

Field Notes from Nebbiolo Prima

By **Tracy Ellen Kamens** on Oct 18, 2012

Understandably, Nebbiolo Prima, an annual press and trade event in Alba, Italy, is all about tasting tight, tannic Nebbiolo; but, it is the afternoon visits that offer glimpses into what these wines will become and the people behind the wines that make it magical.

Paolo Scavino by any other name

These same two vintages marked important dates for the Scavino family. Speaking in Italian only (he joked that if he spoke English, the vines couldn't understand him), Paolo's son, Enrico, clearly recounted the day when his father asked him if he wanted to continue his studies or work in the vineyards. He chose the vineyards; it was 1951 and Enrico was ten years old. Seven years later, the extraordinary 1958 vintage gave him the courage to buy additional land and plant more vines. By 1964, all of the production was being vinified and bottled under the family name. Enrico admitted to having his eye on more vineyards, but daughters, Enrica and Elisa, have asked him to stop—preferring to retain the company as a small, family business. Enrica is responsible for managing the company's affairs, while Elisa works with her father in the vineyard and winery. Today, the name Paolo Scavino carries significant weight in the Barolo world, but the name Elisa Scavino will surely gain prominence as she continues the family legacy.



Malvira—A turning point for arneis

Although lesser known than Barolo and Barbaresco, Roero produces excellent red and white wines and a highly regarded producer in the area is Malvira. Translating as “bad turn,” the name stems from the reference given to the Damonte family’s house, which was designed around a north-facing, instead of a typical south-facing, interior courtyard. Harnessing bad into good, the family chose Malvira for their business name and designed labels that suggest good luck, borrowing symbols from tarot cards. Malvira focuses on the nearly extinct, indigenous variety of arneis. While traditionally used to produce sweet and sparkling wines, the Damontes produce not only dry Arneis wines, but those with ageing potential. It appears in seven of their nine whites, either on its own or as a blend and clearly takes well to lees aging, older oak and/or bâtonnage, while always displaying rich citrus fruit, minerality, good acidity, and full body. Produced from 60-year-old vines, 2007 Malvira’s Roero Riserva Reneiso is a good example as to why these 100% Nebbiolo wines should become better recognized in the U.S. market.