



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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Greg Pearson, Nino Rocca, and Jim Bryant.

## A Week of Feasts

AN EMOTIONAL AND MEMORABLE WINE EXPERIENCE  
AWAITED AT THE PODERI ALDO CONTERNO

WE STARTED OUR LAST DAY by visiting the old cellar of Borgogno in Barolo. After a brief tour we had a degustation of some renown. We started with the current Barolo release, the 2011. It was a reticent wine with a nose of tar, roses, and anise. With an hour of air on the wine in the glass, it softened somewhat. Then we had the 2003 Barolo Reserva. This hot vintage resulted in a fairly approachable wine with a nose of earth, tar, mushrooms, fruit, and spice. Drink now to 2025.

Borgogno is a great place to visit because it has an extensive library which allows one to appreciate just how great older Barolo can be with its secondary and tertiary flavors and scents. Next came the 1998 Reserva, which although from a feminine year, is maturing magnificently. I believe this wine will improve and hold for 10-20 years. At present it shows fine tannins, rose, plum, cedar, and tobacco.

Our final wine was the 1982 Reserva Barolo, which is



one of my all-time favorite vintages. The tasting culminated when I identified this wine and as a result we were all treated to a very memorable experience and an additional pour. This wine is at a point of perfection. It is robust with a deep, great nose and long aftertaste. The finish showed cherry, licorice, mushroom, fennel, and rose canes. This would be superb with steak, lamb, or with white truffles on risotto or tagliatelle.

We then went to Palas Cerequio in La Morra for a tasting and lunch. This property is owned by Michele Chiarlo. We started with their Gavi Rovereto followed by the Barbera Orme and the Nebbiolo Il Principe. These were excellent examples of the respective appellations. Next served was the 2012 Barolo Tortoniano and finally one of the great Baroli from 2012, Cannubi. We ate a variety of appetizers with these wines. First course was the octopus served with the Gavi followed by the tagliatelle with Bianchi tartuffi accompanied by Barolo Cannubi. What an experience!

Our last visit was one of my greatest wine experiences. For many years I had visited Piemonte and was very fortunate to have met all of its greatest winemakers. None of these people loom larger than my great friend Aldo Conterno of Poderi Aldo Conterno. A shy and reticent man, he made a huge impact on the world of wine. I visited him each time I was in the region which was remarkable for one who allowed few visitors. After he died in 2012, I wrote an obituary in Quintessential



*Jim Bryant and Giacomo Conterno outside the winery.*

Barrington. We were granted a three-hour visit hosted by one of his sons, Giacomo. I have never been so honored as when Giacomo told our group that he had put a copy of my obituary of his dad in a scrapbook so that his children could see their grandfather through my eyes. The room was filled with emotion and tears (in my case). Giacomo led us through a great degustation including Barbara d'Alba Conca Tre Pica 2013, Nebbiolo Langhe Il Favot 2011, Barolo Colonnello 2012, Barolo Cicala

2012, Barolo Romirasco Bussia 2012, and Barolo Gran Bussia 2006 Reserva.

Afterwards, he took us on an hour tour of the winery which includes the greatest artifacts relating to Italian wine going back to the Middle Ages. This collection features the world's largest wine bottle, and a large wine container on wheels from which citizens obtained their wine as it passed through the villages and a hand-carved press. Once I told Aldo that the carver of the screw or worm of this press must have been very mechanically blessed and he answered "yes", but said, "imagine the skill of the carver to be able to do the female receptacle for the worm."

As we bid Giacomo farewell, we were all overcome with emotions. Imagine, we were the only people in the winery including employees, for three hours with the owner for our private experience in a place that allows few, if any, visitors.

After the extensive tasting, we went to one of Italy's best and most famous restaurants, Il Giardino da Felecin. I have visited often and consider myself a friend of the owner, Nino, as I was of Giorgio, his father. On each visit, I have been allowed unsupervised access to one of the world's great cellars of Nebbiolo wines. This time I took those of our group who wished this experience and it was deeply appreciated. We had a fantastic dinner accompanied by world-class wines. This was a great finale to a memorable week of feasts. A *Vôtre Santé!* 



*This antique wine barrel and cart was pulled through the town so people could fill up their wine vessels.*