the south. This combination creates cooler conditions than in Barolo. In today's warmer climate, these are excellent growing conditions, with warm to hot days in summer and cool nights. This creates the high diurnal range that is critical for promoting aromatic complexity in Nebbiolo.



The bar chart above clearly indicates that, during the growing season, both areas are about three-quarters of a degree warmer than they were 20 years ago. Even so, Ghemme in

Northern Piemonte remains notably cooler than La Morra in Barolo. All climate data was supplied by the meteorological service of the Regione Piemonte.

Northern Piemonte receives 45 per cent more rainfall than areas further south. Between 2014 and 2024, Ghemme averaged 1,146 mm of rain each year, while La Morra received 794 mm. Notably, most of the extra rainfall in Northern Piemonte occurs during the growing season, which requires additional care in the vineyard, even though both regions see their peak rainfall in November.



This pattern favours Alto Piemonte in the increasing number of dry years. Even in the drought-like conditions of 2022, there was four times as much rain in September in Ghemme as in La Morra. However, in occasional wet years such as 2024, growing-season rainfall in Ghemme reached 1,200 mm, nearly 70 per cent higher than in La Morra. In summary, the climate in Northern Piemonte is helpfully cooler than in Barolo and there is significantly more rainfall.

Complex geological origins and soils

ALTO PIEMONTE

The Alto Piemonte denominations were shaped by two immense geological events. The first was the eruption of the Valsesia supervolcano around 282 million years ago, one of the most powerful eruptions known, which expelled approximately 775 cubic kilometres of rock and ash and formed a caldera over 15 km wide. The second occurred about 30 million years ago when the collision of the African and European plates created the Alps, pushing deep sections of the Earth's crust—now visible in the UNESCO-recognised Sesia-Valgrande Geopark—to the surface.

Later glaciations and erosion further shaped the landscape, creating a complex mosaic of soils within a small area. Consequently, Alto Piemonte today exhibits significant geological diversity, with soils derived from volcanic rocks and porphyry alongside marine sands, clays, gravels, and alluvial deposits. The subsoil and soil types of the individual denominations are described below.

CAREMA, CALUSO, CANAVESE

The geological origins of Carema, Caluso, and the wider Canavese area are also closely connected to the formation of the Alps and subsequent glacial activity. When the African and European plates collided around 30 million years ago, the Alpine chain was pushed upwards, exposing very ancient rocks belonging to the Ivrea–Verbanò geological zone. In Carema, this uplift left steep slopes of metamorphic rocks such as gneiss and schist. Later glacial advances from the Dora Baltea valley during the Ice Ages carved out the striking amphitheatre of the Ivrea moraine. When the glaciers receded, they left behind extensive deposits of morainic gravel, sand, and clay. These glacial and alpine processes created the diverse soils that characterise the vineyards of the area today, from the stony, fast-draining terraces of Carema to the morainic and sandy soils around Caluso, and the richer soils across Canavese with higher proportions of silt and clay.

Although the geological history is quite diverse, acidic soils are common throughout Northern Piemonte. This reduces yields but can enhance concentration by limiting vine vigour and producing smaller berries. In Alto Piemonte and Carema, vineyard soils are generally well-drained, mainly due to their high content of sand, gravel and stones, and are often located on sloping sites. Their texture tends to be light—typically sandy or stony—with relatively low fertility, which again limits vine vigour and yields.

Low-fertility, acidic soils, combined with a cooler climate and more cloud cover than in southern Piemonte, result in Nebbiolo wines that are typically around one degree lower in alcohol than those of the Langhe: roughly 12–13% for earlier-drinking wines and 13–14% for the great, age-worthy reds.

Grape varieties and how they are used

The principal grape varieties across Northern Piemonte are Nebbiolo for red wines and Erbaluce for white wines.

In Alto Piemonte, traditionally, the wines were made with Nebbiolo (50–90 per cent) blended with local varieties such as Vespolina, Uva Rara, and Croatina. This tradition persists, alongside some denominations producing 100 per cent Nebbiolo wines. This practice of blending Nebbiolo marks a notable difference from Barolo and Barbaresco.

Some producers cultivate the same Nebbiolo biotypes as found in the Langhe, while others take pride in growing local biotypes: Prùnent (especially in Val d'Ossola) or Picotendro (Carema and neighbouring Val d'Aosta).

WHAT DO THE LOCAL VARIETIES BRING TO NEBBIOLO BLENDS?

Vespolina: depth of colour, violet and sour red cherry fruit, and a marked black pepper note, with brisk acidity and firm tannins. If that sounds like Nebbiolo, it is no surprise to learn that it is a close relative.

Croatina: depth of colour, black cherry and plum fruit with some earth or spicy notes, moderate to high in acidity and high in firm tannins.

Uva Rara: a traditional part of some blends, sometimes referred to as Bonarda Novarese. It was also called ‘the grapes of the harvester’ as it was ripe enough to eat at the same time as the other varieties were picked. It offers simple, approachable red fruit, moderate acidity and tannins that can add freshness and a softening element to blends.

Stylistically, the Nebbiolo wines of Northern Piemonte are typically lower in alcohol than Barolo and Barbaresco, medium-bodied, with refreshing acidity and relatively gentle tannins. Many show a characteristic earthiness, often with an iron note. At the same time, there is significant variation across the region—especially due to soil types and blending practices—which gives rise to a wide range of Nebbiolo expressions in Northern Piemonte.

A distinctive feature of Northern Piemonte is the presence of two main styles: pure Nebbiolo wines as in the Langhe, and Nebbiolo-based blends in which Vespolina, Croatina and Uva Rara contribute depth of colour, red to black cherry fruit and spicy, earthy notes.

ERBALUCE

This variety is particularly celebrated in the Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG area, but it is widely cultivated across Northern Piemonte. It is moderately vigorous and well adapted to morainic and alluvial soils. It produces thick-skinned berries, which are ideal for its traditional (semi-dried grape) wines. Often grown on pergolas, this arrangement allows grapes to be shaded for early-picked sparkling wines or exposed for the modern dry white wine style. It exhibits subtle floral, lemon, green apple, and almond notes combined with its characteristic racy acidity. Its high acidity makes it suitable for all three styles and for bottle ageing.

Due to an anomaly in Italian wine law, the name of the grape variety Erbaluce may appear on labels in Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG, but not in the broader zones of Canavese or Alto Piemonte. In these areas the wines must be labelled simply as Bianco, even though both Coste della Sesia DOC and Colline Novaresi DOC stipulate that their Bianco category be made exclusively from Erbaluce. The situation appears to date from 2010, when Erbaluce di Caluso was promoted to DOCG status. Since EU wine law does not allow the protection of grape variety names as such, the most plausible explanation is that the regional or national authorities—or perhaps the producers themselves—opted to restrict the use of the name beyond its historic core area. The result is a regulatory quirk that can leave consumers puzzled. I would have loved to be in the room when this baffling decision was made.

Winemaking in Northern Piemonte

Generally, winemaking in Northern Piemonte is artisanal and traditional. Most estates are small and family-run. While there are highly skilled winemakers and consultants, the approach tends to be low intervention. Furthermore, in Northern Piemonte, there was nothing like the 'Barolo Boys' or the modernist versus traditionalist controversy. Barriques may well be used, but that is usually because volumes are small and they are often *barriques exhausti*, that is, used so many times that they impart no oak flavours.

Details are provided below regarding the key choices made by individual producers: destemmed versus whole bunch fruit, the type of yeast used, whether malolactic fermentation is employed for white wines, the duration of maceration on the skins for red wines, and the types of vessels and time spent in oak when used to age wine.

The denominations and their wines

Gattinara

The town of Gattinara has had a reputation for quality wine since the late Middle Ages. The Marquis of Gattinara, Mercurino Arborio, politician, diplomat and latterly cardinal (1465–1530), donated barrels of wine to the main European courts. In the same period, the vine features prominently in the decoration of the west front of the parish church of San Pietro in the centre of the town, which can still be seen today (see the photo in the Delsignore entry below). It is the largest of the Nebbiolo-focused denominations in Alto Piemonte, with around 90 hectares in production. The vineyards are to be found on a single southeast to southwest-facing set of slopes above the town, between 250 and 550 metres in elevation. The eleventh-century tower, which features on many bottle labels, stands guard over the vineyards. The soils are typically thin and stony above rock of volcanic origin, especially porphyry. All these factors mean that the wines have a certain homogeneity and sense of place. They are typically the most powerful and full-bodied of the pure Nebbiolo wines of Northern Piemonte.

Gattinara DOCG

- DOC from 1967; became a DOCG in 1990.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipality of Gattinara.
- The wines must be 90–100 per cent Nebbiolo, and mostly are pure Nebbiolo.
- The standard wine must be aged for 36 months before release, including 24 months in wood.
- This is extended to 47 and 36 months for *Gattinara riserva*.



Vineyards in Gattinara

ANTONIOLO



One of the great names of Gattinara, with a long history of excellence, Antoniolo started to bottle single vineyard wines from 1974, encouraged by Luigi Veronelli, the pioneer of Italian wine writing, who was a friend of the family. Winemaking is fairly traditional here. The wines are macerated on the skins for around three weeks and fermented using ambient yeast in concrete tanks installed in the 1970s. The larger volume Gattinara is aged mostly in Slavonian oak *botti*. At every level, from the simpler Nebbiolo to the single-vineyard Gattinara wines, Antoniolo reliably produce outstanding results.

All the wines are 100 per cent Nebbiolo. The single vineyard wines and the *riserve* are aged for three years in old oak.

*Bricco Lorella Costa della Sesia DOC Vino rosato 2024 13% ****

A few hours of skin contact produce an attractive red cherry and peach flavoured rosé with juicy fruit, crisp acidity and a hint of tannin.

*Juvenia Nebbiolo Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13.5% ****

Ripe red cherry with a hint of smoke and stone, and moderate tannins in balance with the fruit. Good length.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva 2020, 13.5% ******

All the Antoniolo Gattinaras benefit from significant vine age of more than 60 years. Sour red cherry and rhubarb fruit on the nose, with a touch of black pepper, make for high complexity, backed up with elegant tannins. A very complete *riserva*.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva San Francesco 2019 14% ******

Fruit from one of the Antoniolo monopoles, with selection from the highest and sunniest part of the vineyard. A sublime nose with rose, violet and ripe red cherry plus some tobacco development and a very fine velvet texture. The fruit here shows all the qualities of the great 2019 vintage.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva Osso San Grato 2020 14% *****

The 2020 shows ripe red to black plum fruit with tangerine highlights, with a touch of tobacco and earth, and rounded tannins.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva Castelle 2020 14% *****

Dark fruited with rhubarb and beetroot notes lifted by rose petal aromas and the first tertiary tobacco development. Firm but polished tannins.

ANZIVINI



www.anzivino.it

Emanuele Anzivino, a *geometra* (surveyor) by profession, established his winery in 1998, swapping urban life for the relative calm of the countryside. His background was very useful in repurposing the winery building, which had been a distillery. Seven hectares are farmed; five owned, two rented, some in the well-known Molsino and Valferrana sub-zones of Gattinara and also in neighbouring Bramaterra.

*Gattinara DOCG 2022 14% ****

Made entirely with Nebbiolo grapes kept on the skins for two weeks to protect the depth of colour that could be lost with longer macerations. After two months in stainless steel, the

wine is aged for two years in large oak *botti*. Attractive, very ripe fruit, reflecting the hot, dry vintage, with red to black plum to the fore. Not hugely complex but ready to drink.

Bramaterra DOC Riserva 2018 13.5% ***

A small production of 75 per cent Nebbiolo blended with Croatina. This wine is aged for 30 months in tonneaux. With a relatively high proportion (25 per cent) of Croatina, the wine shows a red fruit core, alongside the grape's characteristic brambly, spicy notes, combined with hints of vanilla and slightly prickly tannins.

Cesare Gattinara DOCG 2018 14.5% ****

Another limited production wine, this time a selection of the best grapes of Nebbiolo, picked at full ripeness and then allowed to dry for 10 days. This accounts both for the rich, rounded fruit and, for Alto Piemonte, the relatively high alcohol level. A hint of dried fruit complements fresh fruit notes. Very fine.

CALIGARIS LUCA

www.cantinacaligaris.it



With just two hectares of vineyard and only 1.6 within Gattinara DOCG, Luca Caligaris has to choose each year which wines to produce. In addition to the Gattinara DOCG wines, some years see a rosé (Rosa di Martina), others, Costa della Sesia Nebbiolo. Further, a typical northern Piemontese multi-variety blend is made from Nebbiolo, Uva Rara, Croatina and Vespolina, and bottled for early drinking as Rosso di Sara. The Caligaris Gattinara wines are exceptional wines, made in a traditional style and with great potential to age further in the bottle.

Gattinara DOCG 2022, 13.5% *****

In this hot year, all the fruit was of a quality to make Gattinara DOCG, so Costa della Sesia Nebbiolo was not made. It is traditional in style with three weeks of maceration on the skins and two and a half years in a 20-hectolitre *botte*. Bold, herbal and savoury black plum fruit, full-bodied, with a tannic structure covered by the fruit.

Gattinara DOCG Riserva 2020, 13.5% *****

Made only in the top years with a selection of the best fruit, normally from the Osso vineyard. Four years in oak. Orange peel and cranberry aromatics, this elegant wine is still very primary despite being five years old, but it has the capacity for precise development in the bottle. Outstanding.



Gattinara's 11th century tower

CANTINA SOCIALE GATTINARA

www.cantinagattinara.it



Down an inconspicuous side street in the centre of Gattinara is the historic co-operative, founded in 1908. It is the second-oldest co-operative in Italy and the oldest still to be in production. Before then, winemaking was done at home and mostly for home consumption, just as farmers looked after their cows and chickens, and grew grain. At its peak, the co-operative had 100 members. (Very few will notice the rather grand hotel/restaurant on the main road is actually the property of the co-operative, when in the past they needed all that space.) Today, it has 12 members and 10 hectares of vines (of which 6 are Gattinara DOCG), which is still a decent size by the standards of northern Piemonte. Members have to commit all their grapes to the co-operative and are paid according to the quality of the fruit delivered. The winery bottles its better wine and also sells considerable amounts of *vino sfuso* (bulk wine) to the locals who bring their own containers for wine that they will bottle at home. The winery has a good stock of recent vintages from the last decade to sell.

Costa della Sesia DOC Rosso 2023 12.5% **

A blend of 50 per cent Nebbiolo plus Uva Rara and Croatina, fermented in concrete with no temperature control and aged for one year in stainless steel. Fruity with dark plum and raspberry notes, crunchy youthful tannins, clean and very drinkable.

*Gattinara DOCG 2016 13.5% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, fermented in concrete tanks. The wine is kept on the skins only for as long as fermentation lasts, a week or so. It is then aged for two years in stainless steel and a further two to three years in large *botti*, plus one year in bottle. Pale garnet edge, medium body and attractive lightness on the palate, a very elegant and refined expression of Gattinara from a great vintage.

*Gattinara DOCG 2016 Riserva 13.5% *****

Made from the best Nebbiolo fruit, with the second phase of ageing in 10-hectolitre *botti*, rather than the larger ones used for the standard bottling. Deeper garnet and a hint of ruby in colour, rounded red plum to darker fruit, mellow, fine tannins, definitely ready to drink, subtle, with a touch more intensity than the standard bottling.



Entrance to the Cantina Sociale Gattinara

DELSIGNORE

www.cantinadelsignore.com



As with so many Gattinara families, grape growing historically was part of mixed farming. It nearly came to an end when Stefano Delsignore's father had a stroke, and much of the land was sold. However, later, Stefano bought vineyards and restarted a wine business in 2008, with the vineyard now rising to 3.8 hectares, a decent size by Alto Piemonte's standards. Critical acclaim has enabled the winery to grow and to make an unusually wide range of wines, Gattinara DOCG of course, but also very well-received traditional method sparkling wines with Nebbiolo grapes.

*Rosé, Spumante Metodo Classico Rosato Millesimato Extra Brut 2023 12.5%****

Just 3–4 grams per litre residual sugar rounds out this pale pink sparkler, the dosage made with sugar added to still Gattinara *riserva* wine. Lovely strawberry, brioche and cream aromas lead to a gentle finish, with the wine having spent more than a year on the lees.

*Mecco Spumante Metodo Classico Rosato Millesimato Dosaggio Zero 2019 12.5% *****

A tribute to his father, Domenico, whose nickname was Mecco. This traditional method sparkling wine spends four years on the lees in the bottle. A stony, stylish entry with a floral touch and ripe strawberry fruit. The mildest hint of tannic grip and the dry but rounded finish make this a versatile wine, well beyond just the aperitif moment. Exceptional winemaking, showing the potential of Nebbiolo to make outstanding traditional method sparkling wine.

*La Grazia, Coste della Sesia DOC Rosato, 2024, 12.5% ***

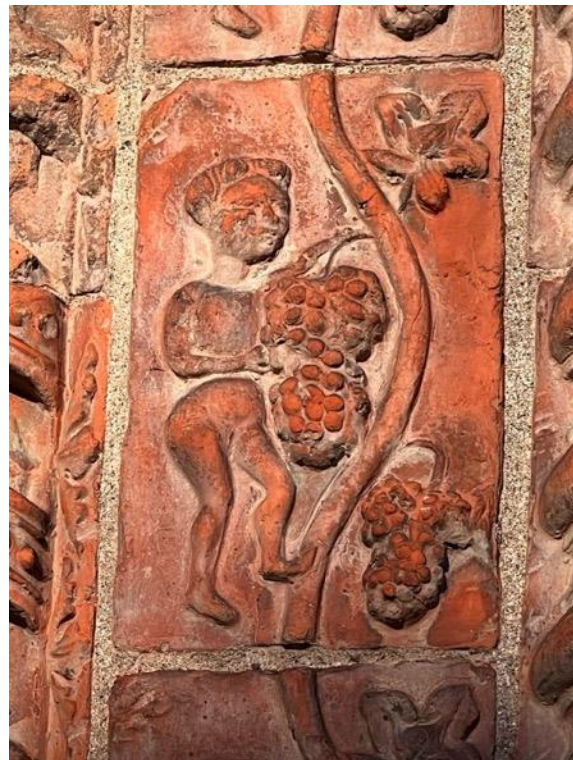
Here the tribute is to Stefano's mother, whose final year, 2011, was the first year Stefano made a rosé wine. 80 per cent Nebbiolo blended with Uva Rara, the 2024 vintage is a rosé for those who want one with a bit of edge, with white stone fruit and lively acidity.

*La Crotta, Costa della Sesia DOC Spanna 2023, 13% ***

'La crotta' is the dialect name for a cellar. It features very juicy, ripe red cherry and yellow plum fruit, with a moderately full body in this 100 per cent Nebbiolo wine.

*Il Putto, Gattinara DOCG 2020 13.5% *****

The fourteenth-century façade of Gattinara's main church has a fine carving of a boy with a bunch of grapes, hence 'il putto'. This wine spends up to a month on the skins and then more than two years in old 20-hectolitre barrels. Serious depth of fruit combined with evident evolution and fine, currently grippy tannins. Very good potential for ageing.



Grapes on the front of Gattinara's church

*Borgofranco, Gattinara DOCG Riserva, 2019, 13.5% ******

This wine is named after the foundation of Gattinara in 1242, a haven of autonomy with tax breaks, after the feudal era. The wine is made from a selection of the best fruit from a number of the Delsignore vineyards. This wine has a few more days of maceration on the skins and longer in the barrel. Red-fruited and vertical in style, there is also real depth here, crunchy tannins and a developing tar note.

II CHIOSSO



www.ilchiosso.it

Il Chiosso, founded in 2007, is the second and larger winery of Marco Arlunno (see Mirú, Ghemme) and engineer Carlo Cambieri, who still tends his vineyards at weekends. The winery is housed in a former Lavazza coffee capsule factory, before the company moved production to a much larger facility in the town, which supplies the entire Italian market.

Il Chiosso's wines are drawn first from Cambieri's vineyards in Gattinara, where the steep, high-altitude sites (460–505 metres) require largely manual work. These are complemented by Arlunno's vineyards in Sizzano, Fara and Ghemme, bringing the total to around 10 hectares.

The approach at Il Chiosso is resolutely contemporary, with an emphasis on fruit expression and the use of modern equipment, including controlled oxygen exposure, temperature management and automated punch-downs. Post-fermentation maceration is relatively short, typically 2–3 days, for a total of around 10 days on skins.

*Paglierino Vino Bianco 2024 12.5% ****

In 2024 much of the Erbaluce crop was lost to wild boar, who love this grape which ripens first. The decision was made to blend 70 per cent of their own grapes with 30 per cent Cortese from a friend in Gavi, a clever solution to a major problem. It was vinified in stainless with no malolactic fermentation. Almond, green fruit and a hint of nougat, a slightly less vertical expression than a classic young Erbaluce.

*Ficorosso Collina Novarese DOC Rosato 2023 13% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo rosé, named after the September fig. Pale copper in colour, an elegant and mild-mannered wine with blossom and red cherry fruit, with a hint of iron and light tannins on the finish. Surprisingly long.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Spanna 2024 13% ****

From the local Cobiacono Nebbiolo clone, so called due to its hazel coloured wood in winter, which, according to Il Chiosso, produces big bunches and berries. While most have abandoned this clone for Langhe clones, Il Chiosso planted it in 2014 in Ghemme. It is vinified and aged exclusively in stainless steel. Pale ruby with a hint of garnet; delicate mint and floral notes over red cherry and plum, finishing on fine, light tannins. Suitable for light chilling.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2024 13% ******

This entry-level Nebbiolo, made from the Lampia and Michet clones, offers a different style to the Spanna above. Lively aromatics, with earth and iron notes overlaying the fruit, firm, fine tannins and a touch more finesse.

Sizzano DOC 2019 13% *****

A wine made from a blend of 70 per cent Nebbiolo and 15 per cent each of Vespolina and Uva Rara, grown on stony, gravelly soils. All the fruit is harvested together and subjected to a week of cryomaceration to extract aromas and to provide a point of difference from the Mirú version of Sizzano (see below). It spends ten days on the skins, one year of ageing in stainless steel and a further two in large *botti*. A beautiful nose with integrated rose, undergrowth, earth and red fruit, very complex and with a firm structure for long additional maturation in bottle if desired. Outstanding.

Fara DOC 2018 13.5% ****

The same blend as Sizzano (they are only a few kilometres apart), but here the soil has more clay. Similar winemaking but without the cryomaceration. A more traditional style, with darker fruit expression, less immediate emphasis on the fruit, but layered and earthy.

Ghemme DOCG 2020 13% ****

95 per cent Nebbiolo, plus Vespolina. 10 days on the skins, three years in oak *botti*. Slightly bricky note to the colour, complex damson and orange skin notes, in an elegant, linear style with very fine tannins.



The vineyards of Gattinara

Gattinara DOCG 2020 13.5% *****

Nebbiolo 100 per cent from vines at a range of higher altitudes on the hill of Gattinara. The wine stays for two weeks on the skins and is aged for three years in large *botti*, with some Slavonian and some French oak. A touch more powerful than the Ghemme of the same year, with the stony and iron notes to the fore, with floral and red fruited highlights. Elegant and long, it is a fine Gattinara.

Terre Vulcaniche Gattinara DOCG 2018 14% *****

This Gattinara is made by blending Nebbiolo from the upper part of the high Galizie vineyard, which contributes greater acidity and from the lower-lying Marzola vineyard, which brings riper fruit, all picked on the same day and vinified together. The wine is aged for two years in used tonneaux. Brickly in colour with the first tertiary coffee aromas and underlying bright red to black plum fruit. An excellent example of creativity in combining the fruit of two contrasting sites.

Galizja Gattinara DOCG 2018 14% *****

A 1.3-hectare plot in the high Galizie vineyard at the top of the hill, which has shallow soils over iron-rich rocky soils. This wine is made like the standard Gattinara, creating a very fine, restrained style, all about elegance, with excellent depth of fruit and fine tannins.

LA STRADINA



www.facebook.com/StradinaGattinara

La Stradina was founded in 2002, the result of a longstanding friendship between five contemporaries who had grown up together since their school years. The tiny winery, a couple of rooms in the basement of a normal block of houses in Gattinara, vinifies the fruit of less than one hectare of vines in the San Francesco sub-zone, which they replanted in 2002. Some of the land came from the grandfather of Piergiorgio Cerello, one of the five, who also went on to study viticulture and oenology to assist the project. The first Gattinara DOCG followed in 2013. All the Gattinara DOCG wines are subject to maceration on the skins for three weeks in total and then aged for three years in used barriques.



Micro cellar at La Stradina

Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13% ***

100 per cent Nebbiolo that shows bright, unimpeded violet and red cherry fruit for early drinking.

Balòs Gattinara 2022 14% ****

'Lively boy' in dialect, this wine is made from fruit from the Molsino and Castelle sub-zones. Red plum and nut notes, with a ripe, rounded mid-palate. The fruit intensity effectively masks the tannins in this still-young wine.

Rusèt Gattinara DOCG 2020 14.5% *****

Rusèt is a family name. The fruit comes from the winery's best vines in the San Francesco sub-zone, with the wine showing real finesse: pretty redcurrant and red cherry fruit with a velvet texture and a vertical style. Numbered bottles: ours was 412 of 600 when tasting with some of the owners. Outstanding.

MAURO FRANCHINO



This is another example of the classic Gattinara small producer story. The family practised mixed farming in the past and had a cellar in their home on a side street within the oldest, formerly fortified part of the town. In those days, the wine was sold *sfuso*, unbottled, for local consumption. With the arrival of the DOC, the final move was to produce high-quality wine in a traditional manner to be bottled and sold both locally and abroad. Approximately half, the best half, of the production of their three hectares is bottled under the winery's own name, with the rest of the fruit being sold off. Like those of several producers, the bottles are decorated with a drawing of the tower that is the symbol of Gattinara. Both wines are 100 per cent Nebbiolo.

*Costa della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo, 2023, 13% ***

15 days on the skins, the wine is matured for 18 months in *botte*. Surprisingly deep in colour with simple red fruit and ripe tannins. Nebbiolo in an approachable manner.

*Gattinara DOCG 2022, 14% ****

Rather longer maceration on the skins of 20 days, wine aged in *botte* for two years. Pale ruby on the turn to garnet, notes of red cherry, beetroot, and thyme, elegant and restrained in style with mildly adhesive tannins.

NERVI CONTERNO



www.nervicantine.it

Undoubtedly, the most significant recent event for Alto Piemonte overall and Gattinara specifically has been the acquisition of the historic Nervi winery by Roberto Conterno of Giacomo Conterno. Nervi, established in 1906, owned prime vineyards such as those in Molsino and Valferana. With 27 hectares, it is a sizeable producer, making it one of the few exceptions to the issue of small-scale companies across northern Piemonte. That a world-famous, world-class winery in Barolo chose to invest here can only benefit the region as a whole. The sale was completed in 2018. The old winery has been converted into a prestigious restaurant, adding another attraction for wine tourists. A striking, entirely new winery has been built, designed by architect Gian Carlo Primatesta.

