

REGION OF THE MONTH



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PIEMONTE

Almost half of Piemonte, which means “foot of the mountain,” lies in the great arc of the Alps and the Apennines, from which the Po River flows east through its broad valley to the Adriatic. Bordering Switzerland and France, Piemonte and the smaller Valle d’Aosta to the north were part of the French-speaking principality of Savoy between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and played a key role in the Risorgimento, the movement that united Italy under a Savoy king in 1859. Famous ski resorts and the wild Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso draw visitors to the majestic mountains in the north, while in the south, vine covered hills around Barolo and vast fields of grain and rice in the Po valley continue a rich agricultural tradition. Torino, the region’s capital, is a crowded industrial city and home to the Fiat car company, but it also offers splendid Baroque civic buildings, palazzi, and museums, one of which is world renowned for its Egyptian collection gathered during the Napoleonic Wars. The ancient Liguri tribes who dominated the region probably first cultivated the wild

vines of the Apennines, but they learned wine making from the Greeks about 600 BC. The Celtic Taurini, who gave their name to Torino, also grew vines in the region. Although the Romans planted vines, they didn’t favor the wines. Finally in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the wines of Piemonte gained distinction when the Savoy and others began to use French methods.

Piemonte has 52 DOC and DOCG zones, more than any other region. Most vineyards are located in two major areas, in the Laghe and Monferrato hills, which are connected to the Apennines in the southeast and in the foothills of the Alps to the north between Lake Maggiore and Valle d’Aosta. In the Langhe hills above the town of Alba are the vineyards of Barolo, one of Italy’s most prestigious wines, “the king of wines and the wine of kings,” although some think that Barbaresco is its equal. The noble Nebbiolo vine produces both wines as well as Gattinara. Barbera and Dolcetto are popular full-flavored reds, while Freisa, Grignolino, and Brachetto are popular pale, fruity varieties often made as bubbly wines.

Whites are equally prominent, the first being Asti Spumante from Moscato d’Asti, the nation’s second DOCG in volume after Chianti and the world’s second sparkling wine after Champagne. Among still whites, Gavi from the Cortese grape has emerged as one of Italy’s most coveted wines, and Arneis is attracting increasing attention.

Italian  
*Winery of the Month*



Elvio Cagno

From Piemonte, “the King of Wines and the Wine of Kings”

**Elvio Cagno**

In 1961, Elvio Cagno began his winemaking career with Macarini at La Morra in Piemonte. In 1990, he purchased his own estate, 11 hectares south of La Morra in Novello, and built a winery as part of a major restoration of a 17<sup>th</sup> Century farmstead. In 1999, the winery earned its first prestigious Tre Bicchieri (Three Glasses) award from Gambero Rosso for its Barolo Elena, and since then has proved itself to be one of the finest wineries in the Langhe. Today, the estate is managed by Elvio Cagno’s daughter Nadia and son-in-law Valter Fissone, who produce the typical wines of the Langhe region, Dolcetto, Barbera, Barolo (made from the Nebbiolo grape), and the indigenous white wine Nascetta that they identified in their vineyard and saved from oblivion. Their Nebbiolo vineyards are farmed without chemicals and artificial fertilizers, and all work is done by hand. The family is in the process of converting its other vineyards to the same farming practices. In addition to his farming methods, Valter Fissone tends toward more natural winemaking and uses indigenous yeasts and large casks for ag-

ing wine instead of smaller barrels whose wood flavors can dominate the superb fruit that the estate produces.

**Damilano**

The origins of this ancient estate go back to the end of 1800, when Giuseppe Borgogno, great grandfather of the current owners, began to grow vines. Since 1997, Guido and Margharita Damilano and their cousins Paolo and Mario have run the estate and have given the winery a younger and more modern approach. The family produces the classical wines of the Langhe area, including the white Arneis and the reds Barbera and Nebbiolo. But above all, Damilano produces fine Barolo from the Cannubio zone and neighboring Liste, Fossati, and Brunate. After signing a recent lease contract for an additional eight hectares of valuable Cannubi vineyards, the family controls over 60% of this excellent cru. “We are extremely proud of this deal and are aware that it comes with great responsibility, which is to represent through our label such an important and renowned territory,” says Paolo Damila

See WINERIES next page



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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

Marenco

2007 Moscato d'Asti Scrapona

The name *Moscato* is derived from the Latin word "muscum" or musk, and the grape was so named because it has such strong aromas. Most Moscato vineyards lie around Canelli in the Langhe and to the west toward Alba on high, steep hills with cool weather conditions. But the Alto Monferrato area in Alessandria province, where the Marenco vineyards are located, has a somewhat lower elevation and slightly warmer climate, which produces richer Moscato wines. This delicious Marenco Moscato from the Scrapona vineyard is intensely fragrant with sweet, peachy, floral flavors that are typical of the wine. With just 5.5% alcohol, Moscato is an indispensable part of the holiday season and should be served well chilled with holiday desserts, especially panetone, biscotti, and fresh or dried fruit desserts. Moscato can also be served as an aperitif or even with brunch.

