

Massimo Clerico



When we determined to make an intensive exploration of the wines of the Alto Piemonte years ago, we first descended on the tiny appellation of Lessona in the province of Biella. We had had limited but satisfying exposure to the wines of Lessona way back in the late 1970's as produced by the Sella family, major landholders (and bankers) in the area. There are a mere 23 hectares in the appellation and they are all situated within the confines of the village of the same name. It was our great good fortune then to encounter Massimo and Concetta Clerico on our first foray into Lessona in search of this elusive wine.

The Clerico family has worked the land in Lessona since the 1700's. In fact, the Clerico estate, under the direction of Sandrino Clerico (Massimo's father), was one of the three original vineyards awarded the right to the Lessona appellation when it was first created in 1976. The Clerico family owns two hectares within the designated Lessona zone which, by the way, makes the Clerico azienda the third largest landholder in the appellation! Massimo Clerico produces his wines exclusively from grapes grown in his own vineyards, most of which surround the family home and cantina on a hill overlooking the town of Lessona. The vineyards are divided into four separate parcels: The "Vigna Leria," the "Vigna Gaja," which has the oldest plantings (dating from 1970), The "Vigneto del Putin" (planted to Nebbiolo in 1984), and the newest vineyard (planted in 2008), the "Vigneto del Gorena." Three wines are produced at the estate, the most noble being the Lessona, accompanied by the Spanna (local name for Nebbiolo) from the Costa della Sesia appellation and the single vineyard Costa della Sesia "Ca' du Leria," which is a blend of Nebbiolo, Croatina and Vespolina.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Practicing Organic
- **Treatments:** Copper and sulfur only
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Acidic pliocene sands and white clays
- **Vines:** Trained in Guyot and planted at 2,500-3,000 vines/ha, vines average 40 years old.
- **Yields:** Controlled through pruning, debudding, and green harvesting on young vines if necessary
- **Harvest:** Entirely manual, usually early-late October
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit



Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Following total destemming, wines ferment with selected yeasts in stainless-steel tanks. Cuvaison lasts c. 65 days.
- **Extraction:** Submersed cap vinification
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic pressing
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Following alcoholic fermentation and maceration, via inoculation

Aging:

- **Élevage:** Wines age for 12-36 months in large, neutral, French oak casks, with some of the wine in neutral barriques.
- **Lees:** Wines are racked off their lees following malolactic and remain on their fine lees until assemblage prior to bottling.
- **Fining and Filtration:** Wines are unfinned and see cartridge filtration
- **Sulfur:** Applied at harvest, after vinification, after malolactic, at rackings, and at bottling, with c. 85 mg/l total sulfur