In Gattinara, Roberto Conterno has applied the same meticulous attention to detail that characterises his work in Barolo. As he has found his rhythm, the wines are distinguished by precision and finesse. In addition to his own vineyards, he has sourced fruit from Sizzano and Ghemme to produce an exceptional Nebbiolo rosé at an accessible price. Production of his traditional Nebbiolo sparkling wine is increasing, which should make it more widely available in the future.

*Il Rosato, 2024, 13% ****

A beautiful pale apricot pink in colour, the wine leads with medium intensity small red berry fruit and white peach on the nose and palate, with a refreshing palate: dangerously drinkable. A very light tannic grip means it can go beyond the *aperitivo* stage of a meal, finishing dry and fruity. It's great to see that the aim is an immediate, approachable rosé, not a grand wine for ageing.



The new winery at Nervi Conterno, Gattinara

Jefferson Vino Spumante di Qualità Zero Dosage 2019 13% ***

Named after the US president who, in 1787, declared that the 'Nebiuole' wine he drank in Turin was 'about as sweet as the silky Madeira, as astringent on the palate as Bordeaux and as brisk as Champagne'. Conterno's wine is made from 100 per cent Nebbiolo grapes, part estate-grown, part bought-in, picked about a week before full maturity to achieve the high acidity required for a traditional-method sparkling wine. The wine is kept on the lees in bottle for three years, with no sugar added at dosage. A gorgeous copper-hued rosé with an exceptionally fine mousse. The nose is delicate yet savoury, layered with rose, fresh and dried cherry, and a touch of malt. The palate follows with precision and restraint, finishing firm and austere, framed by a subtle tannic grip and a distinctly dry, unsweetened edge.

Gattinara DOCG 2022, 14% *****

Despite expectations that the wine would be tannic and mute from the hot, dry 2022, this proved not to be the case, and it was bottled at the usual time. Subtle, developing plum and red cherry with stony notes; precise and sophisticated, with refined, remarkably supple tannins. Top winemaking skill is most evident in challenging vintages.

Gattinara DOCG Vigna Valferana 2020, 14% *****

Valferana, the slightly cooler of the two single vineyards, and with less steep slopes, tends to produce wines that are a touch darker and bloodier than Molsino. The 2020 shows black plum and some red currant fruit with overlays of dark spice and tar, well-integrated acidity and chalky, refined tannins. An outstanding wine that can be enjoyed upon release or allowed to develop further in the cellar.

*Gattinara DOCG Vigna Molsino 2021, 14% ******

If I had a sixth star to award to a wine, the 2021 Molsino would certainly qualify! Sadly, there will not be much to go around as the vineyard lost 75 per cent of its fruit in a hailstorm, leading to high levels of selection but truly exceptional quality. Precise, super elegant small red berry fruit and a lovely lavender herbal note, a satin mid-palate, and crunchy ripe tannins that will provide the structure for long-term ageing. Close to mythical perfection!

PARIDE IARETTI



www.parideiaretti.it

This winery has four and a half hectares of vineyards, spread across all four of Gattinara's hills, including in the highly regarded Vigna Valferana. The company was founded in 2000 when Paride Iaretti decided to farm and make wine himself on land that his family had owned previously. A new winery was completed in 2016. Four wines are made, all from Nebbiolo.

*Velut Luna Coste dalla Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13% ****

Named 'velvet moon' in dialect. It spends 10 days on the skins and a year of ageing in large *botti*. A savoury expression of Nebbiolo showing stony red-plum fruit, medium-bodied and with a moderate tannic grip.

*Pietro Gattinara DOCG 2020 14% *****

This is the largest production, a Gattinara made with grapes sourced from plots across Gattinara's four hills and named in honour of Paride's father, Pietro. His mother contributed the black and white drawing of the town and vineyards that serve as the company's logo. The vines have an average age of 45–50 years. Maceration on the skins lasts between 3–4 weeks, and the wine is matured in old tonneaux for 36 months. It offers flavours of fresh and dried plum with hints of liquorice, displaying considerable aromatic intensity, and is broad and expansive on the palate with notable persistence.

*Vigna Valferana Gattinara DOCG 2023 14% ******

A small production of 3–4,000 bottles from a single vineyard. Along with Nervi Conterno, these are the only current single-vineyard bottlings of this famous vineyard, which is named after the high iron content in its soils. The wine is macerated on the skins for a month and aged for three years in an old Slavonian oak *botte*. A classic expression, showing a quiet, compact and subtle nose. On the palate, it is impressively deep, stony, and smoky, with exceptionally fine tannins. Outstanding.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva 2019 13.5% ******

This wine is made from a selection of the best grapes from all vineyard plots except Valferana. It spends one month on the skins and ages for three years in *botte*. The nose is lifted, exhibiting exquisite rose, red cherry, and liquorice notes. On the palate, power and elegance intertwine with a hint of wildness, supported by a taut structure and a long, lingering finish.

PETTERINO



The Petterino brothers do not understand the concept of retirement. Many years after a normal retirement age, they continue to tend two hectares in Gattinara DOCG, make the wine and still do the bottling by hand themselves. 2011 saw the arrival of stainless steel vessels for the first time, but more typical of the technology here is the old-style telephone in

the courtyard of the house/cellar, which is still the primary means of communication with the outside world. The brothers bottle when they feel the time is right, so it was not surprising to find on a visit in November 2025 that they were about to bottle their last tank of the much-prized Gattinara 2016. (But they still do have some 2009 that they can fall back on.) These are special wines that recall another age yet sit comfortably in the present.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva 2016, tasted from the tank ******

Such a beautiful nose blending rose, violet, and marasca cherry, followed by a sensuous palate and a long, refined finish with satin tannins. Super freshness, promising a long life in the bottle, if you can resist it.

TRAVAGLINI GATTINARA



www.travaglinigattinara.com

Travaglini is the largest producer in Gattinara, with 52 hectares of vines and a history as a company going back to 1920. Giancarlo Travaglini established the modern company in 1958, including commissioning the famous 'twisted bottle' that makes their wines stand out on the shelf. While its major offerings are Gattinara DOCG in various versions (classic, Tre Vigne, Riserva, Vigna Ronchi), it has also pioneered rosé and traditional method sparkling wine, plus a dried-grape wine, Il Sogno. It manages to produce both relatively large volumes of wine of very good quality and some outstanding bottlings.

*Nebolè, Metodo Classico Pas dosé 2020 12.5% ******

Made since 2010, this wine is made from the wings of bunches of Nebbiolo. This makes for an excellent product while carrying out green harvesting to ensure the full maturation of the grapes that remain on the vine and will be picked later for Gattinara DOCG. The wine is aged on the lees for four years. Very pale lemon in colour, with the toasty, nutty character showing well on the complex palate, with a dry, austere finish. Travaglini also makes longer lees-aged versions.

*Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13.5% ****

This wine is from the fruit of young vines and is aged for eight months in Slavonian oak *botti* for a youthful, fresh style. Juicy plum fruit with complexity from earthy and black tea notes, with ripe tannins.

*Gattinara DOCG 2022 14% ****

Fruit from a number of vineyards ranging from 15 to 45 years of age, with the wine being aged for 30 months in Slavonian oak *botti*, which range from 20 to 120 hectolitres in size. Flowing mid-weight palate, raspberry and red plum fruit, very approachable with an intriguing smoky undertow, a great introduction to the Travaglini Gattinara range.

*Gattinara DOCG Tre Vigne 2020 13.5% ******

The three vineyards of the wine name are historic Lurghe, Permonlone and Alice, all with old vines. The maturation is mainly in large *botti* for 40 months, with 20 per cent in first- to fourth-use small barrels. A marked step up from standard Gattinara, with intense red-berried fruit and stoniness, a touch fuller body with a long sapid finish. Definite ageing potential.

Gattinara DOCG Riserva 2019 13.5% *****

Fruit from the oldest vines, up to 80 years old, is used for this *riserva*. A very refined and supple *riserva*, with balsam, rose petal and high-toned red fruit; fine, crystalline tannins and a poised, persistent finish.



Large *botti* at Travaglini

Gattinara Riserva Vigna Ronchi 2019, 13.5% *****

A single vineyard wine made from very old vines on a slope that rises to 440m. The elevation, plus the wind, make for a demanding site, even for old vines and result in low yields and high fruit concentration. Long ageing (four years) takes place in large *botte* (80 per cent) and barriques and tonneaux. Super complex with rose petal, refined red fruit, herbal and minty aromas, refined and assertive tannins, this is a truly exceptional Gattinara, which will benefit from further maturation in the bottle.

Il Sogno 2020 15% *****

200 kilometres to the east in Valtellina (Lombardy), it is common to make wine from air-dried Nebbiolo grapes. This wine is a Piemontese take on this style, with the grapes dried for 100 days before vinification, concentrating flavours and losing one third of their volume. The finished wine is aged for four years in *botte*, showing dark fruit, dried plum, tar and dark chocolate; deep and concentrated, with refined, firm tannins.

VEGIS



Like many Gattinara families, grape growing has long been part of the Vegis family's life, though for many years they sold much of the fruit to larger producers. The grapes come from several small but top-quality vineyards in Gattinara, including in the renowned Osso, San Francesco, Lurghe and Uccineglio areas. The vineyard area in total is just 2.7 hectares. The age of the vineyards varies from 70-80 years old to 20 years old. The wine is made in a small cellar beside the family home. Stefano Vegis' first vintage was in 2013, when he held back a quarter of his grapes to make his own wine. Following a positive public response, from 2018, he has increasingly devoted his grapes to his own production, with outstanding results.

*Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13% ****

This pale ruby, near rosé in colour, wine sees no wood at all. The underlying ripeness of the vintage is beautifully captured but made more complex with a combination of small-berried red fruit and mild oxidative notes.

*Gattinara DOCG 2022 14% ******

In this famously hot and dry vintage, the straight Gattinara, which spent two years in old oak barrels, displays refined cranberry and red cherry fruit alongside earthy, stony notes, with a long finish characterised by genuine tannic finesse. A remarkable achievement in a difficult year.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva 2018 14.8% ******

A dark, smoky nose with dried herbs and black plum fruit. The powerful palate is balanced by refreshing acidity and very ripe tannins, all pointing to a wine of outstanding ageing potential.

Bramaterra

This is an unusual denomination in Alto Piemonte in that it is not named after a single municipality.

Rather, it includes seven, of which the largest by population are Roasio, Masserano and Brusnengo, which have around 2,000 people each. These villages are about 20 minutes by car west of Gattinara. It is called Bramaterra, a name dating back to the fifteenth century, when the area was prized for its fertile, promising soils. In the late nineteenth century, the Sella family built Cascina Bramaterra after acquiring land in what would become the denomination. In the twentieth century, the name came into use for the wine, and in 1979 it was adopted for the DOC.

The dominant sub-soil in Bramaterra is porphyric rock, with a very thin layer of soil, not unlike Gattinara. In more detail, the western part has sandy soils, the eastern side has more clay, and the southern part has richer soils. The other principal feature here is that the wines have to be Nebbiolo blends. Growers today are divided between those who value this distinctive feature (which it shares with Boca, Fara and Sizzano) and those who want to change the rules to allow for 100 per cent Nebbiolo.

Bramaterra DOC

- DOC from 1979.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipalities of Masserano, Brusnengo, Curino, Roasio, Villa del Bosco, Sostegno and Lozzolo.
- The wine must be 50–80 per cent Nebbiolo, plus a maximum of 30 per cent Croatina and a maximum of 20 per cent Uva Rara and/or Vespolina.
- The standard wine must be aged for a minimum of 22 months before release, including a minimum of 12 months in wood.
- This is extended to 34 and 24 months for the *riserva*.

ANTONIOTTI



Odillio Antoniotti and his son Mattia farm seven hectares of hard-to-work vineyards over porphyry, classic Bramaterra. The rocky soils and low organic matter give very low yields, a constant challenge on this side of the Sesia. The wines are made in a nineteenth-century building, using old fermentation tanks dug into the rock (now lined), which naturally moderate temperatures. Co-fermentation, ambient yeasts and ageing in large botte complete the picture. Some wines are not entirely limp, but this is part of the style.

*Pramatel Vino Rosso 12.5% ****

This wine is crafted from a blend of fruit from the 2023 vintage, consisting of between 60–70 per cent Nebbiolo, complemented by Croatina and Vespolina in equal parts. Fermented in a concrete tank, maceration on the skins lasts for 10 days, and the wine then matures in stainless steel for a year. With an attractive pale ruby, nearly rosé colour, the wine offers surprising depth of ripe red fruit with a stony undertow and finishes with a bit of grip; it cries out for a plate of salami or similar!

*Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13% ****

While Bramaterra has to be a blend, the Coste della Sesia DOC offers the chance to make a 100 per cent Nebbiolo wine, with the wine being aged for a year in large old oak *botte*. Pure savoury red fruit with a floral touch, brisk acidity and quite intense rustic tannins, a very good example of northern Nebbiolo in its traditional form.

*Bramaterra DOC 2021 13% *****

This Bramaterra is a blend of 80 per cent Nebbiolo, plus Croatina (10 per cent), Vespolina (7 per cent) and Uva Rara (3 per cent). The grapes are picked and co-fermented, with Vespolina slightly overripe to align with fully mature Nebbiolo. The wine spends three weeks on the skins and three years in large oak *botti*. A touch closed at the moment, the palate reveals a rich blend of succulent red cherry (boosted by the Vespolina), black plum and earthiness (the contribution of the Croatina), and ripe, firm tannins. This will probably peak after 20 more years of ageing.

CERUTI LORENZO



www.cerutilorenzo.it

In the same hamlet as Antoniotti, Lorenzo Ceruti created this winery in 2014 with two and a half hectares of older vineyards, with some being restored. Unusually for northern Piemonte, Barbera takes its place among the more typical plantings of Nebbiolo, Vespolina, Croatina and Uva Rara.

*Legidio Vino Rosso 2023 12% ****

Named in honour of the wine merchant Egidio Nobile, who built the building that now houses the cellar and was killed by fascists during the Second World War, accused of aiding partisans by transporting weapons in wine barrels. An unusual blend of Nebbiolo (70 per cent), Barbera (20 per cent) and Croatina, aged for three months in small *botti*. A good glassful of super juicy red fruit and youthful prickly tannins.

*Pietra Croana Coste della Sesia DOC Rosso 2020 13% ****

This wine is named after the local mountain, reached by the road that runs through the Ceruti vineyards. A typical Bramaterra blend of Nebbiolo (70 per cent), Croatina (20 per cent), with Vespolina and Uva Rara, with fruit from younger vines. Long maceration on the skins (30–35 days) is followed by 12 months in small *botti*, and extended maturation in bottle. Depth of red cherry to black fruit balanced by brisk acidity and rustic tannins, an elegant mini-Bramaterra if you will.

*Bramaterra DOC 2020 13.5% ****(*)*

The same blend as the previous wine, but using the fruit of older vines (planted 1980–85) and the best barrels of the year. Similar winemaking though the time in oak is extended to two years. A fine, vertical wine with exceptional red fruit and energising acidity. Great potential to age further in bottle.

COLOMBERA & GARELLA



www.colomberaegarella.it

Colombera & Garella farms 9.5 hectares of vineyards divided between Lessona, Masserano and Roasio, working exclusively with local varieties – Nebbiolo, Croatina and Vespolina. The majority of the vineyards are in the Bramaterra denomination, with two hectares in Lessona.

The story began in 1992, when Carlo Colombera purchased a ruin in Masserano, Cascina Cottignano, along with neighbouring vineyards that included old-vine Nebbiolo. Carlo gradually transitioned from driving tractors in the rice fields to viticulture, gaining experience at Antoniolo in Gattinara before dedicating himself entirely to his winery. The company was formally established in 2010, and the project took shape with the well-known enologist

Cristiano Garella. Additional plantings were carried out, followed by the construction of a new cellar in 2018. The oldest vineyards were planted with two-metre row spacing, and these have been supplemented by new vines, increasing planting density to yield higher-quality grapes. The centre of gravity remains Cascina Cottignano, on the porphyritic soils that provide structure and depth to Bramaterra. All work in the winery remains traditional: restored second-hand concrete vats without temperature control, ambient yeast, and old oak *botti*. The guiding principles are to keep it simple and to produce only red wine.

*Melascone Vino Rosso 2024 13% ****

90 per cent young-vine Nebbiolo with Vespolina. The wine stays on the skins for 12 days and is aged in concrete tanks. A small portion of fruit is sourced from long-established growers. The 2024 vintage shows more balance than the slightly green, edgy 2023. Bright red-berried fruit, floral notes and a twist of black pepper, light on its feet and vividly fresh. Designed for early drinking – it disappears quickly in Turin and Milan – and can be served lightly chilled.

*Croce Lessona DOC 2022 13% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo grown on classic Lessona sandy soils. The wine undergoes a long maceration of 40–45 days, is returned to concrete after fermentation, and, following malolactic fermentation, is aged for 18 months in old 25 hL *botti*. The name recalls the historic clos from which it originates. Currently quite closed, with refined, savoury red-berried fruit. Lean in body but with excellent depth, featuring youthful, lightly crunchy tannins and a long, persistent finish.

*Cascina Cottignano Bramaterra DOC 2022, 13.5% *****

From the porphyritic soils of Masserano and Roasio: 80 per cent Nebbiolo with Vespolina (the largest part of the remainder), Croatina and Uva Rara. Vespolina is harvested about two weeks earlier than Nebbiolo and given a short maceration to preserve its peppery character; the remaining varieties are picked together, with Croatina sometimes slightly overripe. Two vinifications are made: Vespolina as described and then Nebbiolo, Croatina and Uva Rara together in concrete, which is macerated on the skins for around 40 days with pump-overs. After blending, the wine is aged for 20 months in old *botti*. Smokier and darker in profile than the Lessona, in a traditional style with an acetic lift over the plum fruit. More assertive tannins and broader shoulders in comparison with the Lessona, yet retaining balance and freshness.

LA PALAZZINA

Paolo Montà is a man of conviction and has decided not to submit his wine to critics' scores. This should not obscure attention from his work with challenging vineyards and a commitment to very old vines, including some 80–100 year olds trained to the traditional Maggiorina system. In this system, four vines are planted together and then trained high and outward from the stems. No scores of course, but these are wines that are very well worthwhile exploring: Coste della Sesia DOC Rosso, a Nebbiolo and two Bramaterras: a standard one and Balmi Bioti (single vineyard with relatively young vines, 'bare rock' in dialect). Definitely recommended.

LA PSIGULA

www.lapsigula.com



2015 saw Giacomo and Claudia Foglia turn what had been a weekend house (which itself had to be rescued) from a hobby into a wine business. The land rises steeply above the house, providing a great aspect for the vineyard but making the work hard. Many small plots were bought from an older generation who could no longer work their vines, piecing together a two-hectare vineyard that rises to 440 m. The soils of typical Bramaterra volcanic origin are rocky and challenging to work with, but with low fertility, have high-quality potential.

*Coste della Sesia DOC Rosso 2024 12% ****

A blend of Nebbiolo (60 per cent), Vespolina and Croatina (each 20 per cent), made in stainless steel. The super low alcohol level reflects the rainy 2024, while the hot 2022 had 14% abv. 'People should learn to taste what nature gives', says Giacomo. He adds: 'the Vespolina adds colour and spice and the Croatina structure and colour'. Medium ruby in colour, fruity (red cherry and damson), lightly perfumed, high acidity, with a savoury finish.

*Bramaterra DOC 2021, 13.5% *****

The same three varieties as in the Rosso, but here 80, 15 and 5 per cent respectively. The maceration on the skins lasts for 12 days, and the wine is aged for 24 months in a mix of untoasted Slavonian and French oak. (The barrels were bought new for hygiene reasons, but now are well settled in.) Attractive sour cherry and black plum fruit with liquorice notes, full-bodied with fine tannins, and a finish that accentuates the liquorice and stony flavours.

*Vigna Torre Bramaterra DOC Riserva 2021 14% ******

A vineyard selection made only in the best years, choosing the ripest fruit of the four central, most protected rows, hence the slightly higher alcohol level. A micro-production of just 250–300 bottles. For this wine, the oak ageing is extended to 34 months. Lifted red cherry and fine earthy notes, full-bodied, the fruit covering ripe tannins but with plenty of structure for ageing. An outstanding Bramaterra.

LE PIANELLE

www.lepianelle.com



Dieter Heuskel, originally from Germany, and Peter Dipoli—who also has a winery in Alto Adige—were the investors behind the project. The painstaking assembly of 50 tiny plots began in 2005, with the first vintage in 2010. There was early drama, as the farmhouse that is now the fully refurbished winery was acquired just six months before that first harvest. Five hectares are currently in production, with plans to add a Lessona alongside the Bramaterra. The team includes experienced agronomist Andrea and oenologist Cristiano Garella, who works here while also consulting for around 20 wineries, mainly in Alto Piemonte, and whose influence is evident in the estate's sophisticated winemaking approach, tailored to each wine.

*Al posto dei fiori, Coste della Sesia Rosato 2024 13.5% ****

Nebbiolo (95 per cent) and Vespolina from three cool, northeast-facing parcels, picked at the same time as the fully mature grapes for red wine. Two days of cold maceration is followed by 85 per cent of the juice being fermented in stainless steel and the rest in oak, aiming for a complex rosé. Pale salmon in colour, rose, plum and red cherry of medium intensity on the nose, fully dry, very refreshing and with very good length. It would be interesting to see how this might age in the bottle.

*Al forte, Coste della Sesia DOC Rosso 2020 13.5% *****

Here the blend is nearly 90 per cent Nebbiolo from sandier soils (as in nearby Lessona), with Vespolina and Croatina. After four years, Nebbiolo's garnet hue is beginning to emerge. A developed nose of tilled earth and smoke over dark plum fruit. Quite firm tannins (from Croatina), but with real depth of fruit and a classy overall profile. Don't be misled by the screwcap, this is an outstanding Coste della Sesia Rosso.



View from Le Pianelle, Bramaterra

*Bramaterra DOC, 2020, 14% ******

Principally Nebbiolo, but of course with some Croatina and Vespolina as required by the regulations. Influenced by G.B. Burlotto, the famous Barolo producer, around one third of the stems of Nebbiolo are used (adding freshness and complexity and marginally reducing the alcohol level) and some whole berries. The wine is then macerated on the skins for 40 days, but with minimal intervention, for a soft but complete extraction. A super complex wine with bright red cherry fruit, thyme and some light stalky notes that still need a bit of time to integrate completely, with firm tannins for long-term ageing. Outstanding.

*Robino Bramaterra DOC, 2020, 14.5% ******

The fruit here comes from the cool 1.2-hectare Chiuso Robino vineyard opposite the winery in Brusnengo. The soil is particularly sandy here. For this wine, 40 per cent of whole bunches were included. Around three weeks on the skins and 18 months in 15-hectolitre oak *botti*. Lovely aromatic lift and real finesse: cranberry and red plum fruit with a subtle herbal and earthy undertow, fine tannins. Very elegant indeed.

NOAH



Founded only in 2010, this small estate covers five hectares, but benefits from nearly 50-year-old vineyards planted to the classic Bramaterra mix of Nebbiolo, Croatina and Vespolina. The Bramaterra vines grow on very thin, poor porphyry soils. With an additional vineyard in Lessona, the winery also offers an instructive comparison between the two styles. Former architect Andrea Mosca has transformed the old animal stalls of his house into a spacious cellar.

*Coste della Sesia DOC Rossonoaah 2023 13.5% ****

A blend of Nebbiolo, using the fruit of younger vines, and Croatina in nearly equal proportions and 10 per cent of Vespolina. The Croatina really shines here with dark black plum fruit and earthiness, backed up with austere tannins. Definitely a wine for robust foods.

*Bramaterra DOC Salero 2021 13.5% *****

A single vineyard wine, named after the hamlet in which it is sited. Nebbiolo (80 per cent), plus Vespolina and Croatina in equal parts. One month of maceration for the Nebbiolo and half that for the blending varieties, the wine is aged for two years in *botti*. A beautiful nose with elevated red berry, rose, thyme and black tea notes. Fine, high but not dominating tannins, elegant and long.

*Bramaterra DOC Rocce di Luce 2021 13.5% *****

Planted in 1979-80, here the 80 per cent of Nebbiolo is supported by Croatina (15 per cent) and just 5 per cent Vespolina. 30 days on the skins and 20 months in a mix of 20 hectolitre *botte* and used barriques. Here finesse meets rusticity, elegant red-berried Nebbiolo with added colour and spice from Croatina. Notable, ripe tannins.

*Lessona DOC 2021 13.5% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo grown on sandy soils. 20-30 days on skins and aged for 18 months in large *botte*. The comparison between Bramaterra and Lessona could not be clearer than in Noah's wines. While the Bramaterra wines are substantial and have rustic elements, the Lessona is a classic of red cherry and plum elegance and lightness. This is as close to Pinot Noir as is possible for Nebbiolo.

Lessona

Lessona is a small but distinctive denomination, lying at the western edge of Alto Piemonte's specialist appellations. Close to the city of Biella and with a history of textile production, which now has largely been moved to China, the area has suffered from rural depopulation, as has the whole region. The soils here are dramatically different to the volcanic rock of neighbouring Bramaterra. The drama extends to the bright yellow colour of the marine sands that offer a very meagre diet, even to the hardy vine. Rapid drainage, very low nutrient content and low yields are all huge challenges to the grape grower. In the past, up to 400 hectares were under vine; today, it is just 25. On the upside, Lessona, because of the sandy soils, offers the possibility of producing the most elegant and refined Nebbiolo wines in northern Piemonte.

LA BADINA



Coming first alphabetically, La Badina also neatly captures why Lessona's tiny producers are worth seeking out. With just 1.5 hectares under vine, it is hardly a commercial operation of scale, yet small can be beautiful. Emidio and Rosa Di Betta began in 1999, reclaiming abandoned land, clearing it, building access, and planting their vineyard. Today, they can look back on mature vintages that reflect both the site and their long commitment.

*Coste della Sesia DOC 2021 ***

Vespolina, aged for six months in oak. Ripe plum fruit with light pepper aromas and still youthful, grippy tannins.

*L'intruso Vino Rosso ****

In addition to Nebbiolo and Vespolina, La Badina did have some Barbera, but that was removed due to vine yellows disease. Instead, Cabernet Franc was planted (Emidio explains that he is Friulian.) As the amounts are tiny, this wine is a blend of 2015 and 2016. True to type with its herbaceous red fruit, and like Loire Cabernet Francs, this wine still tastes young after 10 years! Quite grippy.

*Lessona DOC 2021 14% ****(*)*

100 per cent Nebbiolo, 15–20 days on the skins and aged in third-use barriques for 18 months. A touch closed to start with, then fine red cherry and raspberry fruit, tobacco, youthful but ripe tannins. Emidio likes to bring older vintages of his wine to show how brilliantly this develops over time, and I can vouch especially for the remarkable 2010 Riserva and the 2011 (Lovely undergrowth and dried herb development, still some fresh red cherry but with dried fruit too.)

