

2010 WINERIES OF THE YEAR - ITALY

Vietti PIEDMONT



Luca Currado

Founded: 1919
Winemaker: Luca Currado
Acres owned: 86.5
Annual production: 17,000 cases
Estate grown: N/A
Owner: The Vietti family
Known for: Elegant nebbiolo from Piedmont's top crus
Importer: Dalla Terra, Napa, CA
Website: vietti.com

Mario Vietti's family had been growers in the 19th century. Since he began bottling wine in 1919, the family has emerged as one of the great names in Piedmontese wine. Much of that credit goes to Mario's son-in-law, Alfredo Currado, who took over the winery in 1960. In addition to a multistory cellar built into the hillside over medieval foundations (parts of the cellar are believed to have been used by the forces of Napoleon Bonaparte), the estate includes vineyard holdings in the communes of Castiglione Falletto, Barolo, La Morra, Monforte and Serralunga, as well as Barbaresco.

Currado gradually modernized practices in the cellar and vineyards, experimented with single-vineyard crus in the 1960s and was among the first Barolo producers to seriously eye the export market. Together with Bruno Giacosa, Currado is widely credited with saving the Roero's indigenous arneis grape from extinction; indeed, Vietti's crisp, mineral-tinged bottling remains one of this aromatic variety's signature expressions. Sadly, Alfredo Currado passed away in April 2010; his son, Luca, winemaker at the estate since 1990, runs things today.

When it comes to Nebbiolo, Vietti's house style employs the best aspects of modernist winemaking—such as temperature-controlled fermentation and a temperature use of oak (usually a combination of barrique, tonneaux and cask)—yet places the emphasis on the vineyard and commune. The '05 Lazzarito, for instance, shows the ferrous tannins, meaty earth and light rose scents typical of this iconic Serralunga cru. Impeccably balanced with vibrant length, it's a wine that will reward patient cellaring.

The '06 Perbacco is meant for drinking sooner, although it is no less complex. Selected from the lots destined for Vietti's Barolo Castiglione and released a year earlier, it offers an exciting preview of the 2006 vintage in its intensity, freshness and remarkable balance. Along with the recently released '07, Perbacco remains one of the best values in nebbiolo on the market. —Wolfgang M. Weber

TOP-SCORING WINES

93 '06 Langhe Perbacco Nebbiolo - 100 Best Buys of 2010

93 '05 Barolo Lazzarito

92 '06 Barbera d'Alba Tre Vigne