

# Giacomo Conterno

## *The Gold Standard for Traditionally Made Barolo*

For 45 years, until his death in 2004, Giovanni Conterno forged a reputation as the greatest of all Barolo producers, irrespective of style. The wines he made were the quintessence of “traditional” Barolo: rich, powerful, massively structured, and capable of long development in bottle.

For many, his heroic Monfortino—the product of wild temperature swings during fermentation and 6 to 8 years in barrel—is the most perfect expression of the Nebbiolo grape. As for his glorious Barolo Cascina Francia, it has long been the benchmark against which other producers measure their own efforts.

Giovanni left the world many great vintages of Barolo, including 1964, 1971, 1978, 1985, 1990, 1996, 1999 and 2001. But possibly his greatest legacy was to hand over his important work to his gifted son Roberto. A talented winemaker in his own right, Roberto not only shares his father’s brilliance but is equally determined to uphold his family’s traditions. He could follow other young Langhe winemakers into modernism, but he never will. In his words, the wines of Giacomo Conterno will always belong to the generations that came before him.

### **The First Important Barolo**

The Conterno crown jewel, Monfortino, is not only arguably the greatest Barolo; it was also the very first Barolo made in what has come to be known as the classic style.

At the time that Giovanni Conterno’s father Giacomo served in World War I, Barolo was generally sold in either cask or



*At left, Giovanni Conterno and at right his son Roberto who is carrying on the Conterno family legacy.*

demijohn, meant for early drinking. But when Giacomo returned from the war, he decided to create a Barolo with immense aging potential. His first wine was a 1920 Barolo Riserva, and he soon adopted the name Monfortino in honor of his home village Monforte d’Alba.

For the next 54 years, Giacomo—and then his son Giovanni—made Barolo in much the same way. Two Barolos were made, always from purchased grapes, the main distinction being fermentation technique and time in cask.

### **A Noble Vineyard**

Then, in 1974, Giovanni acquired the Cascina Francia vineyard in Serralunga. With its fabulous exposure, the site was perfect for the powerful Conterno style, and Giovanni immediately stopped buying grapes, relying on approximately 5 hectares of Nebbiolo to produce about 600 cases of Monfortino and 1500 cases of Cascina Francia. The ownership of Cascina Francia also made it possible for Giovanni to produce a tiny amount of some of the Langhe’s finest, and most sought-after, Barbera.

Like his father, Roberto is patient in raising his wines. Consequently, the period from harvest to release is two years for his Barbera “Cascina Francia,” four years for Barolo “Cascina Francia” and seven years for Barolo “Monfortino.”

The wines of Giacomo Conterno are among the glories of Piemontese winemaking.

# GIACOMO CONTERNO

Piedmont, Italy

## OVERVIEW

Proprietor: Roberto Conterno  
Winemaker: Roberto Conterno

The Conterno Barolos have been famous since the 1920s, and Roberto Conterno is the third generation to run the firm founded by his grandfather Giacomo. Roberto's father Giovanni purchased the great Cascina Francia cru in Serralunga in 1974, and it was the sole source of fruit for all their wines until 2008. In 2008, Roberto Conterno purchased three hectares in Serralunga's Cerretta cru, and new wines will soon be made from this parcel.

## VINEYARD INFORMATION

Soils: Many variations of calcareous marls.  
Zone: Serralunga d'Alba

## RECENT VINTAGES

2007 – Very good to excellent Barolo vintage. Wines are extremely fresh and aromatic. A masterful Barbera vintage  
2006 – An excellent vintage. Expressive wines with great purity and richness.  
2005 – A mixed vintage with potential for strong wines, but not at the level of 04 or 06.  
2004 – Another great vintage. Classic wines in the style of 2001.  
2003 – A hot, dry year that produced atypically lush, forward, yet nuanced, Barolo and Barbera for near-term drinking. No Monfortino was produced.

## ADDITIONAL WINEMAKING NOTES

In years of outstanding quality, a selection is made while the Nebbiolo grapes are still on the vines, and the very best are reserved to become Monfortino. The two Barolos are fermented identically, with the exception that no temperature control is employed for Monfortino—no matter how high the temperatures may go. The wines are then racked into their respective *botti* for *élevage*. The Barolo "Cascina Francia" is bottled after approximately four years in wood, and the Monfortino after approximately seven years.

## THE WINES

### Barbera d'Alba "Cascina Francia"

Fruit source: Cascina Francia cru in Serralunga Ave. Yield: 30-35 hL/hA  
Fermentation: 2-3 weeks in wooden vats with regular breaking-up of the caps.  
Aging: 2 years in large cask.  
Production: 1,800-2,100 cases

### Barolo "Cascina Francia"

Fruit source: Cascina Francia cru in Serralunga Ave. Yield: 30-35 hL/hA  
Fermentation: 3-4 weeks in wooden vats with regular breaking-up of the caps.  
Aging: 4 years in large cask.  
Production: 1,800 cases

### Barolo "Monfortino"

Fruit source: Cascina Francia cru in Serralunga Ave. Yield: 30 hL/hA  
Fermentation: 3-4 weeks in wooden vats with regular breaking-up of the caps. No temperature control.  
Aging: minimum 7 years in large cask.  
Production: 580 cases