*Lessona DOC 2022 12.5% *****

In the hot, dry 2022, La Badina's approach was to leave more fruit on the vines than usual. The result was a much lower alcohol level, producing a leaner wine with great potential to develop: red fruited, with both fresh and savoury notes, and a fine, dry, mildly tannic finish.

LA PREVOSTURA



This winery is much loved in the local area itself, not least due to the excellent *agriturismo* and restaurant business of which it used to be a part. The reputation for excellent locally-grown food continues. On the wine side, the new majority shareholder is Luca de Marchi of Proprietà Sperino (see below), with Anna Zegna and Franco Ferraris, both from the local textile businesses. The winemaking has been switched to Proprietà Sperino's much bigger

new winery in the town. The former winemaker, Marizio Forgia, has been retained, with Luca de Marchi acting as a consultant to him. The main changes have been to large barrel size, spontaneous fermentation and the use of a submerged cap. The aim to produce more accessible style wines continues, alongside those of Proprietà Sperino. The four hectares of vineyard were mainly planted in 2002–05, with some plots from 2015.

Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2023
13% ***

Approachable cranberry, sage and pepper fruit and very gentle tannins for a very good introduction to 100 per cent Nebbiolo.

Muntace Coste della Sesia DOC
Nebbiolo 2021 13.5% ***

A single vineyard wine, 90 per cent Nebbiolo with Vespolina. Two weeks on the skins, the wine is aged for a year in tonneaux (from 2023, the wine will be aged in *botte*). Fine small red-berried fruit, more depth than the first Coste della Sesia with firmer, furry tannins and good length.

Lessona DOC 2020 14% ****

Fruit from a south-facing, warm site with slightly more clay than typical in Lessona, producing a somewhat fuller-bodied wine. Pale ruby, with pretty red fruit and floral notes, showing real elegance—charming rather than demanding—with refined tannins.



Marine sand in Lessona

MASSIMO CLERICO



www.clericomassimo.it

One of the three companies that launched the new Lessona DOC in 1977, Massimo Clerico has three hectares at the northern and highest end of the denomination, reaching 400 m elevation. One distinctive feature here is the use of some new French oak barrique to mature wine, though that is less evident than it might be due to the long stay in oak and some late releases.. As always, the most important measure is the high quality of the grapes.

Spanna Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2021 13.5% ****

'Spanna' is, of course, the local name for Nebbiolo. This comes from younger vines and those at the bottom of the slope. The wine is aged for one year in used barriques. Intense ruby in colour, a gorgeous, developed wine with excellent red cherry and plum fruit and nut and leather notes. Very fine tannins. Great quality for a regional denominational bottling. The 2022 and 2023 were already in bottle; sadly, there will not be any 2025 due to a hail storm.

Lessona DOC 2021 13.5% **(*)**

From older vines on very acidic soils. The wine is kept on the skins for a week and aged for a year in used barriques and a year in *botte*. Light vanilla note over floral, strawberry and red cherry aromas backed up by fine tannins. There is so much to enjoy here.

*Lessona DOC Riserva 2016 13.5% ******

Fruit from the Gorena and Leria vineyards, close to the winery, this wine is Nebbiolo with a small percentage of Vespolina. The *riserva* wines are macerated on the skins for a month with submerged cap, excluding oxygen. Fermentation temperatures are relatively low (25°C). This wine spent three years in oak, of which two were in barriques. Garnet in hue, powerful leather and earth notes over red cherry and dried fruit, with elegant Lessona tannins. Perhaps showing more maturity than its age, but still outstanding.

*Vigna Gaja Lessona DOC Riserva 2016 13.5% ******

This is the current release of this special wine from the one-hectare Vigna Gaja, a production of just 2,000 bottles from vines planted in the 1960s. The wine is aged in new barriques for four years. Really fine and long, this now shows ferrous notes, hazelnut and smoke over an elegant fruit core.

*Vigna Gaja, Lessona DOC Riserva 2017 13.5% ******

About to be released, the 2017 vintage shows stunning freshness and precision on the nose, with lightly dried red fruit and herbal notes, outstanding finesse through the mid-palate, and exceptionally fine tannins. Bravo!

*Vigna Leria, Lessona DOC Riserva 2015 13.5% ******

Some vines here are centenarian, while the majority are from the 1960s. Three years in barriques. The hazelnut and iron note also shows here, well integrated with red cherry and plum, plus a pleasant acetic lift. A fine, Lessona in a traditional style.

PIETRO CASSINA



The wines of Pietro Cassina stand out for two reasons. First, despite only having seven hectares of vineyard, it produces more than ten labels, adding rosé and traditional method to the classic and high-end line. Second, the wines are released very late, fully mature, with often more than a decade of ageing. As a result, the wines will appeal to those who crave tertiary character.

*Lucilla Vino Bianco 2023 12.5% ****

100 per cent Erbaluce made in stainless steel. A classic moderately aromatic Erbaluce with lemon peel and light floral aromas, backed up with stony acidity.

*Tera Russa Coste della Sesia DOC Vespolina DOC 2013 13% ***

While Cassina is far from unique in bottling a varietal Vespolina, his is unusual given its hugely extended maturation period. After a standard 7–10 days of maceration on the skins, this spent five years in large *botte* and then a similar time in bottle. The result is a very traditionally styled wine with the emphasis on forest floor aromas, developed black fruit and still resilient tannins.

*Ciuèt Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2013 13% ****

Another very late release, the first of two such Coste della Sesia wines. 'Ciuèt' is both the dialect name for a soil type with more sandy-clay than the pure sands typical of Lessona and the name of a single vineyard. Fully mature Nebbiolo with fine autumnal berry character, some dried dark cherry notes and bonfire smoke.

*Cá daj Tàss Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2017 13% ****

Another single vineyard wine, named in dialect after the rascal, the badger, that eats the grapes in the vineyard. The wine is aged for more than four years in oak *botte*. A lovely

developed straight Nebbiolo: smoky with forest floor aromas, sour red cherry fruit supported by lightly crunchy tannins.

Pidrin Lessona DOC 2016 13.5% ****

Extended ageing in oak, if less than the Tanzo bottling below. Refined, smoky, unobtrusive to start, but then real depth of elegant fruit and very fine chalky tannins.

Tanzo Lessona DOC 2013 14% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo grown in the south of the denomination, on a mix of clay, sand and silt soils. This bottling is named after Pietro Cassina's father. 7–10 days on the skins and then matured for more five years in Swiss oak *botti*. In the glass this wine is a slow burn, slowly revealing its rose, black cherry and leather aromatics and refined tannins.

PROPRIETÀ SPERINO



www.proprietasperino.it

In 1999, the historic cellar of an important local family was reopened by their cousins, Paolo and Luca de Marchi. Since then, it has set a benchmark for quality in Lessona. The final step has been to acquire and fully repurpose a former textile factory in the town itself. This will offer both a spacious cellar across two floors and, in time, a bistro for visitors. The company has eight hectares of vines, six in Lessona and two in Bramaterra.

Uvaggio, Coste della Sesia DOC Rosso 2020 13% ****

'Uvaggio' means 'blend of different varieties', which indeed this is: Nebbiolo, Vespolina, and Croatina (80, 15 and 5 per cent respectively). Part is whole bunch for higher acidity and marginally less alcohol, part submerged cap, the wine spends a total of three weeks on the skins and two years in large *botti*. Bold dark fruit, blackberry, red to black plum, lovely in a rustic style. The following vintage, 2021, 12.5% ***** is fresher with violet and green tea aromas and dense red fruit. Real finesse. Luca de Marchi worries that this, the first wine in his range, is getting too complex and bold!



Netted vineyard, Lessona

Lessona DOC 2018 14% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, subjected to a month on the skins and three and a half years in large *botte*. A beautifully lifted nose with the floral, fruit and savoury tertiary notes seamlessly knit together. A truly elegant, light-footed Nebbiolo. The 2019 ***** follows with a touch more dark fruit, black plum and fig, with chewy polished tannins.

Vigna Cova Lessona DOC 2018 *****

From a single vineyard in the Castello area of Lessona at 350 m elevation, this is the top wine of the company. The wine opens with violet and elevated small red fruit aromas,

featuring a gentle and supple mid-palate and the classic silkiness of Lessona, reflected in the fine, mild tannins. It concludes with a long, sensual finish.

Bramaterra DOC 2020 13.5% ***

From the evocatively named Madonna degli Angeli vineyard, with some 40-year-old vines, this is a blend of Nebbiolo (80 per cent), Vespolina and Croatina, co-fermented. Dark fruited, with crunchy tannins, this is complex with red fruit overlaid with green tea and a hint of pepper. A great contrast in style with the winery's Lessona bottlings.

TENUTE SELLA

www.tenutesella.it



The Tenute Sella property was originally acquired in 1671 as a country retreat for the textile- and banking-family of the same name. Banca Sella is still to be seen in every town of Piemonte and across Italy. This longevity and financial backing have made it a key winery in Lessona and for the region as a whole. It offers a wide range of wines: sparkling, rosé, Riesling, as well as Erbaluce and the region's reds. Its choice to release the classic Nebbiolo wines late and ready to drink is a great boon, especially in restaurants.

Clementina Vino Spumante Rosato NV 12% **

This wine is made with the fruit of nearly 50-year-old Nebbiolo vines grown at elevations of 270-350 m, partly in Lessona and partly in the wider Coste della Sesia area. The colour derives from time spent in the press, and the wine is produced using the Martinotti (tank) method, although it remains on the lees for a full 12 months. A fruity sparkling wine with red cherry and plum aromas, perfect for informal occasions, with a subtle touch of sweetness on the finish.



San Sebastiano allo Zoppo, Tenute Sella

Majoli Coste della Sesia DOC Rosato 2024 12.5% ***

An accessible Nebbiolo rosé with complexity: delicately pale apricot in colour, featuring juicy small red-berry fruit, flinty and spicy notes, and a gentle grip. This would complement the Piemontese classic *vitello tonnato* well.

San Sebastiano allo Zoppo Lessona DOC 2015 13.5% *****

Named after a historic three-hectare vineyard planted to 85% Nebbiolo and 15% Vespolina, with an impressive average vine age of 80 years. The wine spends up to a month on skins and is aged for two years in barriques and tonneaux, one-third new oak, now well integrated. The current release is 2015. Initially muted on the nose, it opens to reveal layers of red cherry, thyme and a distinctive stony note—there is real star quality here.

*Omaggio a Quintino Sella, Lessona DOC 2011, 13% ******

This wine is named as a tribute to the Sella family member who served as finance minister after Italian Unification, an event at which Sella wines were used for the official toast. The grapes are sourced from the San Sebastiano vineyard and the wine is produced in only around four vintages out of ten. It undergoes 26 days of maceration on skins and is aged for 24 months in 25-hectolitre Slavonian oak botti. Super-precise redcurrant and raspberry fruit is layered with a light tar note, supported by fine, firm tannins built for the long term. Outstanding.

*Bramaterra DOC 2018 13.5% *****

The first of a pair of Bramaterra wines, this one is 70 per cent Nebbiolo and 15 per cent each of Vespolina and Croatina. The Nebbiolo and Vespolina stay for 30 days on the skins and the Croatina for half of that, to avoid excessive tannins. A touch deeper in colour than the Lessona wines, but even with the significant portion of Vespolina and Croatina, this is remarkably elegant and vertical in style. Red cherry and black plum fruit, the finish shows brilliant acidity and chalky tannins.

*I Porfidi Bramaterra DOC 2016 12.5%2015 ******

Named after the porphyry rock that is typical of Bramaterra, this is 70 per cent Nebbiolo, 20 per cent Vespolina and 10 per cent Croatina, selected from the highest part of the vineyard with very thin soils. Similar maceration times as the classic Bramaterra. Aged for three years in tonneaux and barriques. Darker fruited with more evident tannins, this is built for the long term.

VILLA GUELPA

www.villaguelpa.it



Daniele Dinoia, formerly a winemaker at several historic estates in Piemonte (including Nervi under its previous ownership), as well as in Tuscany and Sicily, brings a breadth of experience uncommon in northern Piemonte, where many producers are self-taught or rooted solely in family properties. He acquired Villa Guelpa—a former textile magnate's residence—in 2015, beginning with just two hectares and with plans to expand to 12 hectares for a production of around 60,000 bottles. The core of the vineyards lies in Lessona, including a steep slope planted beside the villa. The company has additional sites across the Sesia River, some 30 minutes away, in Boca and Sizzano.

*Longitudine 8 Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2023 13% ****

Erbaluce from vineyards on the eastern side of the Sesia River. Lightly tropical fruit in a very ripe expression of the variety, made in stainless steel and with a short period on the skins for increased texture.

*Longitudine 8.26 Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 13.5% ****

Fruit from a vineyard in Sizzano. The fruit is refrigerated to 4°C for one night and then the wine spends 10 days on the skins. It is aged for a year and a half in neutral concrete tanks. A gentle start in the glass is followed by ripe red and black plum fruit and a pleasant bitter almond note with moderate tannins.

*Sizzano DOC 2021 13.5% ****

Principally Nebbiolo, harvested mid-October, plus Vespolina, harvested in late September, which provides colour and spice to the blend. Maceration on the skins for 15 days, with the

wine being aged in *botte* for two years. The nose is somewhat muted but with good depth of nutty plum fruit with very fine tannins.

Lessona DOC 2022 13.5% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, on the skins for 15 days, fermented in concrete tanks and aged in *botti* of 1–2,000 litres. Pretty floral and red cherry aromatics, quite developed for a three-year-old, perhaps reflecting the hot, dry year. Silky, fine tannins. Very classic Lessona.

Boca DOC 2021 13.5% ****

90 per cent Nebbiolo and 10 per cent Vespolina, grown on rocky soils. Aged for 30 months in *botte*. Red plum and blood orange aromas with a hint of early development; a touch grippy on the palate, with firmer structure and a fuller body than the Lessona.

Coste della Sesia

This regional DOC covers 17 municipalities in Alto Piemonte on the western side of the Sesia River, including some west of Lessona. It provides a home for wines made from Croatina and Vespolina, as well as Nebbiolo wines in areas where more specialist denominations restrict the grape's proportion. In particular, in Bramaterra DOC, where Nebbiolo is limited to 80 per cent, a wine made from 85–100 per cent Nebbiolo can instead be labelled Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo. The DOC also allows for Coste della Sesia DOC Bianco, which must be made entirely from Erbaluce.

There are relatively few wineries that are based in the Coste della Sesia outside of the specialist denominations. This is partly because the typical elevations are lower. Equally importantly, the specialist denominations require their wines to be made within the denomination, and therefore it makes more sense commercially to be based in the specialist denominations.

Coste della Sesia DOC

- DOC from 1996.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipalities of Gattinara, Roasio, Lozzolo, Serravalle Sesia, Lessona, Masserano, Brusnengo, Curino, Villa del Bosco, Sostegno, Cossato, Mottalciata, Candelo, Quaregna, Cerreto Castello, Valdengo and Vigliano Biellese.
- The six categories are *Rosso* and *Rosato* (both requiring a minimum of 50 per cent Nebbiolo), *Bianco* (100 per cent Erbaluce), Nebbiolo or Spanna, Croatina and Vespolina.
- There are no specific minimum ageing requirements

CENTOVIGNE

www.centovigne.it



Not many wineries are based in an actual castle, but that is the case for Centovigne in Castello di Castellengo. The originally eleventh-century fortification had fallen into ruin after the last countess died in 1883 and was eventually bought by the current owner's family in 1989. Alexandro Ciccioni has been putting together small parcels of vineyard that now add up to 8.5 hectares, surrounded by 35 hectares of woods.

*Rosso della Motta Vino Rosso 2023 13% ****

70-year-old Nebbiolo vines. The wine stays for 15 days on the skins, and is aged for 12 months in concrete. Elegant, lifted small red-berried fruit, very refreshing and direct in style, good length with smoky notes and resolving tannins.

*Il Centovigne Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2019 13% *****

90 per cent Nebbiolo, plus Vespolina. 15 days maceration on the skins, followed by two years of ageing in second-use tonneaux. Candied red fruit, fleshy, an elegant and ageable expression of Northern Piemonte Nebbiolo.

*Castellengo Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2017 13% ****(*)*

A selection of the best Nebbiolo, 100 per cent, subjected to maceration on the skins for more than 20 days, and aged for three years in oak *botti*. Perfumed rose and red cherry on the nose, hints of smokiness and tar, with firm, elegant tannins and excellent length. This has great potential to age further in bottle.

FABIO ZAMBOLIN



With just one and a half hectares of his own vineyards, Fabio Zambolin unsurprisingly also works for another winery, Le Pianelle (see under Bramaterra). In common with the latter, he also makes some use of whole bunches in his Nebbiolo wine. His own vineyards are partly within the Lessona DOC and partly outside of it in Coste della Sesia. However, his small winery is not within the Lessona DOC and, thus, crazily, he could not label his wine with that name anyway. Occasionally, the law is an ass. But that does not stop the wines from being really worthy of our attention.

*Feldo Coste della Sesia DOC Rosso 2022 13.5% ****

A field blend picked when the Nebbiolo (50 per cent) is ripe and the Vespolina and Croatina are overripe. One month of maceration on the skins, half the wine is aged in old wood barrels. Purple-tinted ruby, powerful dark plum fruit with a hint of pepper, rustic in a good way, medium mouth-coating tannins. Definitely a wine for robust foods.

*Vallelunga Costa della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo 2022 13% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, mainly grown on marine sands (see Lessona DOC above). In the excellent 2021 harvest, 50 per cent of the fruit was crushed as whole bunches; in the more challenging 2022, less than that. The wine was kept on the skins for a month and aged in old barriques for just over a year. Refined red cherry and floral nose on the nose, a rich mid palate, fine raspy tannins; this is an excellent example of what can be achieved, even without the more prestigious denomination on the label.

VILLA ERA



www.villaera.it

This winery, part of the suitably magnificent late-nineteenth century Villa Era, had an illustrious phase back in the 1980s when its wines won important prizes. The vineyards, however, fell into disrepair and were only restored in 2006–07. The top Coste della Sesia DOC Nebbiolo has been bottled with the Villa Era name since 2011.

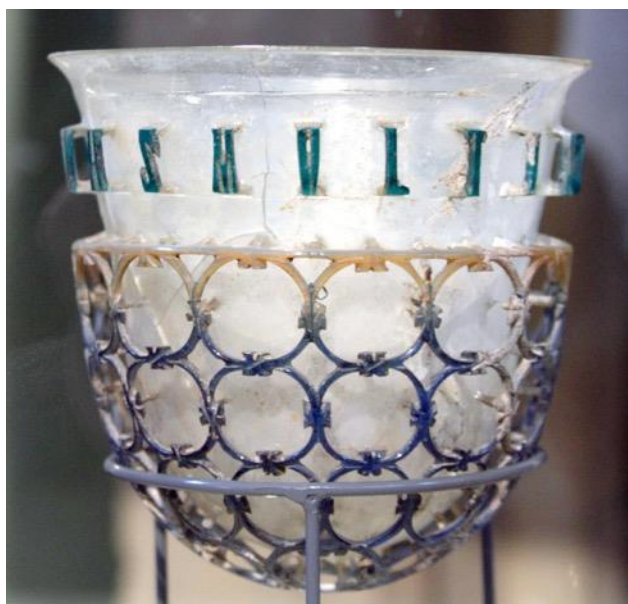
*Rondò Coste della Sesia Spanna 2020 13.5% ***

Nebbiolo, with a small proportion of other varieties. 10 days on the skins and 12 months of ageing in oak for an early drinking wine. Light, juicy, very red fruited but with complexity added by a tobacco note.

*Villa Era Coste della Sesia Nebbiolo 2020 13.5% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, macerated on the skins for 20 days and aged in tonneaux for two years. Rich and fleshy with red cherry to black plum fruit, light but resilient tannins, with a long finish.

Ghemme



Roman glass drinking cup, found near Ghemme
Photo: José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro, via Wikimedia
Commons [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Ghemme DOCG

- DOC from 1969; became a DOCG in 1997.
- The grapes must be grown in Ghemme and part of neighbouring Romagnano Sesia.
- The wine must be 85–100 per cent Nebbiolo. If a blend, the additional varieties allowed are Uva Rara and Vespolina.
- The standard wine must be aged for 34 months before release, including 18 months in wood.
- This is extended to 46 and 24 months for the *riserva*

Of all the Alto Piemonte denominations, Ghemme has the most illustrious and certainly the most documented history. Neolithic remains from the fifth millennium BCE have been found close by. In Roman times, the tombstone of Vibia Earina, a slave freed by Quinto Vibio Crispo, a senator under the emperor Nero, testifies to the cultivation of vines in the area in the first century CE. Perhaps most spectacularly, an elaborate caged glass cup was found near Ghemme, dated to the fourth century, with the inscription: 'drink and may you live a long time'.

Ghemme DOCG is a medium-sized denomination on the eastern side of the River Sesia. Today, just over 50 hectares are in production. While Gattinara and Ghemme are very close and sit on opposite sides of the river, the soils are very different. Ghemme's soils are predominantly glacial in origin, composed of quartz-rich sandy fractions mixed with clay and iron-bearing layers derived from Alpine crystalline rocks left by the retreat of the glaciers from Monte Rosa. The wines are varied in style but are generally a gentler expression of Nebbiolo than Gattinara. Most wines are 100 per cent Nebbiolo, but a few producers make very successful wines with up to 15 per cent Vespolina.

ANTICHE VIGNETI DI CANTALUPO



Building on centuries of experience as grape growers, the Arlunno family established a large winery when Ghemme became a DOC. They went on to acquire and replant 35 hectares of vineyard in the higher parts of the denomination, around 400 m. In today's warming climate, this is a significant advantage in lengthening the season for fuller flavours, retaining acidity and restraining alcohol levels. The style here is elegant and perfumed with the rose and red cherry element of Nebbiolo to the fore. All the Ghemme DOCG wines reviewed here are 100 per cent Nebbiolo, aged in large Slavonian oak *botti*, and released late.

*Agamium, Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo, 2023, 13.5% ****

Agamium is an old name of Ghemme. This wine can age and become, in effect, a declassified Ghemme, as shown by tasting the 2018**** alongside the 2023 in 2025. The 2023 is youthful and fruity, with slightly rustic tannins, and should improve with time in the bottle.

*Ghemme DOCG 2018, 14% *****

Fruit from several vineyards. The wine spent two and a half years in *botte* and the rest in bottle. Savoury red plum fruit with pretty rose, violet, and lavender aromatics; the tannins are still on the grippy side, with a long finish.

*Collis Carellae, Ghemme DOCG 2018 14% ******

This single vineyard wine, named after the La Carella hill, is situated on the second row of hills in Ghemme with some shelter and a mix of stony and clay soils. The wine again spends two and a half years in *botte*. Floral nose with darker plum fruit and a hint of chocolate, a slightly fuller body than the multi-vineyard Ghemme. Chewy tannins that just need time.

*Collis Breclenae, Ghemme DOCG 2018 14% ******

Named after the village destroyed in medieval times, and the first single vineyard bottling from 1979. The fruit comes from old vines in the first row of hills with rocky soils and less clay. The wine is aged for three years in *botti*. Similar in flavour profile to Collis Carellae, with violet and rose notes over dark cherry fruit, but with a touch more finesse and finer tannins.

CANTINA BIANCHI



www.cantinabianchi.it

This winery was in the news recently after being acquired by Paitin of Barbaresco, the second significant acquisition of a winery in Alto Piemonte by a Langhe producer (see Nervi in Gattinara). The sale of the historic company and the farm, which dated back to 1785, was completed in 2024, following collaboration from 2022. Like Paitin, these vineyards were already managed organically, perhaps a motive for their choice. There are eight hectares in total, including three in Gattinara. The main 1960s winery (which will be upgraded in due course) is in Sizzano, with a smaller one in Gattinara (Gattinara DOCG must be made in the municipality). In addition to the wines below, they plan a Sizzano DOC to respect the territory and its history. This is definitely a winery to follow as the new owners get into their stride.

*Monte, Colline Novarese, Bianco, 2024, 12.% ****

Erbaluce grown in a single 3-hectare block in Sizzano, surrounded by woods. In 2024, it was not necessary to refrigerate the grapes for a day, their usual practice, as it was already cold enough! It is fermented in stainless steel with ambient yeast, to a maximum temperature of 15°C, with no MLF. Aged in steel and in one tonneau to add volume, with bâtonnage once a week. Pale lemon in colour, fresh and inviting green plum, floral and almond notes, fullish body, a gentle finish, with lively acidity.

*Monte Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2024 12.5% ****

93 per cent Nebbiolo plus Vespolina, co-fermented and on the skins for two weeks. The wine is aged half in 15-hectolitre oak and half in stainless steel to retain primary aromas. Pale in colour, pretty rose and red cherry aromas on the nose with a hint of almond skin, and prickly moderate tannins. Fresh and inviting.

*Ghemme DOCG 2023, 13% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, from a small plot of 6,000 square metres with pebbly alluvial soils that are less acidic than Gattinara soils. The wine is held for three weeks on the skins in cement tanks with the temperature allowed to rise to 27°C. It is aged in a refurbished medium-large old *botte* for 22 months. A very Pinot-esque take on Nebbiolo, showing a perfumed nose with cranberry and red plum fruit, elegant, if with youthful, slightly grainy tannins.

*Gattinara DOCG 2023 13.2% *****

Nebbiolo is cultivated on poor soils consisting of a mixture of sand, loam, and clay, with the upper part of the vineyard having very shallow soils over rock. The winemaking process is the same as for the Ghemme, but with slightly longer ageing in *botti*. It features red to black plum flavours with an overlay of liquorice and thyme, presenting as complex and assertive, and finishing with ripe tannins.

CASCINA CA' NOVA



www.cascinacanova.it

This winery was established in 1996 when Giada Codecasa and her father from Milan aspired to produce wine. With guidance from a leading agronomist, Davide Ferrarese, and wine consultant Cristiano Garella, the company acquired and planted nine hectares of vineyard. The San Quirico vineyard of one hectare was assembled from 14 previous owners! Some of the vineyards have since been sold, but production now continues on three hectares. They produce traditional method sparkling wines and still wines, including Ghemme DOCG.

*Jad'or Rosé Spumante metodo classico extra brut 13% ***

100 per cent Nebbiolo with fruit from the 2021 harvest and one year on the lees. Pale pink with an orange tint, simple toasty lees-ageing notes and red fruit.

*Aurora Colline Novaresi Nebbiolo DOC Rosato 2024 13% ***

Dry and refreshing, a rosé for casual occasions with peachy and red-berried fruit.

*San Quirico Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2017 14% ****

Varietal Nebbiolo, 21 days on the skins, with the wine spending 12 months in *botte* with extended time in bottle. Good fresh fruit quality with appropriate tertiary, leather and dried fruit notes.