Damilano

2007 Barbera d'Alba

This elegant Barbera was harvested from estate vineyards in Alba, whose vines are 30 to 50 years old. Aged for 16 months in new and used oak barrels, the wine has aromas of blackberry, cherry, and strawberry, and spices like cinnamon, vanilla, and green pepper, all of which carry over to a rich, full-bodied palate. As a young wine, the Damilano Barbera should accompany simple dishes like cold cuts and appetizers and tasty first courses such as ravioli. But at the same time, the wine will complement elegant main courses with stewed or braised red meats and with aged cheeses. Serve at cool room temperature.

WINERIES from cover

no. The consulting winemaker for the Damilano estate is Beppe Cabiola, Gambero Rosso's 2002 Winemaker of the Year.

Marenco

Located in Piemonte in the Strevi zone of Alto Monferrato, the Marenco family has always farmed the land. Current owner Giuseppe Marenco added to his father's small farm, and the extensive estate

WINEMAKER SERIES

Elvio Cogno

2007 Barbera d'Alba "Bricco del Merli"

Barbera is the most heavily planted red grape in Piemonte. Thought to be native to the Monferrato hills near Asti and Alessandria, Barbera is equally at home on the slopes of the Langhe near Alba. But aside from the well-known Barbera appellations of Asti, Alba, and Monferrato, Barbera grows well in lesser known zones, such as Rubino, Gabiano, and Colli Tortonesi. This Cogno Barbera from the Merli vineyard in Alba has a deeply generous bouquet with roses, forest undergrowth, and oriental spices. On the palate, the wine shows flavors of maraschino cherries and plum preserve. Serve at room temperature with richly flavored dishes, such as winter stews, roasted meats, and pasta with tomato sauces, rich with garlic and herbs.

Elvio Cogno

2007 Dolcetto d'Alba

Like Barbera, the Dolcetto grape, whose name means "little sweet one" is heavily planted in Piemonte. As the earliest ripening of the three main grapes in the region together with Barbara and Nebbiolo, Dolcetto is often planted in sties where even Barbera might not fully ripen. Dolcetto, indigenous to the Monferrato valley, distinguishes itself from both Barbera and Nebbiolo with its deep purple color, with low acidity, making it a good blending partner for both, and with full yet sweet tannins. Dolcetto is the fruitiest wine of the three and is usually consumed when young. The Elvio Cogno Dolcetto from Alba is elegant and round in the mouth with hints of dark fruit and a pleasantly intense almond finish. Serve at room temperature with appetizers and entrées alike.

now consists of 80 hectares. Giuseppe was also the first in the family to develop a winery instead of selling his grapes to others. He makes the typical wines of the area, sparkling white Moscato and red Brachetto, both made from the Moscato grape, and also red Barbera and Dolcetto. According to wine guide Gambero Rosso, "Marenco confirms that Strevi is outstanding wine country."

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

Elvio Cogno

2004 Barolo

Regulations mandate that Barolo is made entirely from Nebbiolo grapes grown in the Barolo vineyard district located in the Langhe hills. With enough sun and just enough rain, and most importantly, mild and foggy autumn weather, Nebbiolo is protected and can complete its growth and ripening cycle, which occurs late in October and even mid November. The grape's name is very close to the Italian word *nebbia*, meaning "fog." Running through the Barolo and Barbaresco regions, the Tanaro River both tempers the summer heat and fosters mild and misty autumns, contributing to a perfect climate for the grape. The 2004 vintage provided optimal climatic conditions and, in the case of the Elvio Cogno Barolo, produced an intense bouquet that emits scents of wild red flowers and light spices. The velvety and pleasant body leads to a full taste of red berries and fresh spices with a lasting mineral finish. This 2004 Cogno Barolo is a great companion for mature cheeses, roasted and braised meats, and risotto with dried mushrooms.

Damilano

2004 Barolo "Lecinquevigne"

Barolo is known as "the king of wines and the wine of kings" and began acquiring its royal standing as early as the Middle Ages. Its reputation steadily grew in succeeding periods as both sovereigns and nobles enriched their tables with the wine. It is reported that Barolo was often found on the table of Louis XIV while other admirers of the wine included King Charles Albert, the Marquises of Saluzzo and of Monferrato, and Maria Cristina of Savoy. The fruit for the Damilano Barolo "Lecinquevigne" is a blend of grapes from five different estate vineyards at Castellero, Monvigliero, Fossati, Bussia, and Cavour, hence the name *Lecinquevigne* or "Five Vineyards. Aged for 18 months in large Slovenian oak casks, for 12 months in small French oak barrels, and for 12 months in bottle before release from the winery, the Damilano Lecinquevigne has intense aromas of vanilla and licorice, a warm and elegant texture, and a long finish. Serve at room temperature with at your finest holiday feast.

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