

Wine Spectator & Vinitaly present

FINEST ITALIAN WINES
100 GREAT PRODUCERS

**Barolo and Barbaresco, Royalty of Italian Wines
from Piedmont**

Verona, January 27th 2012 – The “excellence of Italian wine” is connected with two regions: Tuscany and Piedmont. 17 Piedmont producers have been selected by Wine Spectator to participate in OperaWine “Finest Italian Wines, 100 Great Producers”.

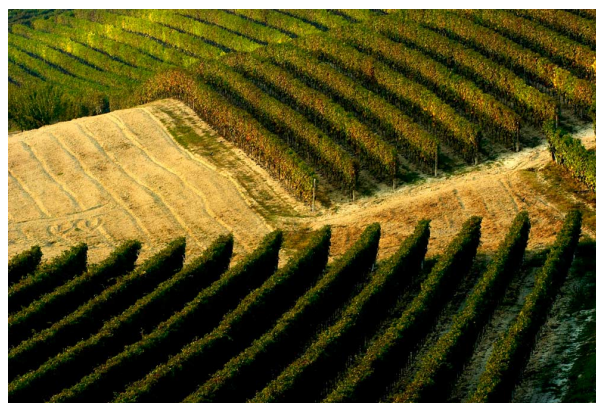
One man in particular has had a significant influence on increasing the prestige and perception of Piedmont and Italian wines abroad: Angelo Gaja. His influence is such that Wine Spectator chose him as the first featured producer in their “Wine Star” series. *“Angelo's wines have had a great impact on Italy,”* says Lamberto Frescobaldi, whose family has made wine in Tuscany for 700 years. *“Not an impact on style, but on complexity, on wines making a statement. Wine has to make an impression on people's minds. Angelo has given many of us that vision.”*

According to Wine Spectator and Aldo Vacca, Director of the Produttori del Barbaresco: *“Gaja's success isn't just in salesmanship. He is constantly thinking about new ideas to try in the vineyard and in the cellar, challenging tradition to improve quality. “Why is he who he is? Because he is a gifted, talented winemaker, he is a smart businessman and also a very gracious host. Very few winemakers excel in all three fields of the industry.”*

Gaja's marketing genius is what truly distinguishes him from many other producers. He recognized

very early on, the importance of “word of mouth” by opinion leaders in the wine industry, sommeliers and restaurateurs. He was one of the first to challenge French wines, charging Grand Cru prices for Nebbiolo and demanding his wines be positioned alongside Burgundy and Bordeaux on restaurants' wine lists worldwide. In the late seventies, **Gaja** started distributing Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. Today, his company Gaja Distribuzione imports almost 42,000 cases annually from 60 wineries in 15 countries. Despite its global reach, the Gaja company remains a classic Italian family winery and Angelo Gaja a true ambassador of Italian wines.

It was not until the late 80's that Piedmont started gaining recognition for its outstanding wines. Pietro Ratti, owner of **Renato Ratti** and President of the Consorzio di Tutela Barolo Barbaresco Alba Langhe e Roero has particular insight on the famed Langhe wine region: *“Piedmont, compared to other regions, is the land of artisanal producers. With its incomparable microclimates, small sized vineyards, local unique grape-varieties, ancient viticulture and winemaking traditions, it has been in the last decades one of the most exciting areas in the world to make wine. With these incredible conditions, every year local winemakers challenge themselves to make their best wine in their own specific terroir.”*



New classification schemes, seek to highlight the wines' prestige by categorizing them into a "Cru" List (French term for designating single vineyards within a specific geographical location). In the case of Barolo this would entail a similar system to that of Burgundy helping consumers identify the vineyards that produce the highest quality wines. The same type of list had already been compiled for Barbaresco a couple of years earlier. Raising the Cannubi vineyard Cru to a higher standing would have positive results for winemakers that are growing within the Cannubi area in Barolo. Beneficiaries would be wineries such as the 58ha **Damilano**, which historically has a two-hectare presence on the renowned Cannubi hill. Under a recent accord, they have rented an additional 8ha as part of a continuing policy to pursue high quality Cannubi Crus and create the best wine possible for its 430,000 annual bottles. Other producers famous for their single-vineyard Cru wines include **Renato Ratti, Paolo Scavino, Ceretto, Aldo Conterno** and **Giuseppe Mascarello & Figlio**.



Emerging markets such as Russia, Hong Kong, and Brazil are becoming more important for Barbaresco and Barolo. Mr. Ratti foresees further expansion into those markets in 2012, with a focus on Asia. *"Currently, Barolo and Barbaresco are sold mostly in Italy (30%), followed by 15% in the USA and UK, 10%*

in Germany and Switzerland and 5% in Canada as well as Scandinavia."

Each of Piedmont's finest producers, **Aldo Conterno, Braida di Giacomo Bologna, Bruno Giacosa, Casa E. di Mirafiore, Ceretto, Damilano, Gaja, Gancia, Luciano Sandrone, Mascarello Giuseppe e Figlio, Michele Chiarlo, Paolo Scavino, Pecchenino, Pio Cesare, Prunotto, Renato Ratti** and **Vietti** have a unique history. All continue to contribute to the already rich heritage of Piedmont and wine lovers will be able to enjoy them on March 24th in Verona.

About:

OperaWine (<http://www.operawine.it>) is discovering the traditions, identity and heritage of the food and art in Italy, whilst falling in love with Italian wines. Exclusive initiatives related to Italian wine, food and culture is to encourage international operators, journalists, sommeliers, wine educators, and high profile wine aficionados alike to explore the fascinating history and context of Italian wine production.

Wine Spectator is the world's leading authority on wine that reaches more than 3 million readers worldwide, exploring wine's role in contemporary culture and delivering expert reviews of more than 15,000 wines each year. Wine Spectator is solely responsible for the choice of producers at the event.

Vinitaly is the largest wine fair in the world with over 4,500 producers and 150,000+ visitors (including 45,000 from foreign countries). The event is held every year in Verona, Italy (46th edition: Verona 25-28 March 2012).

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