*Ghemme DOCG 2015 13.5% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo from a six-hectare vineyard with mainly clay soils, the wine is aged in 50-hectolitre *botti* for two years and a minimum of a further two years in bottle before release. The wine shows a real depth of red cherry to black plum fruit, but at ten years old it is perhaps caught between primary and tertiary phases. Finishes with somewhat drying tannins.

MIRÚ



www.aziendaagricolamiru.it

Marco Arlunno, who also runs Il Chiosso (see Gattinara), has ten hectares of vineyard in Ghemme and Sizzano. He produces two lines, one for the local single varieties labelled with the names of or birth years of his relatives (N for *nato*) and one for Ghemme DOCG.

Piriet Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2023 12.5% ***

Named in honour of Marco's grandmother, this 100 per cent Erbaluce wine is fermented at a low temperature (10°C) to maximise the fruit. A few grams of residual sugar remain, softening the finish. It offers herbal white plum aromas, a classic refreshing mouth-cleansing finish, and is somewhat softer than some young Erbaluce wines, which can be aggressive in their youth.

N50 Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023, 13% ***

N50, since you ask, celebrates the year of Marco's father's birth. It was a blend of 90 per cent Nebbiolo, plus Vespolina and Uva Rara; now it is 100 per cent Nebbiolo. Two weeks of maceration on the skins, one year in Austrian oak *botte*. Fine violet and marasca cherry lift on the nose, and in the mouth, the fruit is well balanced with high acidity and moderate tannins, direct and true to type.

Sizzano DOC 2022 13% **(*)

By law, Sizzano DOC must be a blend, with Nebbiolo limited to between 50 and 70 per cent, reflecting the historic tradition of blended wines in Alto Piemonte. Mirú maximises this with a blend that is half Nebbiolo, along with equal parts of Vespolina and Uva Rara. To maintain the traditional method, the wine is aged for two years in chestnut *botti*. The wine exhibits a slightly deeper colour than straight Nebbiolo (Vespolina adds a depth of colour) with red fruit and black pepper notes and robust, currently dominant tannins. This definitely needs time in bottle age (hence the third star if bottle-aged).



The author with a bottle of Mirú

Ghemme DOCG, 2020, 13% ***

100 per cent Nebbiolo with a dash of Vespolina. Six to seven days on the skins (as with the winery's Sizzano and the second Ghemme), two years in large old French oak *botti*. This Ghemme combines elegant lavender and herbal notes with a hint of liquorice, alongside red cherry and plum, framed by fine, sandpaper-like tannins.

Vigna Carelle Ghemme DOCG 2022, 13% ****

100 per cent single vineyard Nebbiolo from the second line of hills in Ghemme, with more clay in the soil. Three years of ageing in Slavonian oak *botti* of 25 hL. Dense fruit on the palate (dark plum, thyme, blood orange), well-covered tannins, and an extended finale, this wine has a long journey ahead of it. In time, there will also be a second single vineyard wine, Ghemme DOCG Vigna Cavenago.

PIETRAFORATA

www.pietraforata.com



The historic street in the centre of Ghemme

It is so easy to bypass the historic centre of Ghemme with its ancient centre and still inhabited castle; the modern road hides all this from you. But it is well worth making a quick detour where you will find not one but two wineries located on the road that is within the former fortification, Pietraforata and Rovellotti (see below).

In 2012, Pietraforata was the latest to use the castle's natural temperature and humidity stability for their winemaking. Indeed, the winery's name, 'pierced rock', pays homage to a mysterious hole in the wall of the building that, in former times, would have given shelter to country dwellers under threat. Pietraforata owns four hectares of vineyard in Ghemme and Sizzano, with vines between 10 and 60 years of age.

*Chiarezza Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13.5% ****

Erbaluce grown in Sizzano, the fruit is subject to 20 hours of cryomaceration to maximise the primary fruit. The wine is then aged for one month in new tonneaux and six months in stainless steel. Very pleasant lemon, white blossom and peachy fruit, no evident new oak aromas and edgy acidity.

*Orezza Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2024 13% ***

With a learned reference to the *orezza*, 'breath of wind', that comforts in Dante's Purgatorio, this rosé would surely also revive those whose spirits are flagging in difficult situations. 100 per cent Nebbiolo, the wine shows attractive light redcurrant and red cherry fruit with fruit ripeness on the finish.

*Saggezza Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2020 14% ***

Again, 100% Nebbiolo grown in Ghemme, aged for 12 months in barriques. At five years old, it sits between primary fruit and full development, with red to black plum fruit and some earthy, leather notes and moderate grip on the finish.

*Ghemme DOCG 2017 14% *****

90 per cent Nebbiolo, 9 per cent Vespolina and 1 per cent Uva Rara. Both Ghemme wines are macerated on the skins for three weeks. The ageing is five years in large oak *botte*. Pale ruby, with ripe plum fruit and black tea notes, showing moderate complexity; the palate is framed by mild, chalky tannins that give a gentle, dry grip.

*Vigna Locche Ghemme DOCG Riserva 2017 14% *****

The same blend as above, in this case, five years ageing in third-use barriques and tonneaux. More elegant and vertical than the classic Ghemme, cranberry to red plum, with a hint of tobacco, fine, durable tannins. A very elegant, ready-to-drink Ghemme.

PLATINETTI GUIDO



www.platinettivini.com

Following a long gap after the First World War, this winery recommenced business in the 1970s. It has the benefit of old vines, some up to 100 years of age and trained to the traditional Maggiorina system, which in the past allowed other crops to be grown below the vines. The prized Ronco Maso vineyard in Ghemme, three and a half of their five hectares, was replanted following the new start, and thus, they are now 30–40 years old. Ambient yeast is employed, and the wine is aged in the traditional large *botti*.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023 12.5% ****

Nebbiolo from the Ronco Maso vineyard is picked a week earlier than the fruit for Ghemme bottlings. The wine spends six months in a 20-hectolitre Slavonian oak *botte*. Lifted violet and red cherry nose, added complexity from an almond skin note, a flowing mid-palate and a youthful, raspy tannic finish make for an exemplary young Nebbiolo.

*Vigna Ronco Maso Ghemme DOCG 2021 13.5% ****(*)*

A single vineyard, 100 per cent Nebbiolo wine from vines approaching 50 years of age. Low yields, three to four weeks of maceration on the skins, and two years in Slavonian oak *botti*. As the elder sibling of the Nebbiolo above, this wine is currently muted. However, the depth of fruit shows great potential but requires patience for further ageing in the bottle to express itself. The 2020**** is already demonstrating that potential with its rounded, dark, plummy fruit and lively yet refined tannins.

*Vigna Ronco Maso Ghemme DOCG Riserva 2018 14% ******

Made only in the best years from a selection of the best fruit, this is full-bodied, with tobacco and dark-berried fruit, showing impressive depth and concentration. Long and layered on the palate, it has the structure and complexity of a true Riserva—one to treasure and cellar for further development.

ROVELLOTTI



www.rovellotti.it

Not for nothing is the address of Rovellotti, ‘Road within the castle 22’. The ‘winery’ is a series of ancient cellars on the lowest floor of Ghemme’s fortified cluster of buildings, wildly romantic, if somewhat challenging in practical terms. While no doubt wine has been made in these spaces for centuries, the current company was set up in 1972. With 25 hectares, of which 8.5 are for Ghemme DOCG, this is not only a historic but a relatively large producer. They specialise not only in Ghemme DOCG but also in traditional method sparkling wine with Nebbiolo grapes.

*Innominabile Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13% ****

Given the current understanding that wineries in Alto Piemonte are not allowed to use the name of the variety Erbaluce, this has given rise to names that poke fun at this ridiculous situation. ‘Unnameable’ or ‘unmentionable’ is, of course, 100 per cent of this great variety, made in the classic still and dry style. The 2024 shows the characteristic combination of white, underripe peach and green herb and is very inviting and refreshing.



Outside and inside of one of the Rovellotti's rooms that make up the winery

Vitigno Innominabile Metodo Classico Dosaggio Zero 2020 12.5% ****

Erbaluce also makes great sparkling wine on account of its restrained primary fruit and high acidity. This example with the 'unmentionable' grape variety spent three years on the lees in the bottle for a stony, toasty wine with white plum fruit leading to a fully dry, long and savoury finish.

Metodo Classico Nebbiolo Rosato 2020 12.5% ****

Rovellotti also made a very good Nebbiolo sparkling wine, which also spends three years on the lees. Red cherry fruit flavours with liquorice and toast from the time on lees, very dry with a lightly tannic finish.

Valpiazza Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13.5% ***

Stainless steel-aged Nebbiolo showing very ripe red plum fruit (from a very hot year) and some stony complexity. The fruit covers the tannins well.

Chioso dei Pomi Ghemme DOCG 2019 14% ***(*)

A traditional blend of 85% Nebbiolo with Vespolina from a three-hectare single vineyard in the Barragiola area of Ghemme, aged for three years in large botti. A lovely, classically styled wine, with smoky, leathery notes over integrated red to black plum fruit, and considerable potential for further development.

Ghemme DOCG Riserva 2016 13.5% *****

There is a real wow factor here for this selection of the best grapes, for this wine aged for over three years in large *botti*. Layers of fresh red plum fruit, the first dried fruit and leather notes, exceptional depth of flavour and length on the finish. This should put on yet more layers and weight with further time in bottle. The Riserva 2008 *********, tasted from magnum, was fully tertiary but had the freshness to last another 20 years.

*Valdenrico Vino Passito da Uve Stramature 2019 13% ******

The name Valdenrico is a contraction of Valle d'Enrico, one of Rovellotti's vineyard sites, reflecting Alto Piemonte's tradition of using historic local toponyms for individual wines. Erbaluce grapes are dried until February or March, fermented, and then aged in small oak barrels for 12 months. Amber in colour, with complex notes of dried citrus, saffron, walnut and honey; long and beautifully balanced on the palate and remarkable depth.

TORRACCIA DEL PIANTAVIGNA



www.torracciadelpiantavigna.it

This winery was established in 1997, although its history dates back to Piero Piantavigna in the 1950s. The 'Torraccia' is the nickname of a hill with exceptional exposure that he loved. It is a relatively large winery with 40 hectares of vineyard. For historical reasons, it is one of only two wineries authorised to produce Gattinara outside of the denomination in the winery in Ghemme.

*Erbavoglio Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13% ****

Erbaluce is grown on four hectares in Ghemme, the fruit held at a low temperature for at least 12 hours and then fermented for 20 days at a low temperature to preserve aromas. Lovely, tight, with stony fruit (white peach and grassy), medium body, lively acidity, classy.

*Erbavorgia Millesimo Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2022 13.5% ****

A second Erbaluce, this time macerated on the skins for two days for a touch of richness and very mild grip. Is this really distinctive enough for a separate bottling?

*Erbavoglio Spumante Metodo Classico Blanc de Blancs Dosaggio Zero 12.5% *****

Just as in Caluso, Erbaluce responds well to the traditional method for sparkling wine, here with 21 months on the lees and no dosage. Lovely yeasty, sapid and fully dry wine, with a great blend of mild toastiness and distinctive lemon and herb Erbaluce flavours.

Tre Confini, Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13%

100 per cent Nebbiolo from Ghemme, the wine is aged in *botte* and tonneaux for six months and intended to be drunk young. Elegant floral note over ripe, if tart, red fruit, simple and direct, and a pure expression of Nebbiolo, finishes with medium puckering tannins.

*Gattinara DOCG 2020, 13.5% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, macerated on the skins for 10 days and then aged for three years in *botte*. The house style is traditional with mild oxidative notes but this is lifted by its floral and red cherry to plum notes, powerful.

*Gattinara DOCG Riserva 2017 14% ******

Only made in the best years this traditional style really shines here: powerfully smoky with stony red fruit, full-bodied, long, and has all the elements for extended ageing in the bottle.

*Ghemme DOCG 2020 13.5% *****

Predominantly Nebbiolo with a small proportion of Vespolina. Typical Torraccia oxidative traditional style with a depth of fresh and dried fruit and marked leather and tar notes.

*Vigna Pelizzane Ghemme DOCG 2017 14% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo from the best one-hectare plot of a larger vineyard called Ronco dell'Ulivo. Aged for three years in large *botti*. Very refined red fruit, still traditional in style, but the fruit is more evident; medium body, finishes with earthy, gravelly, firm tannins.

VIGNETI COSTACURTA



www.costacurta.wine

With a first vintage as recent as 2019, Costacurta has focused on three expressions of Nebbiolo using the Cobianco clone, native to Ghemme, and certified with the code CVT-C2 in 2012. The 'Cobianco' refers to the light hazelnut colour of the clone's winter shoots: with the 'hazelnut' theme, you can't get more Piemontese than that! It has small to medium berries with a high skin-to-pulp ratio, which promises wines of high concentration. The vineyards are located in Ghemme and nearby Sizzano. As a newcomer, it is refreshing to see the combination of modern technology (the clone, the closures, see below) combined with a dedication to Nebbiolo grown in alluvial and glacial soils. This is definitely a winery to keep an eye on as it gets into its stride and vine age increases.

*Mezzatinta, Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo, 2023, 13% ***

The translucent bottle tells you this is rosé, even if the label doesn't, though the wine is called 'half tone'. Light orange with a faint garnet hue; peach to redcurrant fruit with herbal notes adding a touch of complexity, and a light tannic grip.

*Tintaunita, Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo, 2023, 12.5% ****

10 days on the skins and then aged, like the rosé, for six months in stainless steel. These first two wines are bottled under screwcap for maximum freshness. The wine shows ripe red plum fruit plus floral and apple notes, surprisingly full-bodied, finishing dry and moderately tannic, making this versatile with food.

*Ghemme DOCG 2020, 14% *****

From vines planted in 2008.. The grapes are fermented on skins for three weeks, and the wine ages in untoasted French oak *botti*. One-piece cork is used with a TCA-free (cork taint) guarantee. Powerful red fruit plus soy sauce, liquorice and minty notes for a wine of high complexity. First undergrowth tertiary notes showing.

VINI IOPPA



www.vinioppa.it

With more than 30 hectares of vineyard and still planting, Ioppa is definitely among the larger wineries of Ghemme. Equally impressively, they have built a brand new visitor-friendly winery, which was finished in 2022. As most wineries in the area are either functional or on a domestic scale, this is an impressive statement of how the winery wants to attract visitors to get to know their wines.



New winery, Ioppa, Vini Ioppa

Every successful winery has found something on which it can build its business. In the case of Ioppa, they have had great success in northern European markets with their Nebbiolo rosé. The fermentation hall is organised and equipped to handle the 300,000 bottles that they currently make. This success, in turn, allows them to mature their Ghemme DOCG wines for longer before release.

*Ruisin Colline Novaresi Nebbiolo DOC Rosato 2024 11.5% ****

This rosé is the commercial success story. The fruit is picked from mid-September onwards to preserve freshness and acidity and held in the press for three hours for the colour. Slow fermentation for 40 days at around 15°C, to preserve the fresh fruit aromas, is followed by up to half a year of maturation in stainless steel. Immediately attractive rose and red fruit lift, followed by a sapid palate with some classic Nebbiolo stony complexity and light tannins. The latter make this wine versatile with food beyond the aperitivo hour.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo, 2023 12.5% ***

Less than a week on the skins for a lighter extraction, this early-drinking Nebbiolo is bottled after a year. It is a big production at 70,000 bottles. Juicy, plum fruit, with a layer of earthy complexity and youthful ripe tannins.

*Ghemme DOCG 2017 13.5% *****

The blend here is 85 per cent Nebbiolo, 15 per cent Vespolina, which spends 30 days on the skins, four years in Slavonian oak casks and a minimum of two years in bottle before release. The regulations require this wine to be aged for just short of three years, but this release has had an additional five years in the bottle. Very refined red cherry and cranberry fruit, fine, resolved tannins, an elegant wine that focuses on the fruit and triumphantly overcomes the hot dry vintage.

*Santa Fé Ghemme DOCG, 2018 15% ******

The same blend as the standard Ghemme. Ioppa's preference in their Ghemme bottlings is to blend Nebbiolo with the maximum amount allowed of Vespolina, for colour and spicy red fruit. The fruit is from a single hill-top vineyard with clay-rich soils and southwest exposure

that was planted in 1969. Three to four weeks on the skins and four years in cask. A clear step up in fruit density; a vertical, intensely red-fruited wine with strong ageing potential.

*Balsina Ghemme 2018 14.5% ******

A second single hilltop vineyard, but in this case the vineyard has more gravel in the soil. The wine is made with the same 85 per cent Nebbiolo plus Vespolina blend. Again it spends three to four weeks on the skins and four years in cask. With a total of seven years of age, this is a highly perfumed cranberry to red plum fruited wine supported by racy acidity and elegant, powerful tannins. Both 2018 single vineyard wines are outstanding examples from the excellent 2018 vintage.

*Stransi vino ottenuto da uve appassite, no vintage declared, 15.5% ****

This is undoubtedly a very rare wine and possibly a unique one. Ioppa's belief in the Vespolina variety extends to a sweet *passito* version. The grapes are dried naturally from September to March/April. Maceration on the skins for 10 days and then fermentation is completed in small barrels for 60 days. The exhausted yeast leaves around 120 grams per litre of residual sugar. Maturation continues for five years in the barrels, plus many years in bottle. Garnet in colour, still with a ruby tinge; an intense nose of dried plum and strawberry fruit, with a walnut note adding complexity. The ripe fruit on the nose anticipates the sweetness on the palate, which in turn is in some tension with fine, if slightly grainy, tannins. Intriguing and unusual.

Sizzano

The village of Sizzano, situated immediately south of Ghemme, has a historical record dating back to Roman and medieval times. The DOC applies specifically to this village.

Sizzano's moment of fame came when Camillo Benso, Count Cavour, a prominent figure in the movement for Italian unification and the first prime minister of a united Italy, praised its wines. He wrote a letter to a lawyer commending the wines of Sizzano and the hills of Novara, claiming they could compare favourably with those of Clos Vougeot and Romanet (sic) in Burgundy.

Compared with Ghemme, Sizzano shares the same fluvio-glacial origin but has generally sandier, more permeable soils with less clay, producing lighter, more aromatic wines. This is reflected in the regulations (see box), which require less time in wood than for Ghemme DOCG.

Due to its regulations that require Sizzano to be a blend of varieties, 100 per cent varietal Nebbiolo wines have to be labelled Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo.

Sizzano DOC

- DOC from 1969, one of the earliest in the region.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipality of Sizzano.
- The wine must be 50–70 per cent Nebbiolo, with 30–50 per cent Vespolina and/or Uva Rara, plus up to 10 per cent of other authorised black varieties.
- The standard wine must be aged for 22 months before release, including 16 months in wood.
- This is extended to 34 and 24 months for the *riserva*.

COMERO

www.cantinacomero.it



Although Cantina Comero was formally established only a decade ago, the six-hectare estate has been owned by the family for several centuries. In 2011, Paolo Cominoli chose to vinify the family's grapes rather than continue selling them, naming the winery in honour of his late grandfather. The vineyards, situated at around 200 metres above sea level in Sizzano, include Vespolina, three hectares of Nebbiolo (one hectare eligible for Sizzano DOC), and Erbaluce. Most were planted in the first decade of this century, though some parcels date back to the 1950s. From 2013, three Erbaluce plots were added, including a Maggiorina-trained vineyard planted in the 1960s.

*La misura dei sogni Vino Spumante di Qualità 2021 Extra Brut 12.5% ****

White sparkling wine made with Vespolina (70 per cent) and Chardonnay. Whole-bunch pressed, the wine spends 36 months on the lees after tirage. Fine autolytic toast notes with hints of black tea and lemon; complex, with light grip—very much a food-friendly sparkling wine.

*La grazie del Marchesi Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2023 12.5% ****

Erbaluce, also pressed as whole bunches, is made and aged in stainless steel, avoiding malolactic fermentation with *bâtonnage* until the end of the year. It exhibits notes of green apple, lemon, and a touch of the medicinal (which may diminish with time, as this wine benefits from bottle ageing) and maintains the trademark acidity.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2022 13% ****

Fruit from vines planted in the 1960s and 1970s. Three weeks of maceration on the skins, followed by ageing in stainless steel. Ripe black cherry and red cherry fruit, with fine light tannins, ready to drink. Well-handled in a hot, dry year.

*Sizzano DOC 2020 13.5% *****

Fruit from 2006 and 2011 plantings with clones carefully selected for the site, 70 per cent Nebbiolo plus Vespolina, the latter picked first. Paolo believes in the Nebbiolo/Vespolina blend and opposes those who want to change the rules to allow 85–100 per cent Nebbiolo within the Sizzano regulations. The Nebbiolo is subject to a long maceration of five to six weeks, while the Vespolina is pressed off the skins after two weeks. The wine is then aged for two years in French oak *botti*. Pale ruby with a garnet tint, a subtle, gentle nose, a refined palate with layers of black plum, red cherry and pepper, with a long, silky finish.

LA PIEMONTEINA



www.lapiemontina.com

La Piemontina is a unique winery in northern Piemonte as a large-scale project, designed and built from scratch. Liudmila Bobrova acquired her first plot of land in 2010 and gradually assembled a site of 60 hectares, 27 of which are already planted with more to come. Furthermore, the aim is to create a major wine tourism and hospitality attraction, unlike anything else in the region. The winery, designed by architect Attilio Barone, was started in 2019 and inaugurated in 2022. Mario Ronco is the external wine consultant. The new vineyards are young, and I have no doubt that the wines will improve with vine age. But for a region that suffers from fragmentation, it has the potential to make the wines available to many wine lovers, not least as a wine tourism destination.

*Metodo classico Brut NV 12% ****

This sparkling wine made with Erbaluce, locally called Greco Novaresi, was made with fruit from the 2020 harvest. Future vintages will be labelled as a vintage wine. Ageing on the lees in bottle is 36 months, and the final dosage is six grams per litre. Powerful floral aromas and green apple with a liquorice undertone. The palate is vibrant, with a medium-plus length.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13% ****

Whole bunches of Erbaluce are pressed and aged in stainless steel for six months for a fresh and accessible style. Crisp on entry, with green apple and almond notes, lifted by high, racy acidity.



La Piemontina and one of its hospitality rooms

Roise Colline Novaresi DOC Rosato 2024 12.5% **

Rosé made with Nebbiolo, held for three hours in the press and then vinified as though it were a white wine. Medium onion-skin colour, with modest peachy fruit, framed by balancing acidity. Chill and enjoy.

Colline Novaresi DOC Rosso 2023 12% **

A Nebbiolo (60 per cent) and Vespolina blend made in an early-drinking style. Aged for six months in oak. Simple, direct red fruit, juicy and fresh, with a light earthy undertone.

Colline Novaresi DOC Vespolina 2020 13% ***

100 per cent Vespolina aged in neutral oak for one year and then in bottle. Red-fruited with a floral lift, showing fine tannins and good drinkability. Less peppery than some examples, yet with a pleasing sense of depth.

Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2020 13% ***

100 per cent Nebbiolo aged for 18 months in large Austrian oak *botti*. Fine red fruit and red plum with some nutty oak, with a lightly sappy character and medium tannins.

Sizzano DOC 2022 13% ***

70 per cent Nebbiolo with Vespolina, macerated on the skins for 10–14 days and then aged for two years in Austrian oak *botti*. Moderately intense on the nose, with good depth of red and black plum fruit; fine, mild tannins and excellent acidity for the vintage.

Ghemme DOCG 2020 13% ***

Pure Nebbiolo. The wine is macerated on the skins for a total of 20 days and then aged for between 18 and 24 months in cask. Pale ruby-garnet with moderate development. Aromas

of sour cherry, red plum and dried rose, typical of Ghemme. The palate shows fine, prickly tannins and moderate complexity.

*Ghemme DOCG riserva 2019 13.5% *****

Made from a selection of the best fruit and fermented in oak vessels, and then aged for two years in *botti*. Good aromatic intensity, with mint and herbal notes alongside fine red plum fruit; long, with elegant tannins.

*Vino ottenuto da uve appassite Bianco ****

I am delighted to see that La Piemontina is producing a *passito* wine, as less well-funded wineries are abandoning this due to low sales. However, Erbaluce passito has huge quality potential and a long history. The grapes are dried until they lose about half of their volume of juice. After fermentation, the wine is aged for a year in used barriques. The wine has attractive aromas of saffron, honey, and almond, with a more developed than primary character.

PARIDE CHIOVINI



www.paridechiovini.it

Founded in 1997, this winery became a partnership between Paride Chiovini and marketing expert Maria Elena Randetti in 2021. With five hectares of vineyard, the focus is on Erbaluce, Vespolina, Uva Rara, and, of course, Nebbiolo. One point of difference is the use of some new French oak barriques for ageing red wines.

*Athena Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2023 ****

An austere Erbaluce made in stainless steel, with medium intensity floral and lemon aromas, lean body, and a brisk acidity, leaving a light grip on the finish. In short, Erbaluce for Riesling lovers. Distinctive.

*Eros Colline Novaresi DOC Rosato 2024 ****

A Nebbiolo rosé with four hours on the skins for the colour, then fermented as a white wine and aged in stainless steel for five months. Lifted red cherry pastille aromas, with stony and herbal complexity; medium length, with a dry, rounded finish.

*Sizzano DOC 2021 14.7% ****

Red wine made from Nebbiolo (70 per cent) with Vespolina (25 per cent) and Uva Rara, grown on acidic sandy and clay soils. Maceration time is around three weeks, and the wine is aged for 24 months in second-use barriques. Well-integrated vanilla spice notes with very good depth of cranberry to red plum fruit and a touch of black pepper too. Fruity and approachable, a touch warm but with real depth.

*Ghemme DOCG 2021 14% *****

100 per cent Nebbiolo grown on slightly richer soils than in Sizzano, if still acidic. Again, three weeks on the skins aged in five-hectolitre (small) French first and second use oak *botti* for 20 months. Well-articulated fruit—rose, red cherry to plum, with a touch of smoke; ripe, high tannins, a fairly full body and real fruit density, with firmer tannins than the Sizzano.

Fara

Travelling south from Ghemme, Fara is the last specialist denomination in the direction of the city of Novara. Fara's soils are typically sand-dominant and highly permeable, with less clay than neighbouring Sizzano, producing wines that favour finesse and aromatic lift over structural density. This is reflected in the regulations (see the box), which require less time in wood than for Sizzano DOC and much less than for Ghemme DOCG.

CANTINOTECA DEI PROLO ★★★

www.cantinotecadeiprolo.com

With a history stretching back to 1888, the current generation under Christian Prolo has worked on the vineyards and updated the winery, now dealing with the fruit of eight hectares of vineyard, all in the village of Fara Novarese.

