

DOMENICO CLERICO

After many years of tasting experience I have found six areas in the Monforte township worthy of a "grand cru" appellation. Significantly, these coincide with those traditionally hailed as the best by winemakers of the area.

The Clerico estate has vineyards in four of these crus: Bussia, Ginestra, Pajana and starting with the 1995 vintage, Mosconi. As in the case with most Barolo estates, the Clerico holdings are very small: 0.4 hectares in Bussia, 4.5 hectares in Ginestra, 1.8 hectares in Pajana and 1.5 hectares in Mosconi. Furthermore, Domenico Clerico - owner of the Clerico estate - is a tremendously gifted winemaker, and has a very finely equipped cellar. Having vineyards in crus of such stature enables him to produce exceptional wines even in "off" vintages. In order to insure always top quality when the harvest is not so good, Mr Clerico exercises especially good care in the grape selection and reserves only the very best must for aging into Barolo.

Of the Barolo wines that I have chosen, Clerico's is perhaps the least archetypal - or rather, the one in which the style of the producer is most noticeable. It has a concentration of colour most outstanding and unusual in Barolo: even after three years of aging, most of which is spent in wood, it still retains a deep, vivid ruby with a mulberry ripeness that is reminiscent of a Grand Echezeaux. Similarly, the concentration and viscosity of this wine do not resemble those found in the Nebbiolo. The bouquet is intense, ample and spicy, with herbaceous hints, and in the mouth it is meaty and rich - almost grapey when young - and gifted with a long lingering finish, it will grow with austerity and age. It is a wine of extraordinary equilibrium, its richness in alcohol and extract undercutting the tannic edge all-too-common in Barolo wines, making it

round even when young. Yet, it remains a wine of great longevity that will reward the patience of one willing to age it with an ever increasing elegance and complexity.

In the past, Mr Clerico and I have experimented together at length with small French oak and starting in 1985 his estate produced a wine bottled under the proprietary name of "Arte", which represents the culminating point in our joint effort in winemaking. A revolutionary blend of the finest Nebbiolo and Barbera aged in small French oak, Arte has spawned countless imitations. The Arte label may be seen in Lausanne's Museum of Modern Art.

Mr Clerico also produces very fine Dolcetto d'Alba and a superb Barbera d'Alba.

This Estate every year garners the highest recognition the world over in virtually every serious wine journal, and is today a recognized star among Barolo producers. His wines are sought after by the finest establishments and connoisseurs. ◇



Barolo

Ciabot Mentin Ginestra

Zone: *Monforte d'Alba*
 Cru: *Ciabot Mentin Ginestra*
 Varietal: *Nebbiolo*
 Vineyard Ext.: *4.5 hectares*
 Average Prod: *18,000 bottles*



Arte

Zone: *Monforte d'Alba*
 Cru: *Mosconi, Pajana, Ginestra and Bussia (younger vines)*
 Varietal: *Nebbiolo (90%); Barbera (10%)*
 Average Production: *12,000 bottles*