

Monsecco



Many years ago, in the late 1970's, I remember drinking bottles of Monsecco Gattinara from the 1960's and early 1970's (most particularly the 1971 and 1974) with extreme glee. Powerful yet graceful wines that shone a bright light on another corner of the world of Nebbiolo, a fitting companion to the Barolos from Brovia, the Barbarescos from De Forville and the Caremas from Ferrando. Then, all of a sudden the wines of Monsecco disappeared from view. The Monsecco estate was history! So, I was pleased when I spoke with Giorgio Zanetta, whose family has a long history of producing wine in the Alto Piemonte, to hear that it was the family's objective to revive the royal name of Monsecco.

For many decades, Lorenzo Zanetta, grandfather to Giorgio, had worked as a négociant in the wine trade, specializing in producing wines from the neighboring zones of "Coste delle Sesia" and "Colline Novaresi" in the area known as the Alto Piemonte. His sons, Sergio (father to Giorgio) and Valter, decided, in 1993, to revive the name and image of Monsecco, dedicating themselves to the task of producing the finest versions of the local wines using only local grape varieties. To that end and over time, they purchased five hectares of vineyards and currently rent an additional three hectares where only Nebbiolo, Vespolina, Uva Rara and Croatina are planted. From these assorted sites, they craft in the most traditional manner a series of wines culminating in their formidable standard-bearer: the grand Gattinara.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Practicing Organic
- **Treatments:** Copper and sulfur only
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Red volcanic porphyry and granitic glacial moraine
- **Vines:** Trained in Guyot and planted at 2,000-4,000 vines/ha
- **Yields:** Controlled through pruning, debudding, yields average 40-70 hl/ha
- **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.
- **Extraction:** Wines see pumpovers during fermentation.
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic pressing
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, directly following alcoholic fermentation

Aging:

- **Élevage:** Vespolina spends c. 6 months in stainless-steel tanks. Other wines spend 18-36 months in large oak botti and a small number of used, 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 some wines see plate filtration if necessary. Most wines are unfiltered.
- **Sulfur:** Applied after fermentation, after malolactic, and at bottling