*Vesporosè Vino Spumante di Qualità Extra Dry 2024 12.5% ***

An unusual sparkling wine made from the Vespolina variety, typical of Alto Piemonte, and with the tank method, with six months on the lees. Designed for easy drinking and the aperitivo hour. Pale copper in colour, red plum, strawberry and pepper aromas, with a sweet finish (27 grams per litre residual sugar) that balances the acidity.

*Biènkh Colline Novaresi Bianco 2021 13.5% ****

Another cunningly named wine (Bianco in dialect) to get around the problem of not using the word Erbaluce on the bottle. Fermented in stainless steel, no malolactic fermentation and aged in the same for six months. Green herb and ripe yellow plum; quite full-bodied, with a very rounded finish. The late release is deliberate, allowing Erbaluce to mellow in bottle.

*Spéna Colline Novaresi DOC Rosso 2021 13% ***

Spéna is the local name for Spanna: 100 per cent Nebbiolo fermented in concrete tanks, 10 days on the skins and aged for two years in Slavonian oak casks. In a rustic style, with breadth and depth, brambly fruit and lightly grainy tannins.

*Lochera Fara DOC 2020 14% ****

Named after the hill on which the vineyard sits, this is a blend of Nebbiolo (70 per cent) and Vespolina. It is fermented in concrete, with 20 days of skin maceration. The wine is aged in tonneaux (Nebbiolo) and barriques (Vespolina) for three years, then blended before bottling. A wine of elegance, with aromas of redcurrant, earthy red plum and white pepper, and rounded tannins.

Fara DOC

- DOC from 1969, one of the earliest in the region.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipalities of Fara Novarese and Briona.
- The wine must be 50–70 per cent Nebbiolo, with 30–50 per cent Vespolina and/or Uva Rara, plus up to 10 per cent of other authorised black varieties.
- The standard wine must be aged for 22 months before release, including 12 months in wood.
- This is extended to 34 and 20 months for the *riserva* category.

DEI CAVALLINI

www.facebook.com/DeiCavallini

★★★

Damiano Cavallini turned his grandfather's land into a contemporary, small winery in 2012. There were four hectares to start with, growing rapidly to eight, all planted with the local varieties, Erbaluce, Vespolina and Nebbiolo.

*Lunatico Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2023 13% ***

The Erbaluce grapes are cooled overnight before pressing and then are fermented with temperature control, followed by three months on the lees with bâtonnage. Quite restrained in style with green fruit and herbal notes, refreshing and will probably put on palate weight with time in the bottle.

*ProspeRosa, Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo Rosato, 2023, 14.5% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo from younger vineyards, made with juice from fully ripe grapes drawn off after two hours of skin contact at 11°C. A bolder rosé than many: full-bodied, fully flavoured, ripe plum fruit and very light tannins.

*Ardita, Colline Novaresi Vespolina 2024 13% ****

Innovative winemaking here with half the grapes as whole bunches with some semi-carbonic maceration (to boost the primary fruit and reduce tannin extraction) and the other half crushed, for a total maceration time of seven days. Aged in stainless steel. Juicy red fruit, rose and pepper aromas, fine freshness, medium ripe tannins. Vespolina can be tough, but this isn't!



Wines at Dei Cavallini

*Fara DOC 2022 12.5% ***(*)*

A classic Fara blend of 70 per cent Nebbiolo, 20 per cent Vespolina and 10 per cent Uva Rara, picked and vinified together, that spends 20 days on the skins. Ageing is two years in used tonneaux. Very good depth of fruit, with aromatics of medium intensity at this stage, but with that depth, the wine may develop considerably in bottle.

FRANCESCA CASTALDI

www.cantinacastaldi.it

★★★

Francesca Castaldi returned to be a *vignaiola*, a grape grower, at the age of forty to farm her 6.5 hectares, rising to 8 hectares. She replanted, moving from the old pergola system to trellised vines for higher quality. A new winery followed in 2011.

*Lucia Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13% ****

Fermented and aged briefly in stainless steel. Fresh and elegant with green herb and lemon notes, clean and precise, with a mild grip on the finish, making it more versatile with food.

*Rosalbe, Colline Novaresi DOC Rosato 2024 13.5% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo, the highest bunches, picked in the first week of September, with the colour due to the time in the press, fermented in stainless steel with selected yeast at up to 18°C. Apricot pink in colour, pretty light red cherry fruit, super refreshing and direct.

*Bigin, Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13% ****

20 days of maceration on the skins, aged in old 500 litre barrels for eight months. Attractive red plum nose, serious depth to the fruit here, a touch of bitterness on the finish, light grippy tannins.

*Fara DOC 2021 13.5% *****

A straight blend of Nebbiolo (70 per cent) and Vespolina, which is macerated on the skins for a month with the cap submerged for the second half of that period. The wine then aged in 20-hectolitre oak *botti* for two years. Dark berries, pepper and almond aromas, lively tannins that need either food or some years in the bottle, intense and with good length.

I DOF MATTI

★★★★

<http://www.idofmati.it>

Dialect for ‘the two girls’, I Dof Mati was set up by two women in 2016 to bring back into cultivation an old vineyard and abandoned land. With five and a half hectares, it is now led by Sara Paladini. In addition to the typical local varieties reviewed here, the winery also has Merlot that goes into its Tornato label.

*Eresia Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2023 12% ***

‘Eresia’ is, of course, yet another poke at the ridiculous situation in which producers in Alto Piemonte are not allowed to write Erbaluce on the label of their typical white wine. A classic, reductive handling of the variety — fermented and aged solely in stainless steel with no malolactic conversion — results in a restrained profile of subtle white and yellow orchard fruit, edged with a faintly herbal nuance and a light metallic inflexion that adds complexity.

*Trama Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 13% ***

13 days of maceration on the skins, with one year in stainless steel and six months in *botti*. Youthful Nebbiolo with red cherry and plum fruit supported by mildly grippy tannins.

*Il Matto Ghemme DOCG 2019 13.5% ****

Nebbiolo (95 per cent) with a dash of Vespolina, harvested together when the Nebbiolo is ripe and the Vespolina slightly over-ripe. 22 days on the skins, and aged for three years in used barriques and tonneaux. Lifted nose with rose, red cherry and rhubarb notes, youthful grippy tannins, long with ageing potential. The 2020 version (**), affected by heavy rains, is lighter than the 2019, with fine red fruit.

LA SMERALDA

★★★★

www.cantinalasmeralda.it

Cantina La Smeralda is a very young winery, active since 2020, with three hectares of vineyard on soils composed of clay and sand at just below 300m elevation. It was created

after the purchase of Villa La Smeralda in Briona, within Fara DOC. The vineyards are now between 15 and 18 years old. A range of wines for immediate drinking (e.g. Uva Rara and rosé frizzante) and experimental wines are also made.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13% ****

Erbaluce, vinified in stainless steel with the malolactic blocked, for release as a young wine. Brisk green fruit and lemon notes, clean, direct, crisp acidic finish, typical of the grape variety.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2022 14% ****

Nebbiolo, macerated on the skins for around 10 days and aged in second-passage French oak barriques for six months. Vanilla spice notes over fresh and dried red cherry and youthful medium tannins. The oak notes are well balanced by the fruit intensity.

VIGNETI VALLE RONCATI



www.vignetivalleroncati.it

With nine hectares of vineyard, Roncati is a medium-sized producer, with a surprisingly wide range of wines. Outside of the region, the interest lies in its Fara, Sizzano and Ghemme bottlings, with the fruit picked at the peak of full ripeness. An unusual feature is that some new French oak barriques are used for these wines

*Poderi di Sopra, Colline Novaresi DOC Rosato 2024 13.5% ****

A rosé made entirely from Nebbiolo grapes that spend three to four hours in the press. A juicy, highly drinkable wine, with ripe plum and red cherry fruit and a hint of liquorice, which adds some Nebbiolo complexity.

*Runcà, Spanna, Colline Novaresi DOC 2018 13.5% ****

Runcà is the dialect word for the Roncati valley, where the vineyard is to be found. Nebbiolo, under its local name, is made and aged for nine months in stainless steel. Here is a chance to taste an older vintage of this entry-level wine to see how it holds up. Ripe fruit notes with a touch of dried fruit, now with a layer of leather and compost from bottle ageing. Nebbiolo, even at this level, can age for a decade or more.

*Ciada Fara DOC Riserva 2013 13.5% ****

Fara is one of the denominations that requires Nebbiolo to be blended, in this case with with 20 per cent Vespolina and 10 per cent Uva Rara, all vinified separately at the appropriate ripeness. The Riserva category requires 20 months in wood; here, this is extended to 30–36 months in French oak of various sizes, some of the wood being new. More than a decade after the vintage, these various elements have come together. Lovely developed Nebbiolo, earth and undergrowth aromas over red fruit and a dash of vanilla oak.

*Roano Sizzano DOC 2015 14.5% ****

Sizzano DOC also has to be Nebbiolo blend, here it is 70 per cent of the prime variety, plus Vespolina (25 per cent) and Uva Rara. Rich fruit and vanilla spice, powerful and in an international style, accessible fruit and still with evident new French oak notes.

*Leblanque Ghemme DOCG 2016 14.5% ****

100 per cent Nebbiolo grown on alluvial morainic soils, with the wine being aged in Allier French oak. A touch deeper in colour than most Nebbiolo, with dark plum and black cherry fruit, clearly picked late and unusually high in alcohol and body for Alto Piemonte, even if this

was the perfect year to ripen fruit. A more powerful expression than the Fara or Sizzano, with well-integrated tannins.

Boca

Today, Boca is a small denomination on the northern edge of the Colline Novaresi, just 13 kilometres (8 miles) north of Ghemme. In the fourteenth century, the chronicler Pietro Azario described its wines as 'celebrated since ancient times', testimony to a reputation that once extended far beyond its present scale. Historically much more extensive (perhaps 1,000 hectares), Boca has seen its standing restored largely through the pioneering work of the Swiss importer-turned-producer Christoph Künzli at Le Piane (see below), who revived commercial winemaking here in the late 1990s.

The denomination includes the municipality of Boca and parts of four others. Despite being on the eastern side of the Sesia River, Boca's soils are similar to those of Gattinara or Bramaterra. They are predominantly volcanic soils derived from ancient porphyry formations associated with the Valsesia supervolcanic complex: sandy, acidic, iron-rich and well-drained and typically shallow on the hillsides where the vineyards are planted. However, the wines are required to be Nebbiolo blends, though in Boca's case, they can be 90 per cent Nebbiolo.

Boca DOC

- DOC from 1969, one of the earliest in the region.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipality of Boca and parts of Maggiora, Cavallirio, Prato Sesia and Grignasco.
- The wine must be 70–90 per cent Nebbiolo, plus Vespolina and/or Uva Rara (Bonarda novarese).
- Standard wine must be aged for a minimum of 34 months before release, including a minimum of 18 months in wood.
- This is extended to 46 and 24 months for the *riserva*.

ANTONIO VALLANA

www.vallanawines.com



Vallana was a major wine merchant in the twentieth century, buying wine in bulk and selling it worldwide, as evidenced by the vast storage space in the winery. Ancient bottles of 'Vallana Spanna' are still on the secondary market. The current generation restarted the business with fruit from their five hectares, augmented with purchased fruit for some bottlings. The wines today show outstanding quality at the top end of the range reviewed here.

*Innominato Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 13% *****

This 'innominato' (nameless) is, of course, Erbaluce. After crushing, the juice is kept on the skins for 36 hours before being fermented with selected yeast in old tonneaux. The wine continues to be aged in the barrels for six months with occasional bâtonnage. Light gold in colour with intriguing nutty, dried peach and citrus notes, and a hint of tannins. A distinctive, mildly oxidative style of Erbaluce.

*Metodo Classico Vino Spumante di Qualità Brut Rosé 2015 13% ******

Further proof, if needed, that Nebbiolo can make great sparkling wine (see also Delsignore, Nervi Conterno and more). This is made by drawing off wine from the tank after one night

and then spending 60 months on the lees in the bottle. Around 9 grams per litre of residual sugar. Mid salmon pink, savoury red plum with a mint note. Complex with very good balance between subtle fruit intensity and a rounded finish, with a hint of grip.

Spanna Colline Novaresi DOC 2020
13% ****

Part of the winery's premium range, Nebbiolo is fermented in concrete tanks without temperature control. The seeds are removed after five days, and the wine spends up to a fortnight on the skins. It is aged for one year in old 500-litre tonneaux and three years in bottle before release. Fine, ripe, dried cherry and cranberry fruit, with lovely nutty, leather tertiary aromas, a smooth mid-palate, and quite firm tannins. As we know from the history of the winery, this wine could keep for decades.



Cantine Vallana's substantial winery

Boca DOC 2018 13% *****

A blend of 80 per cent Nebbiolo and Vespolina, grown on the slope behind the famous Boca sanctuary that still attracts worshippers and tourists. Rocky, infertile, acidic volcanic soils produce wines of exceptional concentration. Maceration lasted as long as fermentation, with a slightly extended period in this super-ripe vintage. (Later vintages have experimented with a submerged cap for 25 days.) The wine is aged in 10-hectolitre old Austrian oak *botte* for 18 months. It exhibits great depth of refined crushed raspberry and plum fruit, complemented by added spice, dried fruit, and soy notes, a velvety texture, and firm but refined tannins. An outstanding wine that can be aged for many, many years.

BARBAGLIA

www.vinibarbaglia.it

★★★

Like nearby Vallana, Barbaglia's past was as a wine merchant as well as a producer. The winery side was restarted in 1999 and now has six hectares, half in Boca and half in the regional Colline Novaresi. Today, it is reaching new wine lovers due to the efforts of Sergio in the winery and the indefatigable Silvia as its public face.

Lucino Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13% ***

Erbaluce, pressed at just 0.5 bar and then fermented with temperature control up to 19°C in stainless steel. A pretty nose of green fruit and a touch of honey, ripe on the palate with the fruit depth to balance the brisk acidity.

Il Silente Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2024 12.5% ***

Nebbiolo, picked at ripeness but not overripe, spends two weeks on the skins and is then aged partially in wood. A light and elegant expression with rose and red cherry notes, super fresh and inviting (dangerously drinkable!), with a herbal undertone and moderate tannins.

Cascina del Buonomore, Colline Novaresi DOC Rosso, 2022, 13.5% ***

A new wine from the project to restore this old farmhouse site, 85 per cent Nebbiolo and Vespolina, selected in the vineyard. Super contemporary light style, chillable red wine with juicy, red cherry fruit and light tannins.

Boca DOC 2020 13.5% ****

80 per cent Nebbiolo, 20 per cent Vespolina. The latter has to be picked first as after two days of full ripeness it drops its fruit. It is fermented in stainless steel with three weeks on the skins. Aged for two years in untoasted French mid-sized *botti*. Crunchy, bright red to black plum fruit, with firm fine tannins and bright acidity. Very approachable in youth but with the brooding fruit depth and spice to age in bottle.

CANTINE DEL CASTELLO DI CONTI

www.castelloconti.it

★★★★

The Conti castle, with its castellation straight out of a children's fairy tale, was created by Ermanno Conti in 1963. The red bricks are of local origin, and the first winery was in the nearby village of Maggiora. Today, the winery is run by two of his three daughters. The family maintains a profound respect for the land, not just the vineyards, and harvests only perfect, healthy grapes. After that, the fermentation will take care of itself. Three hectares are farmed in some isolated and remote locations.

Origini Vino Rosso 2023 12.5% ***

A blend of local varieties (Croatina, Slarina, Nebbiolo), grown on the ancient Maggiorina training system with three or four vines planted side by side and then trained outward. The vineyard was left to Elena by a neighbour as thanks for looking after it when he no longer could. The wine is macerated on the skins for two years and bottled after a year. Juicy, approachable, brambly mix, ripe and ready to drink.



Old and new vintages at Conti

Colline Novaresi DOC Spanna 2023 12.5% ***

Pure Nebbiolo with its traditional name. Fermented with ambient yeast and two weeks on the skins, and like the Origini, bottled after a year for possible early consumption, but in the knowledge that this will age gracefully. The wine is aged for six months in steel and another four in wood. Elegant cranberry and redcurrant nose, supple mid palate, elegant tannins, an exemplary youthful Nebbiolo.

Boca DOC 2021 12.5% *****

A blend of Nebbiolo (80%), Vespolina (15%), and Uva Rara (5%), fermented in wood with ambient yeast for one month, without any temperature control unless it rises above 27° C. After fermentation, the wine spends three years in wood and a year in a bottle before being

released. An enticing nose, with pretty rose petal and red fruit aromas; refined, medium-bodied; it finishes long with excellent fruit concentration. A wine with a track record of extended further development in bottle.

DAVIDE CARLONE



www.carloneboca.wine

Davide Carlone is a self-styled producer of artisan natural wine who also has a hand in his family's mechanical machining business. The vineyard holding has crept up to 11 hectares as older growers offer him their vines, making him one of the larger producers in Boca. The winemaking here is contemporary and precise.

*Maria Pia, Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 13.5% ****

The Erbaluce, harvested from one hectare of young vines, is subjected to four days of cryomaceration, and the wine is aged for eight months in stainless steel, with no MLF. Bright lemon fruit, a hint of green herb and peach, not complex but aromatic and satisfying, with a dry, rounded finish. It will be fascinating to see how this develops as vines age.

*Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13.5% ****

Produced from two hectares of 15-year-old vines that are now getting into their stride. The wine is macerated on the skins for eight days for an early-drinking style and aged for 20 months in stainless steel. Redcurrant and dried cranberry lift on the nose, ripeness on the palate, but finishes a little tart and therefore definitely a wine for drinking with food in its youth.

*Boca DOC 2021 14% ****

Parts of Boca are high, and the fruit for this wine comes from 400-460 metres of elevation, an increasingly important bonus in a warming climate. Nebbiolo (85 per cent) and Vespolina come from half a hectare of 50-year-old vines and two hectares of younger vines. It spends two weeks on the skins and then ages for 24 months in Slavonian oak *botti*. Like the 2020 (**), the 2021 is already showing some tertiary character alongside redcurrant and rhubarb fruit; light pepper overlay adds to the complexity.

*Adele Boca DOC 2020 14% *****

This is sourced from the same parcels as the standard Boca, but with fruit selected specifically from vines of the Nebbiolo Picotener biotype, a form widely found in Valle d'Aosta. The expression here is finer, with a restrained power and a wilder note to the fruit.

LE PIANE



www.bocapiane.it

Christoph Künzli, formerly a wine importer in his native Switzerland, is rightly lauded for reviving the Boca denomination when, from 1995, he increasingly took over from an ageing Antonio Cerri. Boca had been reduced from more than 1,000 hectares to a paltry 10 in the preceding century. When asked why an importer became a wine grower, Christoph smiles and says, 'Cerri's wines called me'. Today, he has 10 hectares, much of it rescued old vine, including some Maggiorina-trained vines (see below).



Maggiorina-trained vine in Boca

Bianco Vino Bianco 2024 13% ***

This is whole-bunch pressed Erbaluce, fermented spontaneously in large oak barrel, full MLF, no battonage, and aged for 9 months in wood. Pale lemon in colour, fresh and dried citrus with a light floral note, the lightest grip on the finale, it is a wine of energy and volume. In 2020 only, the winery also made a great Erbaluce called EÓŠ, which shows more neutral oak ageing character (****).

Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2024 12.5% ***

Nebbiolo (90 per cent) and Vespolina were picked at the same time from younger vineyards and less favourable sites. It spent five days of maceration on the skins and was aged for one year in stainless steel, with the aim of making an approachable wine to be drunk young. Simple, direct red fruit, currently leading with the characteristic red plum and pepper of Vespolina, youthful, raspy tannins.

Mimmo Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13.5% ****

A blend of Nebbiolo (85 per cent), Croatina (10 per cent) and Vespolina, it is a proper Boca version of Nebbiolo; while it conforms to European law for a named single-variety wine, it has a good proportion of the supporting varieties. The Nebbiolo is kept on the skins for 10 days, the Croatina just for seven to avoid extracting too much tannin. The ageing is two years in large *botte*. This is pitched between the simpler Nebbiolo above and the Boca below with fine redcurrant and pomegranate red fruit, a mid-weight palate and chalky tannins.

Piane Vino Rosso 2021 14% ***

This is a rare bottle of near-100 per cent Croatina, with just three per cent Vespolina from very old vines (70–100 years old). As Croatina is a very tannic variety, it has a short maceration on the skins of 4-5 days and is aged for two years in large *botte*. A purple tint

(Croatina has an incredible depth of colour), pepper and thyme notes over red to black cherry fruit, earthy, reminiscent of the wildness of Cornas, high ripe tannins.

Boca DOC 2022 14% ****

Old vineyard (30–50 year old) Nebbiolo (85 per cent) and Vespolina combine, with some fruit from top sites planted around the turn of the century. After one month on the skins, the wine is aged for three to four years in large *botte*. Still youthful if pale ruby in colour, a super fragrant nose with very fine rose and red cherry fruit, rhubarb and savoury notes, supported by austere but fine tannins. This is built for extended bottle ageing. Le Piane also makes occasional bottlings of exceptional Boca wines, called Plinius I (in 2007 and 2017) and, for future releases, Antonio Cerri.

La Maggiorina Vino Rosso 2022 14% ***

From this vintage, the former 'Maggiorina' became 'La Maggiorina' and returned to the old formula of using only fruit from 50–100-year-old Maggiorina-trained vines. It is made principally with Croatina (60 per cent) plus no fewer than 12 varieties, red and white. As would have been common in the past, these were picked and vinified together. Relatively short maceration on the skins (up to seven days) is followed by ageing for two years in large *botte*. Deep in colour, predominantly black fruited but with a floral lift and slightly stalky tannins. If you want to taste what wine was like a century ago (if very well made!), this is the model.

PODERE AI VALLONI



www.podereaivalloni.wine

The current iteration of Podere ai Valloni was founded in 1980 when the most important vineyard, Vigna Cristina, was restored. Today, it is run by the daughter of the founders, Anna Sertorio and her husband, Andrea Marzo, a former lawyer who now runs this organically-certified winery with three and a half hectares of vineyard and strong sustainability credentials.

Sass Russ Colline Novaresi DOC Rosso 2023 13% ***

A blend of Nebbiolo (80 per cent) and Vespolina, with the Nebbiolo percentage having risen steadily from just 50 per cent in the last decade. It has a short five-day maceration on the skins, aged only in stainless steel. Immediate, lovely fruity entry with cherry, pomegranate and red plum, light tannins, all well balanced with crisp acidity. An excellent example of entry-level Nebbiolo.

Gratus Colline Novaresi DOC Rosso 2020 13.5% ***

This blend is Nebbiolo (85 per cent) plus Vespolina grown on 35-year-old vines. It spends eight days of maceration on the skins and one year of ageing in large *botte*. This bottling shows a little less immediate fruit than Sass Russ, but higher complexity with floral, red plum to beetroot fruit and thyme notes. An interesting contrast of styles.

Vigna Cristiana Boca DOC 2016 13% *****

Fifty-year-old vines produce a Boca blend of Nebbiolo (70 per cent), Vespolina (20 per cent) and Uva Rara (10 per cent). The wine is macerated for 20 days and aged for three years in oak *botti*, with further ageing in bottle before release. Luscious palate with fine depth of integrated fruit and savoury development. The fruit covers the almost imperceptible tannin. With a lingering finish, the wine perfectly reflects the long, even season.

TENUTE GUARDASOLE

www.tenuteguardasole.it



Marco Bui left a demanding and no doubt well-paid marketing job in Milan to return to help his parents run their fruit-and-vegetable business. Initially, there was just one hectare of vines, but that has now doubled, partly by clearing a plot of forest to plant and partly through taking over a 70-year-old vineyard with Vespolina, Nebbiolo and, unusually for these parts, Dolcetto. Despite all the challenges—hail, wild animals, non-native pests such as *Popillia japonica*—Marco remains optimistic and cheerful about his life choices.

*Virgilio Vino Rosso 2022 13% ****

This wine is made with the mixed 70-year-old vineyard, with the Vespolina, Nebbiolo and Dolcetto picked together. While the Dolcetto is 20 per cent of the vineyard, it is over-ripe at the time of picking, so, with losses, in reality it only makes 10 per cent of the wine. It has just over a week of maceration on the skins, with the wine aged for a year in 10-year-old barriques and tonneaux. An approachable, easy-drinking style, if with firm tannins, with dense red cherry fruit and a black pepper overlay.

*Pio Decimo Vino Rosso 2022 13.5% *****

One hundred per cent Nebbiolo wine, from vines planted in 2013. It is named in honour of the cardinal who later became pope, having declared, on a visit to the Sanctuary of Boca, that the wine was not a wine for a cardinal but for a pope. Two weeks on the skins is followed by 18 months in Slavonian oak *botte*. Lovely aromatic lift (floral, fresh and dried red fruit), with a super elegant mid palate and a finish on ripe tannins. A refined and layered wine.

*Boca DOC 2021 13% ******

2011 planting of Nebbiolo (80 per cent of the vineyard) and Vespolina, with full south exposure rising to nearly 500 metres elevation. The wine itself is 85 per cent Nebbiolo. 25–30 days on the skins is followed by 30 months in untoasted Slavonian oak *botti*. An intense nose, bursting with red plum and black cherry fruit with almond and violet notes, and powdery tannins. The 2022 follows (*****), with violet, red plum and a touch of dried fruit, and combining juicy ripeness with firm tannins.

Colline Novaresi

This is the regional DOC named after the hills of Novara, the provincial capital. It includes 26 municipalities in Alto Piemonte on the eastern side of the River Sesia. In addition to the standard categories, such as *Rosso* or *Bianco*, it also includes the possibility of Uva Rara (also called Bonarda Novaresi) and of Barbera wines, and a *novello* wine, which can be released as early as 1 November of the year of harvest.

It also provides a home for wines made from 85–100 per cent Nebbiolo in areas where its more specialist denominations restrict the grape's proportion: Boca (maximum 90 per cent), Sizzano and Fara (both maximum of 70 per cent). As in Coste della Sesia, the *Bianco* category must be made with 100 per cent Erbaluce.

COGO

www.cantinecogo.it



Cantina Cogo is based just outside the town of Gattico, close to the southern tip of Lake Maggiore and the eastern boundary of Piemonte with Lombardy. It now farms five hectares of vineyard, with organic certification, including the site of the winery, which is on a hill previously owned by the Marchesi di Gattico, hence the tagline, Vigneti di Gattico.

*Spumante Brut 12% ***

A tank method sparkling wine, made with a blend of fruit from the 2022 and 2023 vintages of Erbaluce. The wine remains on the lees for three months, and the residual sugar is under 7 grams per litre. Lemon and green herb aromatics, fresh and fruity, with some structure, make it an obvious candidate for the aperitivo hour.

*La Marchina Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2022 12.5% ***

Erbaluce, named after the vineyard, which belonged to the grandfather. The juice is held for one day on the skins and then fermented and rested in stainless steel. Complex if reserved green plum, lemon and herbal aromas, textbook entry-level Erbaluce. The new vintage, 2024, really needs time in bottle to express itself fully.

