

Taking flight with Barbaresco at vin48 with Marchesi di Gresy

Avon eatery hosts wine tasting on Tuesday

By Suzanne Hoffman
 Special to the Daily

“Do you know Jeffrey Chilcott?” It’s a question many Anglophone oenophiles ask when discussing their winery adventures in Piemonte’s Langhe.

Most often, the answer is “yes.” Those who answer affirmatively know the delights of educationally intense oenological experiences with Chilcott at the famed Barbaresco winery, Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy. Whether a Nebbiolo novice or an experienced lover of Barbaresco’s strong tannins, a wine tasting with Chilcott should top every wine traveler’s bucket list.

Can’t make it to Barbaresco? Greg Eyon, partner and wine director at vin48 in Avon, has just the solution. The same week the skiing world schusses into Beaver Creek and Vail, Jeffrey Chilcott will be speeding through Colorado, with a whistle stop in the Vail Valley.

On Tuesday, between 5 and 7:30 p.m., Chilcott will pour flights of three of Marchesi di Gresy’s wines, including Barbaresco Martinenga, for diners in the bar and main dining room. To drink the rich and expressive wines of Marchesi di Gresy is to sip fruits from ancient times.

ANCIENT ROOTS OF BARBARESCO

Barbaresco, like all of Langhe, is steeped in ancient history. The famed Marchesi di Gresy winery lies in Martinenga, at the base of the south facing natural amphitheater above the Rio Sordo valley. Long before vineyards carpeted the Langhe hills, Martinenga was home to vast oak forests, symbols of strength to barbaric tribes who preceded the Romans in Barbaresco.

The Liguri Stazielli worshipped there to the Celtic god of strength, Martiningen. Conquering Romans kept the war theme and named it Villa Martis in honor of Mars, their god of war. It’s also the birthplace of Roman Emperor Publio Elvio Pertinace in 126 A.D.

Worshippers still flock to Martinenga, a temple of strong, bold Nebbiolo wines from Barbaresco’s largest cru monopole. The 29.5 acres of prime Nebbiolo vines bear fruit for Marchesi di Gresy’s three Barbaresco D.O.C.G.: flagship Martinenga and kingpins Camp Gros and Gaiun.

Like many Piemonte family-owned wineries, the di Gresy family’s continual presence on land Alberto di Gresy now farms began centuries ago. In 1797, the noble di Gresy family purchased the Martinenga property to add to their holdings atop the area’s highest hill, