

# BERGAMOT WINE co

All White Wine Club

July 2021

## WHITE WINES OF PIEDMONT

Piedmont. Home to some of the world's greatest red wines. Nebbiolo in all forms, be it Barolo, Barbaresco or any micro production from Alto-Piemonte. Barbera and Dolcetto; the classics. Even the rogue (yet delicious) reds like Grignolino, Ruche, Pelaverga, Freisa. **But what of white wines?**

There is treasure to be had, for sure, but somewhat hard to find. Cortese and Arneis were the only known grape variety names on our shores and shelves for a long time and the quality varied, but many were less than inspired. It has finally become a far more interesting landscape, ever since we've been introduced to this month's Fabulous Four grape varieties: fun Favorita, aromatic Arneis, enlightening Erbaluce and tantalizing Timorasso. So sip up, cool down, and enjoy some summer sunshine in a glass.

- Kevin Wardell, July 2021

## WINE NO. 1

Cieck Erbaluce di Caluso

Erbaluce

Caluso, Piemonte, Italy, 2020

### GRAPE: ERBALUCE [air-bah LOO-chay]

Among Piemonte's most ancient high-quality white grapes, Erbaluce produces wines that are fresh and mineral-driven. This cultivar has almost translucent green grapes that are "pale as the dawn's light." As a finicky, virus-prone variety, Erbaluce reaches its full potential in the hamlet of Caluso, which has uniquely nutrient-poor sandy and gravelly soils. A small amphitheater, just a couple miles long, houses the best sites. In the 19th century the white wines from this area sold for more than ten times that of the local red wines. Caluso was designated Piemonte's first DOC for white wines in 1967 and won DOCG status in 2010. In addition to still, dry wines Erbaluce's signature high acid make it a standout for sparkling and sweet (passito) renditions.

**GROWER:** Remo Falconieri founded Cieck in 1985 and was one of the original five producers in San Giorgio Canavese (where the red wines of Carema are also made), about an hour's drive north of Turin. Now in his eighties, Remo has help in the cellar from his daughter Lia and Domenico Caretto. He consults for a number of top estates in the area while continuing to turn out benchmark Erbaluce under his own brand. In addition to this still Erbaluce, Remo is equally renowned for his beautifully balanced sparkling and sweet (passito) renditions from his famous pergola-trained vines.

Falconieri keeps his Erbaluce fresh and vibrant by gently whole-cluster pressing the fruit and fermenting the juice cool in stainless steel tanks. It is then left to age on its fine lees for at least two months and malolactic fermentation is inhibited, keeping it razor sharp.

**GLASS:** Let this subtle beauty open up and so many things will come to light! It shows an exotic side, with an array of tropical fruits like under-ripe white pineapple, mandarins and lychee fruit, but the wine is actually quite restrained and elegant with a pretty iris scent and that signature herbal character that gives it its name. Those salted herbs linger into the finish, with just a touch of phenolic tannin structure.

**SIDE NOTES:** Erbaluce Libre! A local myth tells the tale of how the fairy Albaluce (*alba* "dawn" and *luce* "light") blessed the townspeople of Caluso with the Erbaluce grape as her gift, leading to the grape's name.

## WINE NO. 2

Angelo Negro 'Onorata'

Favorita

Langhe, Piemonte, Italy 2020

### GRAPE: FAVORITA [FAH-VOH-rhee-tah]

Favorita is grown exclusively in Piedmont around the Roero region, where 260 acres of it are planted. It is thought to have arrived more than 300 years ago via Ligurian oil merchants, which makes sense, since recent genetic testing has determined that Piemonte's Favorita is the same grape as Liguria's Vermentino and Pigato. Historically, Favorita was blended with Nebbiolo to round out its edges, back when that was a common tool (see: Sangiovese + Trebbiano, Syrah + Viognier etc.) Today you'll find it produces crisp and refreshing varietal wine, and in some cases, complete with a slight spritz.

**GROWER:** Angelo Negro e Figli is a legend in Roero. The winery dates back to 1670, and remains in family hands. In the 1980's when others in the region were experimenting with international grape varieties, the Negros made a conscious decision to remain dedicated to grapes native to their region. They now organically farm 173 acres of prime vineyard land in four main areas: Cascina Perdaudin in Monteu Roero, Cascina San Vittore in Canale (Roero), Cascina Basarin in Neive (Barbaresco), and Cascina Baudana, in the municipality of Serralunga d'Alba (Barolo).

Vineyard sustainability is a central focus for the Negros. They foster biodiversity along the vineyard perimeter to promote pollinator populations. Negro's Favorita is fermented cool in stainless steel tanks. Malolactic fermentation is inhibited to keep the wine crisp.

**GLASS:** As refreshing as a poolside sprite, as minerally as vitamin water, as sweet as ginger tea, this pretty summer sip is like peeling a pomelo in a tropical thunderstorm. Bright and frisky, with tons of pineapple, guava, and kiwifruit, the whole fruit cornucopia wraps up with a pretty little acid perk that puts the Flave in Favorita.

**SIDE NOTES:** Earthworm farming plays a crucial role in Negro's sustainable approach. The humus created by California Red Worm castings (worm poop) provides an organic fertilizer rich in enzymes and microorganisms that nourish the vines' roots and make them more resistant to attack by insects and parasites.

### WINE NO. 3

Angelo Negro 'Sierra Lupini'

Arneis

Roero, Piemonte, Italy 2018

#### GRAPE: ARNEIS [ahr-NAYZ]

Arneis is considered *the* white grape of the Roero, and even sports the synonym Nebbiolo Bianco, only because it is planted in the neighborhood of the prestigious red VIP Nebbiolo (no relation.) It may take its name from the local dialect: *arneis* apparently is a difficult and fussy person, and a believable nickname considering how difficult it is to grow (and to make delicious wine from). It can lose its acid in the blink of an eye, and so the best examples, which are few and far between, are only found in the best vintages and in the hands of a few great producers who know how to get the nice out of Arneis.

**GROWER:** Angelo Negro e Figli is currently run by Giovanni Negro along with his wife and four children. They produced the first dry Roero Arneis on record in 1971 and are considered a master of the variety. This single vineyard Arneis is organically grown in the Sierra Lupini vineyard, which sits at a southwestern exposure 1,000 feet above sea level in calcareous sandy soils. It is fermented cool in stainless steel tanks then rests sur-lie for four months before bottling. Malolactic fermentation is inhibited to retain verve in the wine.

**GLASS:** Griovanni and the family confirm that they are truly masters of Arneis in this glass! With so much cascading minerality the aromatics unfold with chamomile flowers and a sampler plate of fresh pears and apple blossoms, crisp clean sheets, and succulent star fruits. The acid is as crisp as grapefruit and the rich texture is like small blanched almonds. Pair this Sierra Lupini Arneis with lupini beans e questo è tutto!

**SIDE NOTES:** Giovanni Negro certainly has a way with this very difficult to manage grape variety. He has recently released an 'unfiltered' bottling that gives Arneis a whole different dimension. Trendy? Perhaps, Delicious? Indeed!

## WINE NO. 4

Ezio Poggio 'Archetipo'

Timorasso

Terre di Libarna, Colli Tortonesi, Piemonte, Italy, 2018

### GRAPE: TIMORASSO [team-oh-RAHS-oh]

Is it Chablis? Savennières? Riesling? The guesses that emerge from blind tasting wine nerds on Timorasso are all over the map but point to the grape's excellence. It's sort of mind blowing that this variety is still so under the radar. Timorasso was more widely planted around Piemonte in the middle ages but lost favor after phylloxera devastated the area in 1879 and the easy-to-grow-but-middling Cortese won out when replanting took place.

Grown primarily in the Colli Tortonesi DOC, it wasn't until the 1980's that Walter Massa and a group of young vigneroni rediscovered the variety and began to revive it. By the new millennium there were quite a few producers, and its ancient Roman name *Derthona* became the favored name of the wine made from 100% Timorasso in the area around the town of Tortona.

**GROWER:** Ezio Poggio first planted Timorasso in 2004 at 2,000 feet of elevation in southeastern Piemonte, in the mountains bordering Liguria. This is the highest elevation in which Timorasso is grown and it leads to a unique expression of the grape. Terre di Libarna is the smaller of two subzone of the Colli Tortonesi DOC, encompassing just 37 acres. Soils here are a mix of calcareous clay and limestone, with marine sediment strewn throughout.

Selected from two parcels, Archetipo "*archetype*" is Ezio's purest expression of Timorasso. Fermentation and aging take place in stainless steel tanks where the wine rests on its lees for 14 months before bottling.

**GLASS:** This "highest altitude Timorasso" shows its elevation expression with heady aromatics of steeped pine needles and summer rains. It shows classic Riesling-ish petrol and lemon oil viscosity, with cotton candy crushed rocks and a saline cut of oyster shells and aromatics of lemongrass. Personified, this Timorasso speaks French, drinks aged Chenin blanc, and picnics on fine cheeses in the peaks of Alps. Complex and somewhat quirky, Timorasso takes time to understand, but this wine makes loving it super simple.

**SIDE NOTES:** Timorasso is THE white grape to watch right now. Once only championed by 9 small producers like Walter Massa and Ezio Poggio, now the big names like Borgogno, Roagna, Scarpa, Vietti, and Pio Cesare are all on board the Timorasso train.