*Il Sorno Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2021 13% ***

100 per cent Nebbiolo, macerated on the skins for a month, aged in stainless steel for a year and then in used barriques for a further year. Lively redcurrant and red plum fruit, vertical in style, in balance with moderate tannins and acidity.

Colline Novaresi DOC

- DOC from 1996.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipalities of Barengo, Boca, Bogogno, Borgomanero, Briona, Cavaglietto, Cavaglio d'Agogna, Cavallirio, Cressa, Cureggio, Fara Novarese, Fontaneto d'Agogna, Gattico, Ghemme, Grignasco, Maggiore, Marano Ticino, Mezzomerico, Oleggio, Prato Sesia, Romagnano Sesia, Sizzano, Suno, Vaprio d'Agogna, Veruno and Agrate Conturbia.
- The nine categories are *Rosso*, *Rosato* and *Novello* (all requiring a minimum of 50 per cent Nebbiolo), *Bianco* (100 per cent Erbaluce), *Nebbiolo* or *Spanna*, *Uva Rara* or *Bonarda Novaresi*, *Barbera*, *Vespolina* and *Croatina*.
- There are no specific minimum ageing requirements

*Il Sorno 15, Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2021 13% ****

A selection of the best Nebbiolo, aged in 15-hectolitre *botte* (hence the name of the bottling). One third remains whole bunch, macerated on the skins for 40 days. Aged in stainless steel for a year, then in oak *botte* for another year. Lovely ripe redcurrant and red plum fruit, fresh, lively acidity, fine tannins, a definite step up in quality.

ENRICO CROLLA



www.cantinecrola.it

This winery was created from scratch in 2006, with the first sales from the 2010 vintage. A larger winery was built in 2014 in the middle of the 10 hectares of vineyards. It is finished in wood and equipped with photovoltaic cells, the entire initiative driven by the enthusiasm and ambition of former IT consultant Enrico Crolla.

*Cherie Colline Novaresi Bianco 2024 12.5% ****

Erbaluce made and aged until bottled in April, with the malolactic fermentation blocked. Expressive ripe white peach fruit, a faint phenolic grip adds structure, and lively, brisk acidity through the finish.

*Hallè Vino Spumante di Qualità Rosé Millesimato Brut 2018 12% ****

A traditional method sparkling wine, made with the earliest picked Nebbiolo, held in the press for two hours for the colour and aged on the lees in the bottle for more than 60 months, with residual sugar of 1-1.5 grams per litre. An attractive pale copper in colour with pretty rose, cherry and toasty aromas followed by a dry savoury finish.

*Giulia Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2019 13.5% ****

Nebbiolo from 15–20-year-old vines. The maceration time was around 15 days, and the wine was aged for 9–12 months in 40-hectolitre *botti* and a further 6 months in concrete. Crisp, edgy red cherry fruit and a marked herbal thyme note, medium body, fine tannins, all lifted by a vibrant acidity. The 2018****, a great vintage, shows a fine floral lift and ripe plummy fruit.

*Zephiro Vino Rosso Vendemmia Tardiva 2024 15% ***

An unusual example of late harvest, off-dry (15 grams per litre) Nebbiolo, aged in stainless steel for a year. Fresh with some dried black cherry and plum fruit, an off-dry finish and a touch of bitterness.

FEDERICA BOVASSI



www.facebook.com/vigneronway/

With a background in business administration and marketing, in 2020 Federica Bovassi swapped that life for a two-hectare vineyard with a B&B too. The property is in Oleggio, less than half an hour from both Lake Maggiore and Lake Orta.

*L'Amore Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2024 ****

Made from Nebbiolo (85 per cent) with Vespolina and Uva Rara: it has a floral lift, bright red fruit, crisp acidity and raspy tannins; a fine young red wine

*La Bestia Ghemme DOCG 2022 *****

Predominantly Nebbiolo, this shows an earthy, developed note on entry, an excellent depth of fruit, in a fine, vertical and sapid style.

FRANCESCO BRIGATTI

www.vinibrigatti.com



Although less than 20 minutes by car east of Ghemme, Francesco Brigatti's winery and vineyards feel remote, deep in the countryside. The 5.5 hectares of vineyards are on the picturesquely named 'hill of the songbirds', Mötziflon, surrounded by woods, orchards and grain fields. The downside is the increasing challenge of damage by deer and other animals. When the DOCs were being drawn up in the last century, his father was the only grower and so no village DOC was created. But that does not stop him from making high-quality wine.



Young pergola-trained vine at Brigatti

*Mottobello Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2022 14% ****

Erbaluce is grown on these red, sandy soils in a 1.5-hectare plot. As it matures early, it is often eaten by the roe deer. The 2022 still felt young when tasted in 2024 (the 2023 and 2024 were already sold out due to the small production, not helped by the deer). It spends one night on the skins and then is fermented in stainless steel with

the temperature allowed to rise to 18°C; there is no malolactic fermentation. Austere, if with ripe green fruit, full-bodied, less floral than in cooler years, but still with refreshing acidity.

*MötZiflon Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2022 13% *****

'Hill of the songbirds' in local dialect is the name of the one blended wine made here: Nebbiolo (85 per cent), Vespolina (10 per cent) and Uva Rara (5 per cent), the blend that Francesco's grandfather made. It spends three weeks on the skins and 20 months in large *botte*. The soils here have more clay, resulting in wine that has darker, brambly fruit, mushroom and earthy, but with the Nebbiolo floral lift, spicy, firm tannins.

*Mötfrei Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2022 14% ****

'Hill of the Porcini mushrooms' (what's not to like?), this 100 per cent Nebbiolo is grown on red, sandy soils, just 300 metres from the clay. It spends three weeks of maceration on the skins, fermented in concrete, and aged for 18 months in old *tonneaux*. Pale ruby, lovely floral lift, stony red cherry and cranberry fruit, lively acidity despite the year, quite intense tannins.

*Oltre Il Bosco Ghemme DOCG 2021 13.5% *****

From a vineyard bought in 2009 with clay soils, in which Francesco does the pruning, but a friend helps with the spraying, reducing the need to travel to Ghemme. Made in a very traditional way with 90 days on skins with the cap submerged (no rack and return) and aged for two years in Slavonian oak *botti*. Fine, elegant, integrated aromas of rose, red fruit and savoury notes, medium body with supple, flowing mid-palate, and quite firm tannins. It can be drunk now, but will improve with more time in bottle.

IL ROCCOLO DI MEZZOMERICO

★★★

Close to the eastern boundary of Piemonte, the 'roccolo' close to the town of Mezzomerico was a building used to catch birds with nets; today it is used, more peacefully, to dry grapes for dried grape wines, a speciality of the company. Eight hectares of vineyard are planted with Nebbiolo, Uva Rara, Vespolina, Erbaluce and Chardonnay, with the first vintage in 1990.

*Francesca Colline Novaresi DOC Bianco 2024 12.5% ***

Named after the second daughter of the current generation, this Erbaluce is made in the classic way in stainless steel, with the malolactic fermentation blocked. Pale lemon in colour, fresh lemon and green herb aromas on the nose and, as a very young wine, it has less impact on the palate, but that should grow. This wine is now sold out but the 2025 follows.

*La Cascinetta Collina Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2023 12.5% ***

Named after the country building where the winery is based, this is 100 per cent Nebbiolo, macerated on the skins for five days and aged in stainless steel. Bright raspberry and rhubarb flavours, uncomplicated, refreshing and direct.

*Valentina Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2019 15% ****

Oak-aged Nebbiolo, named after the first daughter, which is macerated on the skins for three weeks and then spends three years in French oak barriques, not first use. High-quality fruit with evident vanilla spice notes, powerful and in an international style

*Valentina Vendemmia Tardiva Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2019 15.5% ***

A selection of the best quality grapes that are dried until the first week of November before being vinified to dry and then aged in oak barriques for four years. Powerful and warming, with dense brambly fruit and finishes with rather rustic tannins.

RICCARDO RINALDI

★★★

www.instagram.com/costadiseradeitabacchei

A small producer, specialising in Erbaluce in both the classic still dry style and in a short-lees aged low-pressure sparkling wine. The vineyard of 1.5 hectares of Erbaluce is managed without a tractor or the use of herbicides. Since 2021, the winery has been run by the founder's son, Riccardo.

*The Rocker frizzante 2024 13% ***

Using the same Erbaluce base wine as the Costa di Sera di Tabbacchei below, it undergoes second fermentation in the bottle without disgorgement (known in Italy as *rifermentato in bottiglia*), spending six months on the lees before release with a modest two bars of pressure. Turbid for a fashionable look and taste: gentle bubbles, lightly grippy texture with the yeastiness accentuating the herbal, earthy side of the variety. Bravo for a different style of Erbaluce!

*Costa di Sera di Tabbacchei 2024 12.5% ****

Erbaluce grows on clay soils in a west-facing position at an elevation of 270 m. Hence the name 'the evening slope', on which the last rays of the setting sun shine.. Fermentation is temperature-controlled in stainless steel. White peach with a hint of pineapple fruit and herbal notes, and a textured mid-palate and finale.

TIZIANO MAZZONI

www.vinimazzoni.it



The Mazzoni family had previously owned vineyards in Ghemme but had relinquished them in an earlier generation, lured by regular employment in a factory (tap manufacture is big business in these parts), a common story. The 'new' winery was founded in 1999 by Tiziano, who left a job as a mechanic to restart the family wine business. He acquired some historic vineyards in Ghemme itself, adding them to the family vineyard in Cavaglio d'Agogna, for a total of 4.5 hectares.

*Iris Colline Vino Bianco 2023 12.5% *****

This wine is Erbaluce, from vines planted in the year 2000. The juice spends one night in contact with the skins before fermenting with temperature control and then ageing in stainless steel on the lees with bâtonnage for six months. A fine herbal expression of Erbaluce, with light grip and notes of fresh and dried lemon; refreshing, with a stony, convincing finish.

*Del Montereccio Colline Novaresi Nebbiolo 2023 13% ****

Del Montereccio is the name of the Ghemme vineyard, which contributes part of this wine, with grapes also from Cavaglio d'Agogna. This Nebbiolo, planted in 2000, is kept on the skins for a week, followed by 18 months of ageing divided between stainless steel, oak and concrete. Sapid, with cranberry and red plum fruit, showing a touch of rawness from acidity and finish with mild tannins. Likely to benefit from a further year in bottle.

*Dei Mazzoni Ghemme DOCG 2021 *****

The first of two single-vineyard wines from Ghemme, this was also planted in 2000. 100 per cent Nebbiolo, planted on clay soils. The fruit is macerated on the skins for two weeks, and the wine is aged for two years in large oak *botti*. Elegant, with floral, red cherry and some darker fruit, with some tertiary notes already, a textured mid-palate and a firm finish.

*Ai livelli Ghemme DOCG 2019 13.5% *****

This single vineyard was planted in 1975, with additional planting to increase the density for higher quality. It is made more traditionally, with 40 days on the skins with the cap submerged and then aged in large oak *botti* for three years. A compact nose with rose, raspberry and meaty notes, great depth on the palate, powerful, with a firm final tannic structure, one for the cellar.

VIGNAIOLI BONIPERTI

www.bonipertivignaioli.com



Gilberto Boniperti set up this winery in 2008, having qualified in Milan, and simultaneously replanted his grandfather's vineyard. The winery now owns 4.5 hectares. Only black grapes are grown and, unusually, this includes a small amount of Barbera. The motto here is Gilberto's grandfather's advice: 'When you don't know what to do, just go to the vineyard—there's always work to do there!'

*Carlin Colline Novaresi DOC Nebbiolo 2024 13% *****

This Nebbiolo is planted on the richer soils of the farm. The wine, dedicated to Gilberto's father, is macerated on the skins for 15 days and aged in stainless steel for 10 months. Bright redcurrant and red cherry, lifted by a hint of violet, the wine flows seamlessly from

nose to palate. Fresh and highly drinkable, with fine, lightly structured tannins and an elegant, subtly complex profile.

Bartön Fara DOC 2022 13.5% ****

This bottling is named in honour of Gilberto's grandfather, whose vineyard he restored. In this case, 70 per cent of the fruit is Nebbiolo, plus Vespolina, which stays on the skins for 20 days and then is aged in a large *botte* for 18 months. Impressive depth of fruit, weaving together red plum and cranberry with a smoky, peppery nuance. Medium-plus in body, with firm tannins lending an austere edge.

Valli Ossolane

This DOC, the most northerly in Piemonte and touching the Swiss border, is 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Gattinara in the province of Verbano-Cusio-Ossola. The DOC's geographical extent is large, roughly 35 by 20 kilometres (20 by 12 miles). It includes and is centred on the central plain of the Toce river, known as Val d'Ossola, plus seven side valleys. As in other areas, production was much greater in the past, but today it is small (20–25,000 bottles per year in total). The upsides are historic vineyards, many still boasting topia-supported pergola systems (as in Carema), the Prünent Nebbiolo biotypes and a biodiversity of which the Langhe can now only dream

The Prünent biotype is lighter in colour and body than the Langhe biotypes, with vivid acidity, fine but present tannins, and a distinctive profile of iron-tinged, herbal red fruit. It also ripens slightly earlier, making it well-suited to a cool climate.

The current regulations allow for the growing of Chardonnay and Merlot for DOC wines, in addition to Nebbiolo and Croatina, making it very different from other parts of Alto Piemonte.

The soils of the Valli Ossolane DOC are highly varied due to the complex topography and glacial history of the upper Ossola valleys. On the steep, terraced vineyards common in the DOC area, soils tend to be acidic, shallow, stony and well-drained with limited active rooting depth, while lower valley sites can have deeper limy and clay-influenced profiles. Furthermore, in an area of small production, the range of elevation for vineyard sites is remarkable, typically 250 to 600m, but occasionally 150 to 900m, making generalisation dangerous.

CANTINE GARRONE



Cantine Garrone is the pioneer of the modern wine business in Valli Ossolane and the largest producer. It began in 1921 as a merchant business selling wine from Monferrato in this outpost of Piemonte. In 1994, it started producing and bottling wine with Prünent (the local biotype of Nebbiolo), mainly sourced from local growers. The winery can be confident that both old vineyards and young ones, the latter carefully selected for Prünent, are indeed the local biotype. The vineyards planted towards the end of the last century include some Langhe biotypes. Today, Garrone owns 3 hectares and sources fruit from Associazione Produttori Agricoli Ossolani, a group of 45 growers tending 10 hectares, a true testament to the fragmentation of vineyard holdings in the area.

Valli Ossolane DOC

- DOC from 2009.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipalities of Beura-Cardezza, Bognanco, Crevoladossola, Crodo, Domodossola, Masera, Montecrestese, Montescheno, Pallanzeno, Piedimulera, Pieve Vergonte, Premosello-Chiovenda, Ornavasso, Trontano, Viganella, Villadossola and Vogogna.
- The four categories are *Rosso* (minimum 60 per cent Nebbiolo, Croatina and/or Merlot), *Nebbiolo*, *Nebbiolo Superiore* and *Bianco* (minimum 60 per cent Chardonnay).
- Nebbiolo Superiore must be aged for 13 months before release, including 6 months in wood.

Tarlàp Vino Rosso 2022 13% ***

A 'drop' in the local dialect, this is the winery's only red wine made from an international variety, Merlot, planted after the Second World War. It spends 10 days on the skins and one year in a 20-hectolitre large *botte*. Generous red plum fruit and a hint of smokiness and ripe mild tannins make it easy-drinking but with real depth of fruit.

Munaloss Vino Rosso 2023 12.5% ***

A 70/30 blend of Nebbiolo and Croatina is the typical proportion to be found in many local vineyards and as a result this winery's largest production. The grapes are picked and vinified together, spend a week on the skins (to limit extraction) and aged for a year in stainless steel. Earthy, moderately intense blackberry and red plum notes, supported by soft tannins. Uncomplicated, but highly approachable.

Prüent Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo Superiore 2022 13.5% ***

The Prüent biotype, typically grown on pergola in the Val d'Ossola, is known for its large bunches, its ability to ripen in cooler temperatures and moderate tannins. This wine is the product of careful selection from multiple growers and is only made with the local biotype. It spends 10 days on the skins and one year in a 20-hectolitre oak *botte*. Precise red-berry fruit layered with subtle notes of undergrowth and rhubarb, all framed by moderate chalky tannins.

Prüent Diecibrente Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo Superiore 2022 13.5% ****

Fruit from a single vineyard planted in 1933 and owned by two growers. The typical arrangement is that Garrone work the vineyard and, in return, receives the fruit. The winemaking is as for the first Prüent, but the time in *botte* is extended to 15 months. Cranberry to red cherry fruit with a fuller body than the straight Prüent, longer and more intense, with a slight pepper note. The wine retains the cool-climate Nebbiolo character in a hot year.

Prüent Vigna Fornace Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo Superiore 2023 13.5% ****

Owned by the family since 2011, this is a 0.35-hectare plot, south-east facing and replanted in 2016. The ageing is 18 months in smaller *botti*. Red cherry fruit with meaty and orange-peel nuances. Lean and graceful in structure, finishing on firm, still-grippy youthful tannins.

EDOARDO PATRONE



www.edoardopatrone.com

After getting experience in Australia, Spain and Barolo, Edoardo Patrone returned to his home region and set up this winery in 2016. Here he grows grapes on roughly five hectares of land, but crucially, these are the sum of 28 micro-plots, many of which he has recovered from an abandoned state. The altitude ranges between 450 and 650 metres and the vine age, in the main, is between 30 and 100 years.

PSB Poderi San Brizio Vino Rosso 2021 13% ***

This is a field blend, with perhaps 15 per cent each of Nebbiolo and Merlot, but incorporating up to 13 varieties in total, including the classic Northern Piemontese Vespolina and Uva Rara. Intended for early drinking, maceration is limited to 12 days, with the wine racked off after five days to complete fermentation off the skins. It is then aged for 6–9 months in stainless steel. Purple-edged ruby, even more than four years after the vintage, it remains very fresh on the nose, showing bright red cherry, cranberry and red plum fruit with a subtle

stony note. That stony character is more pronounced on the palate, supported by steely, medium-bodied tannins.

Prünent Stella Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo 2022 13% ***

Named in honour of his wife and partner in the business, the wine is made from 100 per cent Prünent, with a small proportion of whole bunches used depending on the vintage, and some juice bled off to concentrate the final wine. Maceration on the skins lasts around 15 days, and the wine is aged for 12 months in a mixture of oak (70%) and acacia barrels (30%). Pale ruby with the faintest garnet tint, the wine is initially austere on the nose, showing earthy, small-berried red fruit, before Nebbiolo's floral character emerges with air. Lean-bodied and finely drawn, it finishes on an earthy note with moderate, still-firm tannins.

Vigna Vagna Valli Ossolane DOC 2020 13% ****

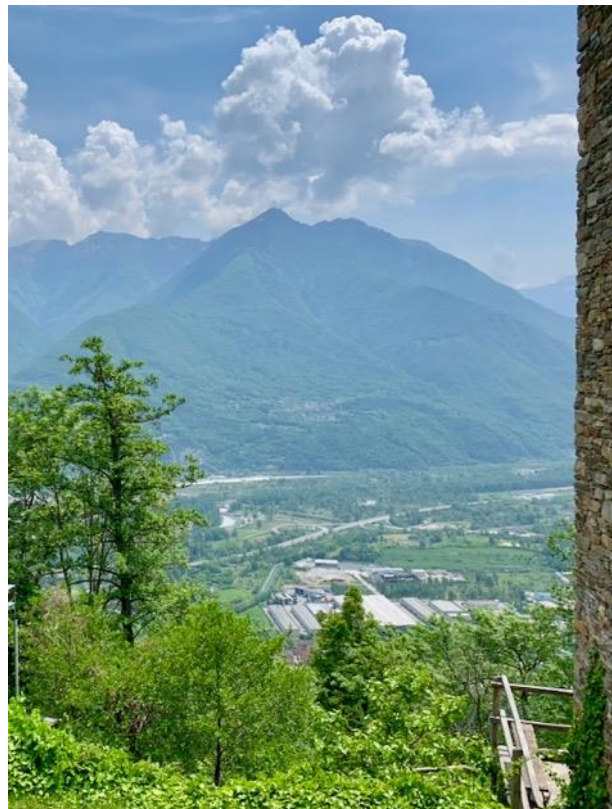
This wine, made with the fruit of 15–40-year-old vines, makes full use of the flexibility of the DOC, being 50 per cent Nebbiolo and 50 per cent Merlot. Maceration on the skins is in the 15–20-day range, and the wine is aged for just over a year in 15-hectolitre Slavonian oak botti. Despite the medium body and, by today's standards, moderate alcohol, this wine packs a punch. The flavour profile with the earthy notes and red cherry dominating is similar to the Prünent Stella but with a black cherry to plum note from the Merlot, plus impressive intensity.

LA CANTINA DI TAPPIA



www.facebook.com/lacantinaditappia

The Cantina di Tappia and agriturismo is perched high up on the western ridge above the Toce River and the town of Domodossola, affording guests and wine lovers fantastic views. Corrado Zaretti is a mechanic during the week and a tender of vines and a winemaker in the rest of his time. In 2005, his father decided to rescue abandoned vineyard terraces and start the business. The original one-and-a-half hectares of vineyard are at 350–410 m elevation with shallow, rocky soils. In 2023, it took over the vineyards of the former winery, Eca, and now has five hectares and a new winery facility. As a result, there will be a significant step change in production and ambition, not least hiring external consultant Giacomo Marchiori. This is awinery to watch.



View from La Cantina di Tappia

Noegi Spumante Brut Rosato NV 12.5% **

The tradition of growing international varieties is well established in the Valle d'Ossola, and this tank method sparkling wine is made with Merlot. The name of the wine is based on the names of the owner's children. Pale pink in colour, it has simple red fruit, a dry finish and a lightly grippy texture.

*But, Vino Bianco, 2024 12.5% ***

'But' is the dialect word for the branch of a vine. This is fermented in stainless steel, with one third of the wine going through malolactic fermentation. Made to be an easy drinker for the agriturismo guests, this Chardonnay has ripe yellow apple and a touch of stoniness.

*Romano Vino rosato 2024 12.5% ***

This new rosé from 2023 is made by bleeding off 20 per cent of the Prünent wine after three hours on the skins, producing both a rosé wine and concentrating the remaining red Nebbiolo wine. Lifted red cherry and stone fruit on the nose and palate, with a hint of tannin and a juicy, rounded finish. There is a small amount of residual sugar (5.5 grams per litre) as the fermentation did not finish.

*Prünent Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo Superiore 2023 13.5% ****

Nebbiolo with its local name, macerated on the skins for 10 days and then aged for 16 months in tonneaux. The 2021*** had beautiful fruit expression; 2023 was a more challenging year, more rounded and full-bodied with red plum and rhubarb flavours.

CÀ DA L'ERA

www.cadalera.it



Cà da l'Era is another example of locals in mid-life returning to the abandoned vineyards of earlier generations, driven by the conviction that Prünent—the local expression of Nebbiolo—can produce truly distinctive wine. The estate's two hectares are worked entirely by hand, as the tiny, fragmented plots are difficult to reach and impossible to mechanise. In the valley, some vines are on pergola (supported by pillars of local stone, see below), others on wires. The winery takes its name from the old house where rye was once stored. Even today, wine production coexists with the making of local foods and preserves, maintaining domestic and agricultural traditions.

*Cadalèra Valli Ossolane DOC Rosso 2024 12.5% ****

A blend of Merlot and Barbera from vines that are more than 50 years old. The style is for early drinking: 10 days on the skins, short ageing in stainless steel and bottled under screwcap. The wine opens with a burst of ripe black fruit, followed by a lean mid-palate, lively, refreshing acidity and medium-plus length. An easy-drinking summer quaffer.

*P di Pietro Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo 2024 13% ****

Nebbiolo from a one-hectare terraced site, subject to 10 days on the skins, followed by 10 months' ageing in stainless-steel tanks. Not entirely limpid, it opens with brilliant cranberry and red-cherry fruit, incisive and precise. Acidity takes the lead over tannin, carrying the wine to a crisp, finely-etched finish.



A culogna of local gneiss supporting the vine pergola.

*Prünent Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo Superiore 2022 13.5% ****

Prünent biotype of Nebbiolo is grown on dry-stone terraced vineyards at 150 m elevation, with the stone walls storing and reflecting the heat. The wine spends 15 days on the skins, then aged in used tonneaux for 13 months. The small production varies from year to year depending on the quality of the grapes (1,400 bottles in 2022, 700 in the following vintage). A broader palate with some dark plum fruit; in late 2025, the wine still tasted super young and needed time in bottle.

*Dulz Vino da uve stramature 2023 15.5% ***

A very unusual wine made with two hybrid varieties: Solaris, known for its ability to produce high sugar levels, and the unregistered Muscaris (a fungal-resistant variety, Moscato x Solaris). Some of the vineyard plots are around 900 m above sea level. The grapes are partly shrivelled on the vine for two weeks by cutting the cane that carries the fruit, and then brought indoors for two months. The wine is fermented at below 12°C and is macerated on the skins for a month, and the malolactic fermentation is inhibited naturally. It is aged in stainless steel for a year. Honey, lemon zest and nutty on the palate, moderately sweet (70 grams per litre), definitely a wine that calls for mature or blue cheese!

DEA VALDOSSOLA

www.deavaldossola.it



The Stratta family, for a change, are not a multi-generation farming family; rather, as recently as 2021 they left other professional roles to farm and make wine. In addition to 2.5 hectares of vines, they also keep bees and make honey, and grow saffron on their sandy and iron-rich soils. The company is named in honour of Mother Nature. They value their old vineyards: while trellis-trained vines (30 per cent of their vineyard) can give you more control, those on pergola (70 per cent) can survive and produce for more than a century.

*Archè 2023 Vino Rosso 2023 12.5% ****

A blend of Nebbiolo (85 per cent) and Croatina, which contributes freshness, grown in two vineyards between 360 and 420 m above sea level with 15–20-year-old vines. It spends eight days on the skins with selected neutral yeast and is aged for ten months on the lees in stainless steel. Named after the ancient Greek for ‘beginning, origin, first principle,’ the wine has a fresh, enticing nose of red berries and almond skin, which leads to a linear palate driven by racy acidity and framed by fine, crisp tannins.

*Proodos Valli Ossolane DOC Nebbiolo Superiore 2023 14% ****

A selection of the best grapes from the same vineyards as Archè. 16 days of maceration follow, with the wine ageing in 20-hectolitre *botti* for a further year. Its name is the ancient Greek word for 'progress, advancement'. With more depth and black plum fruit, it retains the brilliant acidity. The 2023 has light vanilla new oak notes, as this was the first use of a new *botte*.

Caluso and Canavese

Caluso and Canavese are situated in northwest Piemonte, below the Alps, north of the city of Turin. Canavese is the regional DOC, host to many varieties and styles, including Canavese DOC Nebbiolo. Within it, in terms of location, is the specialist Erbaluce denomination, Caluso or Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG. For Carema DOC, also within Canavese, see below.

