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The Soul of Vietti

September 16, 2011



Luciana Currado, Vietti (Photo ©Tom Hyland)

I had the pleasure of dining with Luciana Currado of the great Piemontese estate Vietti in Chicago yesterday. Currado was in town to taste out a number of wines, most importantly the brand new release of Barolo Villero Riserva 2004.

I've known Luciana and her son Luca, who serves as winemaker, for more than a decade. Both of them are hard working, down to earth people, who are very gracious and always willing to listen to what you have to say. Luciana has been at the forefront of promoting Vietti wines; this responsibility has become a larger part of her life since her beloved husband Alfredo passed away last year after a long illness. While Luciana misses her husband, she clearly brings a lot of energy and passion to her job, as she talks of the history of her estate.

We started off the tasting with two bottlings of **Barbera**: one, the **2007 La Crena**, is from Asti, while the other, the **2009 Scarrone Vigna Vecchia**, is a Barbera d'Alba (this vineyard is at the Vietti estate in Castiglione Falletto). While both are modern interpretations of Barbera- that is to say, very ripe with slightly lower acidity and more small oak aging – these are beautifully balanced wines (unlike too many examples of Barbera today that are overly ripe, “serious” wines). The La Crena has beautiful black fruit along with a hint of mocha and excellent persistence; forward and quite tasty, this will be at its best in 5-7 years.

The Scarrone is from a vineyard at the Vietti estate in the commune of Castiglione Falletto. There are two bottlings: a regular and this, the Vigna Vecchia (old vines), from vines that are now more than 90

years old. Although not as deep in color as the La Crena (deep ruby red/purple on the Scarrone versus deep, bright purple on the La Crena), this is a richer, riper, more sumptuous wine in every way. With boysenberry and plum fruit and outstanding persistence, this is a great success. 2009 was a warm vintage, which aided ripeness and helped keep the natural acidity down; Luca Currado plays this up, but the wine is in perfect balance with every component in harmony. This is a delicious, hedonistic, decadent style of Barbera that is a long way from traditional Barbera and a wine that has to be tasted to be believed!

Next were the **2007 Castiglione Barolo** and the **2006 Masseria Barbaresco**. The Castiglione Barolo is a blend of Nebbiolo grapes from several communes and is a nice introduction to Vietti Barolo, with its varietal purity and distinctive spice. As for Barbaresco, here is a wine few talk about when referring to Vietti; that is a shame, as this is a lovely wine, very underrated. With beautiful aromas of persimmon (I find this to be a trademark aroma for Nebbiolo in the Barbaresco area) and dried cherry and expressive spice notes in the finish (cumin, oregano and thyme) along with excellent persistence and acidity, this is a notable wine. 2006 was a classic Piemontese vintage, that is to say, one in which the finest wines offer beautiful structure, impressive concentration and outstanding complexity- these are wines that are not as forward as in some years, but with patience – 12-15 years for this wine, in my opinion – they will display their finest traits.



Then came the showcase wines – three vintages of **Villero Riserva Barolo**. Villero is a single vineyard in Castiglione Falletto and in most years, Luca Currado uses the grapes from this site as part of the cuvée of his Castiglione Barolo. But in truly exceptional years – he will bottle this wine separately. We tasted three vintages, the newly released 2004 along with the 2001 and 1996; in tasting these wines the character of this vineyard, its outstanding fruit and the precision winemaking of Currado were all clearly on display.

The 2004 displayed the beautiful perfumes and ideal acidity of that vintage; red cherry and currant fruit are featured in the aromas and the wine has excellent persistence and complexity along with a beautiful sense of place. Look for this deeply concentrated wine to be at its best in 20-25 years- perhaps longer. (The playful label reminds one that 2004 was the year of the rabbit.)

The 2001, from an amazing Barolo vintage, is a huge wine of great power and intensity. Here the aromas are of cherry and black plum and there is outstanding depth of fruit and complexity. This is a

wine of great persistence and structure; my best guess is that this wine will peak in 25-40 years! This is a great bottle of Barolo!

The 1996, from a truly great Barolo vintage, offers a bit more subtlety now, which is no surprise as the wine is a few years older. The aromas are of red currant and strawberry preserves (heavenly!) and there is a bit more spice on display in the finish (cumin, oregano and cinnamon). The tannins are big, but beautifully balanced, the acidity is perfect and the persistence is quite impressive; look for this wine to peak in 25-30 years, although it will probably drink well for a few years after that.

These three vintages all offer a beautiful sense of the terroir of Villero and are packed with layers of fruit. The complexity on all three wines is impressive; each is an outstanding wine, a testament to the life's work of the Currado family. Not only was it a rare treat to try three vintages of the Villero Barolo at one sitting, but how wonderful to enjoy these wines along with Luciana Currado!

The tasting/lunch was held at the Balsan Restaurant at the Elysian Hotel in Chicago, a property that has only been open a little more than two years. The space is quite handsome and cozy and the food was excellent. For the Barolos, we were offered the option of a rib-eye steak or rainbow trout; as I don't eat red meat, I opted for the latter. While I have enjoyed fish a few times with Barolo (only a few), I would have never thought of trout as an accompaniment, but it was perfect here, served with goat cheese and arugula. It had enough texture and flavor to stand up to the Barolo and captured the earthiness of the wines quite well. Bravo to the chef!

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- 1.  Bill Hayde | September 16, 2011 at 6:17 pm

We have the pleasure of representing Vietti in NY and NJ as their distributor. The family is wonderful. The wines exquisite.

Great article. Luciana was just in NY at our tasting in Lincoln Center.

Bill Hayde, Martin Scott Wines, NY, NY

[Reply](#)

- 2.  [tom hyland](#) | September 16, 2011 at 8:25 pm

Bill:

Thanks much for taking the time to comment. You must be delighted to be able to sell the Vietti wines. Yes, the family is wonderful.

Thanks for the kind words.