

LA CA'NOVA

PIEDMONT



This estate has quietly been making outstanding, terroir-driven Barbarescos for generations from two of the denomination's top crus, Montestefano and Montefico. And perhaps the most remarkable aspect is that these polished and compelling wines are made with almost no use of modern technology.

Pietro Rocca, the family's smiling and modest patriarch is the fourth generation of grape growers. In the early 1970s, he began making and bottling Barbarescos; before that, his family sold grapes to none other than Angelo Gaja and his father before him. There is no secret as to why these ones are quintessential expressions of Nebbiolo – it all starts in the Vineyards with healthy grapes that have reached ideal ripening.

Their single vineyard bottlings come from two of the most coveted sites in Barbaresco. Montestefano produces some of the most structured Barbarescos, and the Roccas own prime parcels situated at 270 m above sea level with full southern exposures. Montefico, where the Roccas own the Bric Mentina Vineyard, has the same altitude, Southern and southeastern exposure, and less marly soil.

Today Pietro is joined by his sons Marco, an enologist, and Ivan, an agronomist who tends to the vineyards. The firm adopts a strictly hands off approach to the winery, using only wild yeast for fermentation, which takes place mostly in steel tanks and three wooden conical vats, but with no temperature control. Just before fermentation is complete, the firm continues fermentation and maceration with the antique tradition known as steccatura, whereby wooden planks keep the cap submerged in the tank. This time-consuming method gently extracts more color and polyphenols. For the firm's single-vineyard bottlings, fermentation and maceration generally take twenty-five to thirty days.

After fermentation the firm ages its Barbarescos in 30 hectoliter casks, but rather than Slovenian oak, Pietro prefers Austrian oak: "They are untoasted and neutral, and are the best-quality barrels I have ever seen. In fourteen years, not one has ever leaked a drop." Pietro recounts that eschewing barriques a decade ago was very difficult, especially since his children were pushing him to switch over. "Now they're glad we didn't because these days there is a strong interest in traditionally crafted wines, but it was a battle for a few years," he says. The wines are also unfiltered, and besides being quintessential Barbarescos with finesse and structure, they are also extremely well prices. - Kerin O'Keefe



"The more you know about wine, the more you'll want to know about us."
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