Erbaluce di Caluso or Caluso DOCG

DOC from 1967; DOCG from 2010.

The grapes must be grown in the municipalities of Agliè, Azeglio, Bairo, Barone, Bollengo, Borgomasino, Burolo, Caluso, Candia Canavese, Caravino, Cossano Canavese, Cuceglio, Ivrea, Maglione, Mazzè, Mercenasco, Moncrivello, Montalenghe, Orio Canavese, Palazzo Canavese, Parella, Perosa Canavese, Piverone, Romano Canavese, Roppolo, San Giorgio Canavese, San Martino Canavese, Scarmagno, Settimo Rottaro, Strambino, Vestignè, Vialfrè, Villareggia, Vische, Viverone and Zimone.

Wines must be made with Erbaluce.

The four categories are standard still white wine, *spumante*, *passito* and *passito riserva*.

The *spumante* wine: traditional method with a minimum of 15 months on the lees and a maximum of 12 grams per litre of residual sugar.

The *passito* wine must be aged for three years and the *passito riserva* for four years.

Canavese DOC

DOC from 1996.

The grapes must be grown in the municipalities of Agliè, Albiano d'Ivrea; Alice Castello, Alice Superiore, Andrate, Azeglio, Bairo, Baldissero Canavese, Balangero, Banchette, Barbania, Barone, Bollengo, Borgiallo, Borgofranco d'Ivrea, Borgomasino, Burolo, Busano, Cafasse, Caluso, Candia Canavese, Caravino, Carema, Cascinette d'Ivrea, Castellamonte, Castelnuovo Nigra, Cavaglià, Chiaverano, Chiesanuova, Ciconio, Cintano, Collettero Castelnuovo, Collettero Giacosa, Corio, Coassolo, Cossano Canavese, Cuceglio, Cuornè, Dorzano, Favria, Feletto, Fiorano Canavese, Forno Canavese, Front, Germagnano, Ivrea, Lanzo Torinese, Lessolo, Levone, Lorzè, Lugnacco, Lusigliè, Maglione, Mazzè, Mercenasco, Moncrivello, Montalenghe, Montaldo Dora, Nomaglio, Oglanico, Orio Canavese, Ozegna, Palazzo Canavese, Parella, Pavone Canavese, Pecco, Perosa Canavese, Pertusio, Piverone, Pont Canavese, Prascorsano, Pratiglione, Quagliuzzo, Quassolo, Quincinetto, Rivara, Rivarolo Canavese, Romano Canavese, Roppolo, Salassa, Salerano, Samone, San Carlo Canavese, San Colombano Belmonte, San Giorgio Canavese, San Giusto Canavese, San Martino Canavese, San Ponso, Salussola, Scarmagno, Settimo Rottaro, Settimo Vittone, Strambinello, Strambino, Tavagnasco, Torre Canavese, Valperga, Vauda Canavese, Vestignè, Vialfrè, Vidracco, Villareggia, Vische, Vistrorio, Viverone, Zimone

The eight categories are Rosso, Rosso Novello, Rosato and Rosato Spumante (minimum of 60 per cent of Nebbiolo, Barbera, Uva Rara, Bonarda, Freisa and/or Neretto), Barbera and Nebbiolo. Bianco and Bianco Spumante must be made with Erbaluce.

ERBALUCE DI CALUSO

The town of Caluso, 35 kilometres north of Turin, lends its name to the DOCG dedicated to its star white grape, Erbaluce. Bottles can be labelled either Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG or simply Caluso DOCG. This horseshoe-shaped denomination follows the arc of a huge, remarkable moraine left by a retreating glacier, forming a natural amphitheatre of some 530 square kilometres. Within this, vineyards are typically planted on slopes between 200 and 500 metres above sea level. Soils are predominantly sandy loam with pebbles and stones—highly acidic, yet with sufficient silt and clay content to retain moisture.

Erbaluce

Erbaluce is typically trained on pergola, a system well suited to its natural vigour and the cool, Alpine-influenced climate. The broad canopy maximises light interception while protecting bunches, allowing the grape to ripen fully while retaining its hallmark acidity.



The Ivrea moraine

Erbaluce continues to be made in three completely different styles (still, *spumante* and *passito*), though the latter is less commonly seen today. The variety has gentle floral, lemon and green apple flavours and high acidity, which makes it appropriate for all three styles. Typically, malolactic fermentation is blocked to preserve acidity and to retain its delicate aromas. Erbaluce's thick skins allow it to be dried for the historic *passito* style, one of Italy's great sweet wines. To be labelled as DOCG, the *spumante* style has to be made by the traditional method.

CANTINA DELLA SERRA



'Serra' in old Italian meant a closed-in place, the land enclosed by the moraine left by the glacier, now called the Ivrea moraine, after the city of Ivrea. This co-operative, founded in 1953, has 140 members and gets the grapes from 150 hectares of land. About 30 per cent of the grapes are Erbaluce, which is made in all three classic styles. It makes no fewer than 26 different wines to meet a range of local needs. Here we concentrate mostly on Erbaluce and Nebbiolo. The head winemaker here for a number of years has been Vittorio Garda, who also owns Sorpasso in Carema (see below).

*Serra Classic Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Brut 2021 12% ****

Made with pergola-grown grapes from two vineyards near Lake Viverone, with enough leaf cover to shield the grapes from the sun. Whole-bunch pressed and three years on the lees in the bottle. This wine has three grams per litre residual sugar (the winery also makes a zero dosage and a 'Dry' version). Light floral notes, dried citrus with toasty, mushroom aromas for a complex wine with rounded acidity. The cooler 2021 was excellent for sparkling wines.

'60' Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 13% ***

A production from a selection of the best grapes to celebrate the 60 years of the co-operative, now 13 years ago, a step above in quality from the standard still version. Aged for a total of 18 months before release, one year of which is on the fine lees. Restrained, pear skin and lemon aromatics, rounded out by the time on lees, with a refreshing but not overly sharp finish.

Macerato Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 13% ***

A small production of just 2,000 bottles of a skin-contact wine aged in three different types of vessels. You can sense the winemaker having an enjoyable experiment here. Erbaluce used to be made with skin contact until 25 years ago, now revived again. The grapes are destemmed and then fermented on the skins for two weeks in concrete tanks. The ageing is one year in a mix of concrete, used oak and ceramic vessels. Pale lemon in colour, lightly nutty, orange peel, with creamy and almond notes adding to the complexity.

Tupiél Canavese Nebbiolo DOC 2022 14% ***

Nebbiolo grown on wires from growers across the region, with the wine being macerated on the skins for a month and then aged for two years in large concrete vessels. Vibrant violet aromatics lead into ripe plum fruit on the palate, with a subtle almond note adding nuance. The texture is supple yet gently structured, with lightly chewy tannins.

Canavese DOC Rosso 2023 12.5% **

An interesting wine made with the local variety, Neretto. Standard red wine making and aged for six months in stainless steel. The co-operative is keen not to lose this variety. Spicy red cherry fruit, a touch of pepper, medium body, a simple, straightforward wine.

Caluso DOCG Passito Riserva 2015 14.5% *****

Erbaluce with perhaps five per cent botrytis-affected grapes, which are dried indoors for four months. After pressing, fermentation lasts for two months due to the high sugar levels in the must. The wine is aged in an old 15-hectolitre barrel for four to five years, and topped up with dry Erbaluce. The residual sugar is 120 grams per litre. A star wine with great complexity: butterscotch, a hint of marmalade, honey, with light leather and nut tertiary overlay. The luscious sweetness is well balanced by Erbaluce's high acidity.

CIECK

www.cieck.it



Remo Falconieri was an engineer and designer who worked in the Olivetti typewriter factory, but also had a love for sparkling wine. He started with just a family vineyard and attended a sparkling wine course in Epernay, after which he bottled the first sparkling wine in 1985. This grew into the business today with 13 hectares of vineyard and an ample range of Canavese wines, mostly Erbaluce but also red wines, including Nebbiolo. In quite a big range, Cieck also make outstanding sweet *passito* versions of Erbaluce. He continues to innovate, now experimenting with modified pergola training systems.

Calliope Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Spumante Brut 2020 13% *****

Whole bunch pressed, the grapes for this premium bottling are selected from several vineyards, and one third of the juice is fermented in barriques, with six months on the lees during this phase of production. The wine then spends four years on the lees in the bottle. Despite the Brut labelling, this contains just 4.5 grams per litre of residual sugar after

dosage. Gorgeous toast, dried citrus, almond skin and earthy notes, with some mushroom tertiary aromas beginning to evolve. An outstandingly complex and layered wine. The 'San Giorgio' version is made in stainless steel only and aged for just over two years on the lees.

Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2024 12.5%

This is the classic dry, still white version of Erbaluce from grapes picked across the estate and pergola-trained vines up to 50 years of age. Standard modern white winemaking, with the wine aged in stainless steel for four months before bottling. Pale lemon in colour, grassy, green apple and white peach fruit, an immediate expression with ripe acidity. This wine will be certified organic from 2025. The winery also makes an excellent, ageable single vineyard version, Vigna Misobolo. ****



Erbaluce being dried to make *passito* wine

Sust Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2023
14% ***

'Sust' in Piedmontese means both 'desire' and 'to care for, to have a heart', a wine for early drinking. Lampia and Picotener biotypes of Nebbiolo from 20-year-old vines. Short maceration on the skins, seven days, and aged for 18 months in large oak *botti*. Clean and elegant nose with violet, sour cherry, black plum and thyme aromas. A very delicious lighter style of Nebbiolo.

Alladium Erbaluce di Caluso Passito 2018 14% *****

The most open bunches of Erbaluce, bronzed by the sun, are picked and dried indoors (see the picture). There was less botrytis this year, around 10 per cent, due to the dry conditions. Fermentation was in stainless steel, after which the wine is aged in old barriques for four years. Golden-bronze in colour, lusciously sweet (130 grams per litre), with aromas of walnut, dried and cooked orange and a hint of smoke. Full-bodied, sweet and satisfying on the finish, lifted by refreshing acidity.

COOPERATIVA PRODUTTORI ERBALUCE DI CALUSO ★★★
www.produttoriebaluce.it

The Produttori can be found in the very centre of the town of Caluso, where they have been since 1975. The 130 members tend 45 hectares of vineyard, including some very small parcels. Ninety per cent of the vineyards are pergola-trained.

Goccia d'oro Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Brut 2021 12.5% **

Early-picked Erbaluce for a racy traditional method sparkling wine that spends two years on the lees and is finished with six grams per litre of residual sugar. Here, the pleasantly bitter almond side of Erbaluce is to the fore, with some pastry autolytic aromas.

*Fiordighiaccio Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2024 12.5% ***

One of the still dry versions of Erbaluce made by the winery, the top tier of the wines that are not given extended ageing. This is held at 4–5° C for 24 hours before cool-temperature fermentation at 12–14° C. Bold fruit on a spectrum from grassy and green to a hint of pineapple and papaya, with a softening touch of residual sugar on the finale.

*Baiarda Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2020 14.5% ****

Baiarda is a historic place name in the hills around Caluso. This is the oak-aged expression of Erbaluce, made from very ripe fruit, with malolactic fermentation and up to 20 months in used barriques. Deeper golden in hue, it shows tobacco and just-ripe white peach, with a subtle creaminess that rounds the palate and adds gentle warmth and texture.

*Caliginem Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2019 13.5% ****

Nebbiolo, half grown on wires and half on pergola on soils with more clay content. The wine is named after fog or mist in Latin, picking up the classic weather condition associated with Piemonte. The wine stays for three weeks on the skins and receives extended ageing for three years in large *botte*. A developed and old-fashioned oxidative style with plum and liquorice flavours and rustic but not over-aggressive tannins.

DONNALIA



www.donnaliasalussola.it

DonnaLia is a winery on the eastern side of the Ivrea moraine, close to the town of Caluso but outside the Caluso DOCG area. The Villa Ca' Bianca has documentation going back to 1710, though earlier it had belonged to a religious house. The current generation has maintained some Barbera and Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards that date back to the 1950s and planted Nebbiolo, Freisa and Erbaluce in 2009–2010. The total vineyard area is 6.5 hectares. The winemaking cellar is based in the old ice store, dating back to the 1700s. Erbaluce is also made and bottled as Canavese DOC Bianco.

*Madama Metodo Classico Vino Spumante di Qualità Rosé Extra Brut 2019 12.5% *****

The challenge with the Freisa variety is that the wines can be tannic and bitter. Producing sparkling wine from it neatly sidesteps these issues. This wine is made with early-picked Freisa, fermented and aged in stainless steel before spending 70 months on the lees in the bottle. (The winery also makes a 36-month version.) Pale copper in colour, 3-4 grams per litre residual sugar, very refined with creamy strawberry fruit, a hint of tannin, creamy, long and savoury, a very versatile and drinkable wine.

*San Siond Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2020 13.5% ****

San Siond is a place name for this traditionally styled Nebbiolo, which is aged initially in stainless steel for a year and then in tonneaux for a further year. The production is limited to 4,000 bottles a year by the strict selection of the grapes. A nutty, gently oxidative style, layered with developed red fruit — sour cherry and red plum — ripe on the palate over chalky tannins, with a hint of sage and a long finish.

FAVARO BENITO

www.cantinafavaro.it



This small but special winery goes under several names, that of its founder, father of the current owner but also Favaro Le Chiusure, named after its location in the Caluso DOCG. Camilo Favaro somehow manages to be an author on the wines of Burgundy, a designer of labels and logos, while crafting sophisticated wines in Piverone. 4.5 hectares of vineyards are farmed. The vineyard was certified organic (if not printed on the label), but that has had to be modified to be economically sustainable in the current extreme climate with its new pests, such as the Japanese beetle, *Popillia japonica*. More happily, Favaro has experimented with various vessels for wine, including a fine group of four ceramic eggs, each named after one of his other passions, The Beatles. Also innovative is his fermenting whole bunches of Nebbiolo when the fruit is perfect.

*Le Chiusure, Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 13% *****

Favaro continues to treasure his Erbaluce on pergola, stating that this is a better option in a period of global warming. (The vines range in age, having been planted in 1992, 2001 and 2009.) The 2023 season was, by contrast, a classic cool vintage. The juice is cooled and held with the destemmed fruit for 24 hours before being inoculated with selected yeast for fermentation up to 18°C. There is no bâtonnage and the wine is raked off as little as possible: there is no hurry, is the watchword. The wine is aged in stainless steel on the lees until June. Such a subtle wine with stony and yeasty notes and a hint of lemon skin over greengage fruit. Direct, complex, an elevated example of Erbaluce.

*Tredicimesi, Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 13% *****

This version is made by dividing the wine between concrete (70 per cent) and used barrique, in which the wine remains until the next harvest. The barrique portion does go through malolactic fermentation, introducing a new element. The final wine is more rounded and complex with a first liquorice note to add to the subtle blend.

*Ros Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2023 14% *****

This Nebbiolo is mainly destemmed but about 20 per cent of whole bunches is also used. Three weeks of maceration on the skins and stems with punch downs only, and then aged for 14 months in old barriques and tonneaux. Pretty red fruit on the nose with some darker plum notes emerging, clearly a Nebbiolo of elegance rather than power, finishing with fine tannins.



View of Monviso from Favaro

*Pies Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2023 14% ****(*)*

Here, the whole bunch theme is pushed to the limit with 100 per cent whole bunch, crushed by foot (by Camilo's son, to whom this wine is dedicated). 'I don't praise my wines,' says Camillo, 'but I love this!' Opens with some earthy, vegetal notes over red cherry and cranberry fruit, less immediately fruity than the Ros bottling, but has the depth and structure to age well.

GIACOMETTO BRUNO



www.giacometto.com

Bruno Giacometti comes from a farming family that once kept animals and produced the sweet, *passito* version of Erbaluce and table wine. More recently, he has expanded the vineyard from one to ten hectares. Six wines are made, but Erbaluce is the most important. Bruno recounts how, when he was 16, he persuaded his father to make Erbaluce as a modern white wine, rather than fermenting it on the skins as was done in the past. This theme continues today, with winemaking that is technically advanced and precisely controlled.

*Αὐτόχθον Erbaluce di Caluso 2024, 13.5% *****

This is the premium version of Erbaluce made from old vine (30–50 years old) fruit in the Macelio and Madonna vineyards. The Greek name 'Autocton' refers to the use of indigenous yeast. First, the grapes are subject to cryo-maceration at 3°C for four days, then whole bunches are pressed with the use of argon gas to avoid oxidation. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel at temperatures up to 17°C, malolactic is blocked, and the wine is aged on the lees for four months. Pale lemon, peachy and grassy with almond overtones, with a lovely freshness in the mouth, this manages to combine intensity and subtlety.

*Αὐτόχθον Erbaluce di Caluso 2018, 13.5% *****

An example of the same wine with bottle age, from a hot but high-quality year. Now the wine opens with classic hydrocarbon ('petrol') notes, very Rieslingesque, with dried stone fruit, with a full body and softer acidity than many examples of Erbaluce.

KALAMASS



www.kalamass.com

The tagline for the Kalamass winery is *nuove radici*, literally 'new roots'. This neatly sums up the fact that historically, vine growing and winemaking were a part of the history of the Canavese that had fallen into neglect, but now is being revived by young, gifted producers such as Riccardo Boggio. Kalamass was the ancient Celtic name for the area of the Ivrea moraine. The winemaking here is innovative and informed by Riccardo's technical training and later experience in Alba and the Langhe.

Caluso DOCG 2021 14% ****

100 per cent Erbaluce, destemmed and pressed, with part of the juice (30 per cent) going into used barrels and the rest to stainless steel vessels. Malolactic fermentation further aims to round out primary fruit characters. The wine is then aged for a year in the same vessels with monthly bâtonnage and then, most unusually, for a further two-and-a-half to three years in bottle before release for a wine of texture and length. Bread-like dough notes with green herbs and both fresh and dried lemon, long and linear, driven by Erbaluce's trademark acidity.

Broglina Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2023 14% ****

Broglina, seen in the picture, is a south-facing vineyard, 400 m above sea level, on morainic soils — Alpine rock with 55–60 per cent sand plus clay and silt — planted in 1999. The grapes are destemmed and crushed, with around 30 per cent of the stems reintroduced to enhance freshness and help stabilise Nebbiolo's colour. Spontaneous fermentation is followed by 35–50 days on skins and stems, finishing with a submerged cap; temperature is moderated naturally by opening the cellar doors. The wine ages 12–15 months in old barriques, is minimally handled, and bottled unfiltered. Lifted violet, cranberry and redcurrant aromas with a bay leaf green edge, combined with super fine sandy tannins. A Nebbiolo of elegance, complexity and lightness.



Riccardo Boggio in the Broglina vineyard

LA MASERA

www.lamasera.it

★★★★★

La Masera was founded by a group of friends in 2005 and put on a more professional footing in 2010, following extensive visits to top French and Italian wine regions to glean insights and broaden horizons. Red wines are made from Barbera, Freisa, Vespolina and Nebbiolo, and an important range of wines is made from Erbaluce. In 2024, the winery was bought by local businessman Michele Bardus, who has big plans for its future.

Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Spumante Brut 2018 12% ****

Part of the base wine here is aged in barriques for six months with weekly bâtonnage. Total time on lees—from the start of the secondary fermentation—is four years, for extra depth and complexity. The final wine has eight grams per litre dosage. Very subtle layers of acacia flower, lemon and pastry on the nose, with ripe apple and citrus pith, a beautiful and complex wine with a rounded finish.

Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Spumante Pas Dosé 2019 13% ****

An older vintage of the Pas Dosé bottling, tasted in 2024. This spent three years on the lees. Very sophisticated, very dry, citrus rind, toast and yeasty aromas, with a light tannic finish.

*Anima Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 12.5% ****

The classic dry Erbaluce, fermented with selected yeast in stainless steel and matured for six months in the same. Clean and focused, edging toward the bitter almond aspect of the variety, with zesty lemon and restrained floral notes.

*Macaria Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2020 13.5% ****

The grapes here are partly from pergola-trained vines and partly trellis-trained. Cryomaceration for up to 18 hours and then fermented at 16°C. Halfway through alcoholic fermentation, 90 per cent of the wine is transferred to barriques and tonneaux with a mix of new and used oak. The two portions of the wine, both subject to bâtonnage, are blended after 10 months. An excellent fruit core married with overt vanilla spice oak notes.

*Venanzia, Caluso DOCG Passito Riserva 2013 13% *****

The traditional *passito* version of Erbaluce. A selection of perfectly healthy grapes with open bunches is dried until March, and then fermented and aged in barriques, where the wine ages for more than four years. Medium intensity gold in colour with a hint of garnet, a wine with subtle tobacco, leather and dried yellow fruit aromas. With a residual sugar of 92.6 g/L, the wine's sweetness is beautifully balanced by its racy acidity of 7.6 g/L

LE MASCHE



www.lemasche.it

Lorenzo Simone has devoted his energies to Le Masche since completing his studies in 2013. The company now has 10 hectares of vineyard and mainly makes wine from black grapes. Barbera is planted on sandy soils at 480 metres elevation, and Nebbiolo in the Gaiarda vineyard with its mixture of sandy gravel and clay.

*Roccia Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2023 13% ****

Innovation again is a hallmark of this young generation Canavese winery. 100 per cent Nebbiolo with 30–40 per cent whole bunches. The wine spends 10 days on the skins and stems and is aged only in stainless steel. Lightly stinky with attractive fruit concentration, showing red plum and spice nuances and a subtle carbonic edge; the tannins are soft and unobtrusive. The 2024*** follows with lighter red fruit, reflecting the vintage.

*Gaiarda A l'é Chièl Canavese Nebbiolo DOC 2020 14.5% ****

The complicated name is borrowed from the *ciabot* (worker's hut) in the vineyard. This wine is made more traditionally, fully destemmed and spends 40 days on the skins. It is then aged for 18 months in first- and second-use barriques. Bold vanilla spice over dark plum fruit; for my taste this needs another five years to integrate the oak and resolve the tannins. Those who love new oak flavours will value this wine.

ORSOLANI



www.orsolani.com

Now in its fourth generation, the Orsolani family has been among Erbaluce's most steadfast proponents since 1984, when great-grandfather Giovanni Orsolani returned to his home region. That generation ran a hostelry and part of the business was to work in the vineyards to provide wine for guests. Today, the winery has 18 hectares of vineyard and rents another two. Most of the vineyards are still maintained traditionally, with the high pergola system,

widely spaced rows and no chemical herbicides. Their use of Erbaluce at various stages of ripeness illuminates the versatility of this variety.

La Rustia Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2024 13% ***

'Rustia' means 'roasted', i.e., the grapes that are most exposed to the sun begin to turn golden, and have lower acidity. After crushing, these are macerated on the skins for two days, then fermented with selected yeast at temperatures up to 16°C. Medium lemon in colour, the wine offers notes of unripe peach, herbs, and wet stone, clearly a wine of finesse rather than simple primary fruit. Orsolani also make an interesting version called Vintage. There is no tradition in the region of drinking older wines, but this is fermented in large *botte* and released in the third year after the harvest, with a projected drinking window of 10–15 years.

Idi di Maggio Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 13.5% ***

This is a new version of Erbaluce, intended to be released on the Ides of March. The distinctive feature is that the grapes are a blend of fruit from pergola-grown vines (more aromatic expression) and trellis-grown vines (lower acidity, more rounded in the mouth, which also goes through malolactic fermentation). A light nuttiness and a hint of mint on the palate, the wine still shows a brisk acidity, but it is a bit more rounded on the long finish. An Erbaluce for those who might find the traditional versions too austere.

Cuvèe Tradizione Metodo Classico Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Spumante Extra Brut 2017 13% ****

For this wine, fruit is chosen that is pergola-grown, where it is shaded by the canopy. The base wine is aged in oak for three months with a second fermentation in the bottle, with four years on the lees. Very toasty on the nose, with creamy, fresh and dried yellow fruit, a classy traditional method sparkling wine.

Sule Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Passito 2017 13.5% ****

The traditional version of Erbaluce is made by picking the most open bunches that will suffer less from rot during the drying process, which lasts until the end of January or beyond. Once fermentation is underway, the wine goes into a *botte* of 700 litres, where it will remain for three and a half years. Final sugar level is around 150 grams per litre. Medium amber in colour, with an oxidative, gently woody nose giving way to dried apricot, almond and a subtle marmalade note. The finish is surprisingly dry.

ROBERTO CROSIO



www.robertocrosio.it

Roberto Crosio, son of the restaurateurs who created Caluso's best restaurant, Magnolia, began with a vineyard gifted to him by his parents. Since then, he has expanded it to 10 hectares across various locations around the town, with the majority planted with Erbaluce. 14 wines are made, but the emphasis is very much on Erbaluce.

Primavite Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 13.5% ****

A selection of Erbaluce from vines over 20 years old. This wine was originally called Primavigna (first vineyard) but was renamed Primavite (first vines) as the production expanded beyond his first vineyard. Whole bunches are crushed and subjected to cryomaceration (2–5°C) for eight days, then fermented with selected yeast for consistent, reliable results. As the fruit is very ripe, malic acid levels are low, so malolactic fermentation

is blocked. The wine is then aged on fine lees for 6–8 months. Lemon zest, green apple, and ripe white peach flavours, with light bitter almond on the finish (very typical of Erbaluce) and a high-tension, acidic finish. An exemplary Erbaluce.

*Costaparadiso, Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2022 14.5% ******

The grapes for this small batch of 1,500 bottles are picked from formerly abandoned vineyards with pergola-trained vines, up to 60 years old. Late picked and then subject to a short *appassimento* (drying) before being fermented and aged in tonneaux, with 30 per cent new oak. *Bâtonnage* is carried out every 15 days for a year. Roberto loves the *passito* wines, but the sweet ones don't sell, so this is a more viable alternative. Almond cream, toast and vanilla overlay the ripe peach core, a rich and textured wine, well-balanced by mouth-cleansing acidity. Outstanding.

*Gemini, Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2022 14% *****

Using the Picotendro biotype of Nebbiolo, for Roberto, this is a wine from mountain soils, grown on sandy, very stony sites. The wine remains on the skins for 20 days and gains greater concentration by drawing off 10 per cent of the juice (*salasso*), which is used for an entry-level red or rosé. The wine is aged in second- and third-year oak tonneaux for 12 months. Bright red-currant and plum fruit with a notable stoniness, elegant and gentle on the palate with fine tannins. The wine finishes on ripe fruit and has retained its freshness in a hot year.

TAPPERO MERLO



www.tapperomerlo.it

Domenico Tappero Merlo is rightly proud of Olivetti's technological innovation in nearby Ivrea, where he worked. In 1965, the company produced what is regarded as the world's first programmable desktop computer. However, he then chose to take on the challenge of abandoned terraces, which represent the area's long-term viticultural heritage. Today, he farms three hectares of vineyard on the youngest moraine soils of the Ivrea amphitheatre, which are very poor, with sand content reaching up to 80 per cent in places. This has meant working to increase the organic content of the soils with cover crops and natural products such as plant extracts. To achieve the highest quality, the Erbaluce is trained on trellised vines to produce perfectly uniform bunches. His aim has been to produce white wines that can be aged, an unusual choice in a country that still values the latest vintage.

