

Tenuta Cucco: Rebuilding a Lost Barolo Cru

Piero Rossi Cairo is quite candid that, with the acquisition of Tenuta Cucco and rebuilding of an historic Barolo cru, he and his family are doing something ‘modern’. The transparency with which he speaks about the project is commendable. There is no attempt to ‘spin’ a portrayal of fanciful dynastic wine family narrative. No camouflage to obscure that his chosen profession of attorney precedes his entry into the wine life – he readily admits that he, “...was not a farmer, but became a farmer.”

According to Piero, he will not rely upon labeling maneuvers or \$30 flash sale promotions to attract your consumer attention.



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vintrospective Piero Rossi Cairo of Tenuta Cucco talks Barolo at La Pizza Fresca NYC
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Instead, where it comes to the wines, Piero smartly chooses a time-honored approach, the only one that matters, really, to earn your patronage: he'll rely on what's in the bottle.

Family wine holdings include the bio-dynamically farmed La Raia, with 45 hectares under vine to Cortese and Barbera; and the aforementioned Tenuta Cucco, set to be certified organic in May 2018, with 12 hectares (9 nebbiolo, 3 leased hectares to

barbera), the star of which includes the historic cru of Cucco, situated at the best exposed/highest point of Cerrati. A second cru, Bricco Volterra, will not be marketed until 2022.

Gavi

La Raia researched some 230 indigenous yeasts between grapes and cellar. After testing, the estate finally settled on one that worked especially well. As the beauty of Cortese is to be found in the delicate flavor and detail of its wines, La Raia smartly chose a production path favoring stainless steel and time on lees, avoiding the risk of overpowering, aggressive oak.

La Raia's Gavi DOCG 2015 is impeccably clean and aromatic, scents of fruit and white flowers, overtones of almond and ginger, and an attractively warm finish.

The estate's Gavi Riserva DOCG 2015, produced from a single vineyard of 60-70 year old vines, drinks with more body, depth, complexity and detail. There is a viscosity, too, that adds to palate richness, and a markedly long, savory finish.

Barolo

Tenuta Cucco is located in Serralunga d'Alba, a Barolo commune known for austere, tannic wines of outstanding structure. (One mustn't forget that austerity and tannins...and patience...are part of the Barolo experience.)



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Tenuta Cucco's Barolo DOCG del Comune di Serralunga d'Alba 2012 is no exception, announcing itself with a calling card of formidable tannic structure. Intense and high-spirited, the wine is well-proportioned, showing classic varietal aromas, scent of underbrush. Needs more time, but has a long life ahead.

The estate's Barolo DOCG del Comune di Serralunga d'Alba 2013 is easier to appreciate at the moment, showing ripe fruit, wonderful balance, notes of dried

flowers, earth, and subtle spice.

Cucco's Barolo DOCG Cerrati 2012 is a single vineyard production of 8k-12k bottles. Diplomatically styled, the wine straddles middle ground between traditional and modern, with 1 year French / 1 year Slavonian oak. An especially well-balanced wine bringing aromas and flavors of cherries, small berries, savory herb, forest floor. Quite enjoyable now, this will be a remarkable wine a few years down the road.

Tenuta Cucco Barolo DOCG Cerrati "Vigna Cucco" Riserva 2011 is made in a modern style, aged in medium toast French barrique. A flagship wine of Tenuta Cucco, it is elegant and complex, with panoramic aromatics including scents of rose, dried fruit and flowers, warm spice. A sonorous, mosaic-like finish rewards your attention with its persistence. Massively cellar-able.

Coda

Opting again to let "what's in the bottle" do the talking, Piero stands aside as a Barolo Serralunga d'Alba 2007 taken from the cellar of Cucco's previous owner gives compelling evidence of the excellence that can be achieved from Cucco. Further testimony is heard from a Barolo Serralunga d'Alba 1995 of similar provenance, lest any doubt should remain among tasters present. That wine's umami notes, tasted with a mouthful of La Pizza Fresca's mushroom pizza are reverberating joy, any remembrance of Serralunga austerity transformed by time to Zen-like calm, serene tannins and ethereal repose.

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