

Charles Scicolone on Wine

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Remembering Alfredo Currado: A Man and his Wines

How do you pay tribute to a great winemaker and special person? The answer is: by drinking his wine and talking about the times we spent with him. We decided to have a dinner and invite our friends who were close to Alfredo Currado of the Vietti winery. We asked each of the guests to bring at least one bottle of Vietti wine made by Alfredo.



Alfredo and Luciana with family and friends

We first met Alfredo in the fall of 1982. It was my first time in Piedmont and my only itinerary was to visit as many wine producers as possible. We were on our way to Monforte d'Alba when Michele saw the sign for Castiglione Falletto and the Vietti winery. Before we left NYC, Sheldon Wasserman, one of the greatest Italian wine writers, told us to visit this winery not only because they made great wines, but because Alfredo and Luciana Currado were such nice people. (it is impossible to think of Alfredo without also thinking about his wife Luciana, they were a team and to us it was always Alfredo and Luciana) . We arrived at the gate of the winery and I rang the bell. A man appeared and

I said in Italian, *siamo amici di Sheldon and Pauline Wasserman*. He turned and shouted to his wife: "Luciana, Luciana, friends of Sheldon and Pauline are here!"

They invited us into their home to meet the whole family and we drank Moscato d'Asti with corn meal cookies and had a wonderful time. When we got back to the hotel there was a message waiting for us from Alfredo and Luciana. They were taking us to dinner that night and they would not take no for an answer. So began a wonderful friendship and many adventures both in Piedmont and NYC with this wonderful couple that lasted until Alfredo's death last year.



One of my favorite memories is from 1985 when Michele and I visited Alfredo and Luciana with Mary Ewing Mulligan, MW and Ed McCarthy. A man from Naples had opened a pizzeria a few doors down from their winery and they wanted us to try it. The whole family joined us and the pizza was very good especially the one made with fontina cheese and porcini mushrooms. Alfredo brought a magnum of 1961 Barolo to drink with the pizza. He very proudly told us that this was the first wine that he had made. The wine was great with the pizza. From then on, I was hooked



on pizza and Barolo.

On another of our visits, Michele and I rented a very small Japanese car. When we arrived at the winery, the whole family, especially their grandson, began to make jokes and laugh at the car. Someone said it was so small that a three liter bottle of Alfredo's wine could not fit in the driver's seat. A few days later when we were leaving, I opened the door to the car and behind the steering wheel was a three liter bottle of Vietti Barolo as a parting gift.

In 2003 Michele was doing a story for a magazine on where the winemakers eat in the Langhe and we again visited Alfredo and Luciana. Alfredo asked if we would like to visit Bartolo Mascarello and I said "perche no". Listening to these two great winemakers talk

about wine and the state of winemaking in the Langhe was fantastic. I only wish I had a recorder or a video camera with me. Bartolo kept joking and teasing Alfredo, saying, if I understood correctly, that because Alfredo produced

many different wines he was making “industrial wines”. They both laughed and then started to speak in the Piedmontese dialect and I could not follow the conversation.

Two years ago I was in Alba for a wine tasting and Alfredo and Luciana invited me for dinner. Luciana apologized for not being able to make dinner because the winery was under construction. It was too bad because she is an excellent cook. We went to a restaurant just a few doors away. The food was very good, typical of the region, and Alfredo brought wine. We drank a 1998 Barolo Rocche which was wonderful. Alfredo said this was the last vintage that he made before Luca, their son, took over as the winemaker. I am one of the few people to have had the honor of having this great winemaker’s first and last wines, and the privilege of drinking a lot of his bottles in between.



The starter wines for the Alfredo Currado dinner:

Nino Franco 2009 Brut “Grave di Stecca” of Primo Franco

Dom Ruinart 1993 “Blanc de Blancs”

Krug Grande Cuvee Brut NV

The Vietti wines:

We started with the 2008 *Barbera D’Alba “Tre Vigne”* my favorite of



their Barberas made by Alfredo and Luciana’s son Luca.

The grapes come from three different vineyards located in Monforte, Castiglione Falletto, and Castiglione Tinella. The vines are 35 years old and there are 5,000 per hectare. After pressing, the wine is kept in stainless steel tanks for 10 days for the alcoholic fermentation. Malolactic fermentation and aging takes place in casks. Aging is for 10 months in a combination of barriques, Slovenian oak casks and stainless steel. The wine is not filtered before bottling. There were aromas and flavors of red cherry, violets and good acidity. It was a perfect segue to the bigger red wines that followed.

Wines made by Alfredo:

Barbaresco 1985 “Masseria” Made from 100% Lampia. Malolatic fermentation takes place in oak barrels. The wine was aged for two years in Slovenian oak barrels and is bottled unfiltered. The wine was drinking very well with hints



of tobacco and cherry.

Barolo 1988 Riserva “Villero” Nebbiolo –sub varietal *Michet*. Soil, clay with white and blue marl and the harvest takes place in the middle of October. Fermentation in stainless steel vats with automatic replacement. Malolatic fermentation takes place in oak barrels where the wine remained for six months. The wine is then racked and assembled in 30hl oak barrels for 31 months. After two months in stainless steel the wine is bottled without fining or filtration. This wine was showing its age and there was a lot of sediment. It had a mineral character with a slight celery taste and a touch of fruit.

Barolo 1985 Riserva “Villero” was drinking very well and is a classic Barolo.

Barolo 1997 “Rocche” Made from *Nebbiolo* – 75% *Michet*, 20% *Lampia* and 10% *Rose*.



There are 4,600 plants per hectare. The wine is fermented for 22 days in stainless steel tanks with daily pumping air through the application of an old system called “cap submerged”. It is aged for over two years in Slavonian oak barrels, is unfiltered and is aged one year in bottle before release. My favorite Barolo has always been the “Rocche”. This is traditional classic Barolo with hints of violets, faded roses and leather.

Barolo 1988 Rocche this also was showing very well.

Barolo 1982 Rocche — In my opinion this was the wine of the evening. I always believed that Rocche was the best Barolo that Alfredo made.

It was a wonderful evening of food and wine and memories shared with good friends. Maybe we will do it again next year when the 3L bottle of Barolo that Alfredo gave me will be 30 years old.

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2 Responses to *Remembering Alfredo Currado: A Man and his Wines*

Alfonso

March 8, 2011 at 3:24 am



Wonderful post about a really nice guy and his family. Friendly. Open. Now we're tawkin'

Man I love those old wines. I'm pretty jazzed about the new ones too.

Thanks for taking us down memory lane, Charles.

Always a pleasure, as you say...

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charlesscicolone

March 8, 2011 at 3:31 am



Thanks Alfonso Yes he was a wonderful man as is his wife and the whole family wonderful people.

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