*Acini Perduti Vino Bianco 2023 11.5% ****

Malvasia Moscata was probably described in G. B. Croce's historic 1606 treatise on vines and vinification in Piemonte, where it appears as Malvasia Nostrale and is praised both as a table grape and for the production of sweet, aromatic wines. In this 'lost grapes' bottling, it accounts for 70 per cent of the blend, complemented by Erbaluce. Vinified entirely in stainless steel, the wine shows intensely aromatic apricot, orange and floral notes, combining notable ripeness with crisp acidity in a highly distinctive style.

*Cuvée des Paladins, Caluso DOCG Spumante Brut 2019 13% *****

This traditional method sparkling Erbaluce pays homage to Charlemagne's administrative and monastic reforms in the eighth century. These extended into what is now northern Italy, allowing agriculture to flourish. Erbaluce is fermented in 'exhausted' barriques and then kept on the lees after tirage for 66 months. Dosage is below six grams per litre. Toast and apricot notes dominate both the nose and palate, accompanied by hints of citrus peel and dried

flowers. The mousse is fine and persistent, while the palate combines notable breadth with Erbaluce's characteristic freshness and sapid structure. A subtle grip on the finish adds texture and length to this distinctive sparkling wine. This is another example of how Erbaluce can make an outstanding traditional method sparkling wine.

Kin Caluso DOCG 2020 13.5% *****

Named 'Kin' in honour of his grandfather, this Erbaluce undergoes a couple of days of skin contact and is fermented with ambient yeasts in *botte*. Malolactic fermentation is permitted, followed by weekly bâtonnage. The wine is aged for 18 months in a 20-hectolitre French oak cask, then spends a further two years ageing in bottle before release. A wine of creamy, velvety texture with restrained lemon, white peach and thyme notes, and a long finish in which the richness is in tension with the lively acidity. For a French comparison, one might consider an aged dry Chenin Blanc.

Bohémien Caluso DOCG Passito 2020 14% ****

This wine is made from Erbaluce picked 10 days early (standard practice, as the skins need to be perfect), which is then naturally dried in drying rooms open to the air until mid-March. Around 30 per cent will be affected by noble rot. After crushing, the wine is made and aged for around three years in a mixture of acacia and oak barrels (*barrique* to *tonneau* in size). The result is a light amber-coloured wine with powerful aromas and flavours of walnut, honey and dried apricot, accompanied by hints of candied citrus and spice. The style is intense and concentrated rather than especially layered, and the substantial sweetness (145 grams per litre) is balanced by vibrant acidity, giving the wine a surprisingly fresh and persistent finish.

TENUTA ROLETTO



www.tenutaroletto.it

Tenuta Roletto is a substantial winery with 60 hectares of vineyard in production and capacity for more. Initially founded in 1961, it has expanded significantly, including the building of a fine new winery, under the leadership of Antonino Iuculano, married to Domenica Roletto, who 'retired' from a successful business career in 2011. The winery's motto is 'Drink more Erbaluce', so it is no surprise that this is the main, though not the sole, focus.

Gran Cuvée Metodo Classico Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Brut NV ****

A multi-vintage blend (60 per cent 2023, 20 per cent each 2022 and 2021) that spends two years on the lees and is finished with 7 grams per litre of sugar. Impressively complex, with layers of honey and toast over crisp green apple, finishing on a savoury, yeasty note.



The view from Tenuta Roletto in winter

*Centoventi Metodo Classico 120 Mesi Caluso DOCG Pas Dosé 2011 13% ******

With a mind-boggling 120 months on the lees in the bottle, this wine was only disgorged in 2025. Medium gold in colour with full-on pastry crust, mushroom, and tobacco aromas, super long and fine with a dry, supple, bitter almond finish. The winery calls it 'the maximum expression of Erbaluce', and it would be difficult to disagree (well, at least until you get to the *passito* wines). A 60-month-on-the-lees version is also made.

*Lei Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2023 12% ****

The Erbaluce here for this large volume wine (130,000 bottles) is partly pergola and partly trellis grown. After fermentation, the wine is aged on the lees for 2–3 months for a fresh and fruity expression. Classic green plum fruit with unripe peach and white blossom, plus a touch of wet stone.

*Nobilis Canavese DOC Nebbiolo 2021 14% *****

Made with the fruit of young vines, planted in 2015, this is only the second vintage of this wine. Short maceration on the skins of seven days and then aged for a year in large *botti* of 20–25 hectolitres. Vanilla spice note (as the *botti* were new) over rose petal, ripe red cherry to plum, succulent and very drinkable, with refined but present tannins.

*Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Passito 2013 15% ******

Historically, this would have been the most important wine, but sadly, today, like all high-quality sweet wines, it is difficult to sell, which is such a shame. The grapes are picked early for tough, perfect skins, though the ideal is that 30 per cent are attacked by noble rot. They are then left to dry indoors for four months, when half their weight is lost. Long slow fermentation follows, which can stop and start over several years. The wine is aged in large *botte* for the best part of a decade and released after 10 years. A remarkable wine: amber in colour, with walnut, smoke, marmalade and saffron notes unfolding in layers. Intensely complex and very sweet (140 grams per litre), yet beautifully balanced by vibrant acidity and deep fruit concentration.

Carema

This is a small but distinctive DOC, the only one in the Canavese devoted exclusively to Nebbiolo.

Carema is the last village in Piemonte on the border with the Valle d'Aosta. Its vineyards occupy a series of steep, rocky, south-facing amphitheatres, arranged on narrow terraces supported by dry-stone walls and only accessible largely on foot. Vines are trained on traditional pergolas to maximise space, called *topie*. They are constructed from local chestnut wood and supported by stone pillars known as *pilun*, and require much of the work to be carried out from ladders. This is work for the young or at least the agile.

The soils are thin, sandy and exceptionally well-drained, derived from Alpine crystalline rock as in neighbouring Valle d'Aosta. Often they are no more than a shallow layer of decomposed stone over solid bedrock, resulting in naturally low vigour. In the past, growers brought more fertile soil up from the riverside below, since other crops were planted beneath the pergolas. Viticulture has been documented here since at least the late Middle Ages, and today a younger generation – many still in their thirties – is carefully restoring these tiny terraces and reviving the denomination, parcel by parcel. In 1968, the writer and filmmaker Mario Soldati captured the essence of Carema with characteristic precision, describing it as having 'an inimitable taste of sun and stone'.

Carema DOC

- DOC from 1967.
- The grapes must be grown in the municipality of Carema.
- The wines must be 85–100 per cent Nebbiolo and must be grown between 300–600 m above sea level.
- The standard wine must be aged for two years before release, including one year in oak or chestnut (the latter reflecting local tradition). The total ageing is extended to three years for the *riserva*.

CANTINA PRODUTTORI NEBBIOLO DI CAREMA



www.caremadoc.it

With Ferrando, the Produttori has flown the flag for Carema for the last 65 years. The vineyard area is highly fragmented, with countless tiny plots owned by individual families. As a result, the cooperative, founded in 1960, is an excellent solution for many and has kept the tradition of grape growing alive, against all odds. 65 growers, with an average plot of 0.23 hectares each, bring their grapes to the Produttori Nebbiolo di Carema. As local growers reach the age when they can no longer manage their plots, the co-operative can help and even bought some plots in 2023.



Stone pillars and pergolas on the terraces of Carema

Lunaneuva, Vino Spumante di Qualità Brut Rosè NV 12.5% ***

Nebbiolo from the 2022 vintage was held in the press for a few hours before being fermented, with second fermentation in the bottle and remaining on the lees for three years. Labelled Brut, the wine has less than six grams of residual sugar per litre. This is a small batch wine made since 2009. Pale lemon with a light copper hue. Aromas of ripe white peach and bread crust, with subtle red cherry notes. The palate is fresh and balanced, combining orchard fruit with light autolytic character. A slight tannic edge provides structure on the finish.

Carema DOC 2022 13.5% *(*)***

In a top year like 2022, the winery prefers to blend multiple plots for its main wine. 14–20 days on the skins (the experience is that colour is lost if the wine is macerated for longer.) The wine is then aged for a year and a half in old oak *botti*. Pale ruby, shading towards garnet. Aromas of fresh and dried cherry lead, with a pronounced savoury character. Hints of fennel and red orange add lift and complexity. The palate is long and composed, supported by refined, discreet tannins. Textbook Carema.

Carema DOC Riserva 2020 13.5% *****

This was made from a selection of the ripest fruit and then of the best barrels. It is aged for 30 months in *botte*. Slightly more evolved in character, with a fine, mellow and supple mid-palate. Well balanced between fruit and acidity, showing early hints of tertiary leather notes. The tannins are rounded and integrated, contributing to a harmonious, composed finish.

CANTINA TOGLIANA

www.instagram.com/cantinatogliana



Achille Milanesio comes from nearby Ivrea from a family of vine nurserymen who owned some plots in Carema, less than one hectare in total. The family memory was that after phylloxera in the 1930s, there were just five producers in the village, plus, of course, many families who made wine for their own consumption. After one private bottling for his own wedding in 1992, the winery was formally established in 2019.

*L'Arsin Carema DOC 2022 13.5% *****

'L'Arsin' means a bunch of grapes in dialect. This wine is made from a number of plots, just over 0.5 hectares in total at 350–450 m above sea level. The mainly pergola-trained vines range from 20 to 80 years old, with a small plot of trellised vines on a flat plot. 100 per cent Nebbiolo of the Picotener biotype. Maceration on the skins starts for a fortnight with some whole bunches (with the aim of a more perfumed wine) and continues for a total of 40 days, with the cap being managed with rack-and-return. The wine is then aged for two years in 'exhausted', i.e., old barriques. Deep garnet with a hint of ruby at the rim. Rustic and earthy in style, with savoury red plum and subtle leather nuances. Raspy tannins add structure, giving the wine a firm, grounded character.

*Carema DOC riserva 2021 13.5% ******

The riserva is made from about 0.3 hectares of vines, selecting the best bunches from the older vines. Similar winemaking to L'Arsin but with three years of ageing in a 10-hectolitre *botte*. Bright garnet with depth. Pure red plum and redcurrant aromas lead on the nose, with striking fruit clarity. The palate is supple and elegant, framed by fine, silky tannins, with a long and harmonious finish.

CELLAGRANDE

www.cellagrande.it



Cellagrande is perhaps the outlier in terms of the wineries that make Carema DOC, as the principal winery is in the Canavese area. However, with 3.5 hectares in Carema and rising to 5, this will be one of the larger producers. The first hectare was inherited from Roberto Bagnod's mother's family. Roberto then went on to have a successful career in farming, green energy, wheat and rice (risotto rice being a major business in Piemonte), before building a high-tech cellar in Piverone. The first vintage of Carema was 2017. The optical sorter is brought to Carema in time for its harvest, as by law the wine has to be made in or close to the village.

*Carema DOC 2021 13% ******

Severe selection of Nebbiolo grapes is followed by drawing off 5–10 per cent of the juice, to aid concentration in the final wine. Maceration on the skins lasts 12–15 days. The wine is aged in 20 hectolitre *botti* plus, as necessary, used barriques and tonneaux for two years. Good depth of garnet colour with still some youthful ruby tint, intensely perfumed with rose petal, red cherry and redcurrant fruit, edged by a hint of darker berry and pepper. Fine, filigree tannins frame a palate of striking freshness and precision, with a long and lifted finish. The 2020^{****} was tending to garnet already with red fruit and rhubarb notes.

FERRANDO

www.ferrandovini.it



Ferrando was founded five generations ago as a wine merchant selling Piemontese wines in the Valle d'Aosta. However, it quickly became a grower and producer. It initially focused on Carema wines, later expanding to Erbaluce as well. For many years, it was the sole private producer of Carema, with the co-operative representing the denomination.

Roberto Ferrando explains the extraordinary amount of work required to grow Nebbiolo on the steep terraces of Carema, which he describes as 'more wall than earth'. Everything must be done by hand, from spraying with a rucksack on your back to carrying everything up and down the irregular steps that link the terraces. He reckons it takes four times as many hours per hectare as in conventional vineyards. In 2024, the company was bought by its US importer, Rosenthal. With a new winemaker set to start work in 2026, this is definitely a winery to watch.

The names of the two Erbaluce di Caluso wines had to be changed. The former 'Cariola' shared the name with a village in Valtellina. Equally, 'La Torazza' was deemed to be too close to place names (mainly restaurants, it has to be said) and potentially misleading.

*Etichetta Bianca Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2024 12.5% *****

All the Erbaluce is grown in the municipality of Borgomasino, southeast of Ivrea, on pergola, with an average vine age of 40 years. Following experimentation with ambient yeast, selected yeast is now preferred to avoid tank-to-tank variation. The wine is made and aged until May in stainless steel. Malolactic fermentation was blocked in 2024, having been allowed in some earlier vintages. Medium-plus lemon in colour. Fine green plum and citrus notes on the nose, with a subtle richness and a hint of dough from time on lees. The palate shows good fruit depth and balance, with the freshness carried through to a poised, stony finish.

*Etichetta Verde Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG 2024 13% *****

This wine is made from the higher part of the same vineyard as the Etichetta Bianca. 10 per cent of the grapes are fermented and kept for five months in new tonneaux; this portion undergoes malolactic fermentation. A step up in intensity from the Etichetta Bianca, with more pronounced aromatics of white peach alongside a green plum core. Fuller-bodied, with a subtle almond-skin nuance adding gentle bitterness and complexity. The acidity is rounded yet supportive, carrying the wine to a composed, persistent finish.



Roberto Ferrando

*Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG Spumante Pas Dosé 2018 11.5% ******

Erbaluce is picked relatively early to moderate the final alcohol and preserve acidity. After the first fermentation, the wine rests in stainless steel for a year, then spends 64 months on its lees in the bottle. The dosage is made with still dry wine, with no added sugar, to preserve a pure varietal character. Beautifully expressive on the nose, with honeyed and lightly toasty aromas. The palate is lean and precise, marked by green herb nuances and brisk freshness. The finish is gentle yet persistent, tapering into a stony, hay-tinged note. Pas Dosé is the most difficult style to pull off successfully, given Erbaluce's austere character, but this certainly triumphs!

*Etichetta Bianca Carema DOC 2021 13.5% *****

Ferrando has two hectares in Carema, made up of 30 different parcels, some owned and some rented. The 'white label' is fermented with ambient yeast, using a *pie'd de cuve*, and no temperature control, as by mid-October the cellar temperature is naturally low and Ferrando believes that ambient yeast reduces heat spikes. The wine is macerated on the skins for 15–20 days and aged for 30 months in 5- and 30-hectolitre *botti* of French and Austrian oak, five per cent new. Turning garnet in colour, the nose is initially muted, opening gradually to reveal raspberry and delicate floral notes. On the palate, stony red plum fruit comes to the fore, framed by a restrained tannic and acidic structure.

*Etichetta Nera Carema DOC 2021 14% ******

A relatively large production of 2,000 bottles was made in this vintage, due to the high quality of the year. The 'black label' is made with selected grapes, 90 per cent from south-facing parts of the Laurei and Costa subzones and the warmer parts close to the border with Valle d'Aosta. The winemaking is similar to the Etichetta Bianca except that the selected vats are aged for 30 months in old barriques. Ripe black plum on the nose, with remarkable depth and richness. Notes of pepper, stone and a hint of smoke add complexity. The palate is refined, framed by elegant, finely woven tannins, with impressive length and clear ageing potential.

MONTE MALETTO



Gian Marco Viano came to winemaking having worked as a sommelier in high-end restaurants in Glasgow, London and Italy before tiring of restaurant hours. A job in the tasting room at G.D. Vajra (Barolo) sparked a deeper interest in viticulture and cellar work, leading him to experiment with three demi-johns in a friend's garage. In 2015, he acquired his first 0.3-hectare vineyard in Carema; Monte Maletto now farms 1.7 hectares. He is a strong advocate of the pergola system, though with less old wood on the vines than in the past, which in turn means that the pergolas can be lighter in construction.

*Vecchie Tonneaux Vino Bianco 2024 13% *****

This white wine is made from Erbaluce grown in Roppolo, close to the Viverone lake, half an hour from Carema. The grapes are harvested as late as possible, destemmed and pressed. Fermentation starts naturally in stainless steel before the wine is transferred midway through fermentation to old barrels — some nearly 20 years old — to complete alcoholic and malolactic fermentation. The wine remains untouched until summer, when it is moved back to stainless steel and bottled unfiltered. As Gian Marco says, making wine is simple; the real challenge is growing great grapes. Quite intense yellow in colour, with a hint of browning,

suggesting development. The medium (+) intensity nose is complex and attractive, combining lemon and tangerine fruit with the light savoury character suggestive of dried citrus peel and bruised apple. Medium-bodied, with racy, intense lemon- and lime-like acidity balancing the texture from ageing in old barrels. Long, savoury and distinctive.

Sole e Roccia Carema DOC 2023 13.5%****

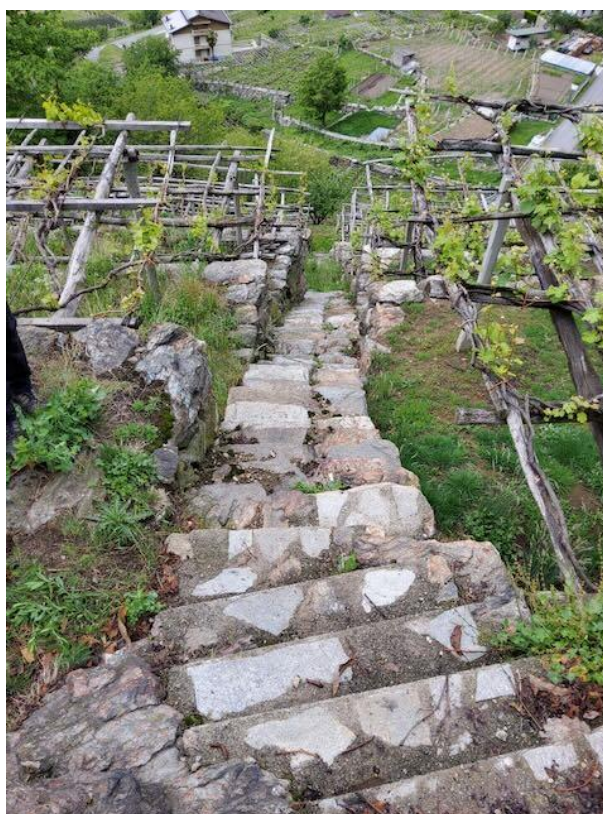
Sole e Roccia ('sun and rock', a perfect summary of Carema) is made with 100 per cent Nebbiolo from fruit in a number of different parcels. Normally, the fruit is destemmed, but Gian Marco may add some selected, fully ripe stems back into the juice (in this case, 30 per cent), an approach he learnt from Luca de Marchi at Proprietà Sperino. The fermenting wine stays on the skins and stems for about a month, with punch downs a couple of times a day. After this, the wine is sent straight to 225-litre barrels. The barrel size is a practical choice as Gian Marco wants to make the wine from each small vineyard plot separately and then blend it later. Even his newer barrels are 3–4 years old. Deep cherry-ruby in colour, with a moderately aromatic nose combining small red-berried fruit and a distinctive earthy, stony character. On the palate, ripe fruit is balanced by crisp acidity and refined tannins, giving a wine of freshness, structure and subtle complexity.

MURAJE



'Muraje' is simply 'walls' in dialect, with reference to the massive rock wall from which all the Carema vineyard plots are carved and the dry stone walls that create the terraces. Federico and Deborah Santini, who regard themselves primarily as wine lovers, set up their 1.5-hectare winery in 2012, starting with just three demijohns of production made in a friend's winery. Their aim is to expand to four hectares. The tiny traditional cellar they now have is already full of barrels of various sizes, tanks and bottles waiting to be shipped. As all the new wave of producers in Carema say, this is very much a work in progress.

For Muraje, the value of pergola-trained wines is the reduction of evaporation from the ground, a critical factor in Carema's fast-draining, sandy soils. Also, the tiniest scraps of land can be used, as the canopy can be allowed to develop over rocks and paths, where there is no soil. They also believe that pergola-trained vines are more resilient. In fact, all their fruit comes from old vines that are around 50 years old, shortly to be supplemented by tiny amounts of fruit from young vines.



Carema terraces and pergolas

Percia, Vino Rosato 2023, 12.0% ***

A tiny production of 380 bottles, this rosé is 95 per cent Nebbiolo with other local, related varieties. The grapes were pressed by foot, fermentation follows with ambient yeast and the wine is aged for eight months in old barriques. Pale copper-pink in colour. Light red-fruited

aromatics of strawberry and raspberry. There is an underlying concentration of fruit beneath the delicacy, a faint hint of violet, and a finish that moves increasingly towards a dry, savoury register.

*Sumié Carema 2022 13.5% ****(*)*

This is Muraje's main wine, named after the local word for the wooden slats laid across the main beams of the pergola. Nearly 100 per cent Nebbiolo from multiple plots. Fermented with ambient yeast in concrete and stainless steel, the wine spends a month and a half on the skins and then is aged for 13 months in old small barrels. Pale ruby-garnet. Lifted red cherry and wild strawberry with rose petal, herbal and stony notes. Linear and refined on the palate, with bright acidity, delicate tannins and a long, savoury finish.

SOPRAVENTO

★★★★★

Matteo and Michele Melfa worked as sommeliers in top restaurants in London and locally. Having got the winemaking bug, they looked around for a high-quality possibility in their home region, starting up in 2019. They are motivated by a desire to save the past of Carema when the whole hillside was a vineyard. And they want to work in a way that is complementary to nature. They are happy to keep some of the trees on their land, they want to hear the birds in the vineyard, grow vegetables for guests and see grapes as only part of a diverse landscape. Some wines are labelled in homage to David Bowie.

*Rebel Rebel Vino Bianco 2024 13% *****

The Erbaluce used for this wine originates from a vineyard in Borgomasino south of Caluso, and it could therefore have been labelled Erbaluce di Caluso DOCG. Low-intervention winemaking: ambient yeast, no temperature control, fermented and malolactic fermentation in second and third-use acacia barrels, and aged for 11 months in the same barrels with bâtonnage, no filtration or clarification. Pale gold. It features citrus peel, lemon balm, and delicate acacia notes. The palate is subtle and composed, with softened acidity and fine balance, although it remains tight and needs bottle age to develop more complexity.

*Time Vino Rosso 2024 13% ****

This again is from the Borgomasino vineyard, which could have been labelled Canavese DOC Nebbiolo. It makes sense for a start-up to source fruit here, as vineyard space in Carema itself is so scarce. The wine is racked off after two weeks to used tonneaux for one year of ageing. Beaujolais-inspired, this Nebbiolo showcases violet notes and vivid red cherry fruit, supported by a light fine tannic structure.

*Heroes Carema DOC 2023 13.5% ****(*)*

Even the least Bowie-aware will spot the homage here in Sopravvento's Carema, which the Melfa brothers describe as 'the crowning love and obsession with Nebbiolo'. The fruit comes from a restored, abandoned vineyard plot, the first 2022 vintage producing just 567 bottles. The 2023, with some whole bunches, was subject to 40 days on the skins with daily punch downs and was aged for 20 months in mainly used oak barrels. Lovely classic ruby color. On the nose, red cherry and red plum are complemented by violet and subtle earthy-iron notes. The palate shows mild, grainy tannins and a lingering medium-plus finish.

SORPASSO

★★★★★

Vittorio Garda, with his wife Martina Ghirardo, is the leading figure in the new wave of younger Carema figures and the only one with formal winemaking training and experience.

Until recently, he has divided his time between being the winemaker for Cantina della Serra (see above under Caluso DOCG), the co-operative winery in nearby Canavese, and creating and promoting Sorpasso. From January 2026, he is dividing his time between some consultancy at the co-operative, winemaking at the historic Ferrando (see above) and Sorpasso. But he is a humble man who has learnt from both the older generation and the young producers in Carema. As he says, I will always be grateful for my technical training, but speaking with and tasting with producers who have applied artisanal techniques opened my mind. It made me freer. Sorpasso currently cultivates grapes on 1.5 hectares consisting of four main plots in Carema, with an additional hectare expected soon, as well as more vines for white wine in the nearby village of Settimo Vittone.

*Caluso DOCG 2023 13% ****(*)*

For this wine, whole bunches of Erbaluce were pressed and held in the press for up to three hours. The wine is then fermented in stainless steel, malolactic fermentation is suppressed, and it is kept on the lees for a year. The aim is then to age it further in bottles to release it two years and three months after the vintage, like his Carema Nebbiolo. Intense and generous, with aromas of dough and almond cream, complemented by green plum and unripe peach. The palate is vibrant and full-flavoured, with plenty of potential to develop further.

*Carema DOC 2022 13.5% ******

Sorpasso's Carema DOC is made from the traditional blend, 90 per cent Nebbiolo (Picotendro biotype) and the rest is made up of the ripest bunches of the local varieties, the Nerettos and Ner d'Ala. The fruit is sourced from a number of vineyard zones, Neirère, Airale and Seie. One and a half months of maceration on the skins with 10 per cent whole bunches. The ageing is 12-18 months in fine-pored, old Allier barrels. Bright and fresh, with cranberry and raspberry accented by subtle pepper notes. Beneath the vibrant fruit, hints of earthy nuance add depth. Direct and racy, with chalky, lightly grippy tannins and a long, lingering finish. The essence of Carema.

A small-batch single-vineyard Carema is also made from a plot in Airale at 450–500 m elevation. Vignealte^{*****} is a super fine expression, half of the ageing being done in low-porosity ceramic.

Northern Piemonte Annual Report 2026

Northern Piemonte is one of Italy's most historic yet least recognised wine regions. While Barolo and Barbaresco are internationally renowned, the denominations stretching from Carema in the west to Boca and Ghemme in the east offer wines of remarkable quality, individuality and value.

This inaugural annual report provides an in-depth guide to the region, covering its history, climate, geology, grape varieties and appellations. It profiles 90 wineries and reviews more than 300 wines, from established names to emerging producers. The report aims to raise the profile of Northern Piemonte and encourage a greater appreciation of the quality, diversity and character of its wines.

About the author

David Way is an English wine writer specialising in the wines of Italy. He is Senior Researcher at the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) and author of *The Wines of Piemonte*, winner of an OIV award and published in both English and Italian. Through www.winefriend.org, he writes about wine regions, producers and styles, with a particular focus on Italy.



Download future reports and publications

David Way • Wine writer

www.winefriend.org

Follow for updates:

Instagram: [@davidwaywine](https://www.instagram.com/davidwaywine) · Facebook: [David Way](https://www.facebook.com/DavidWay) · LinkedIn: [David Way](https://www.linkedin.com/in/DavidWay)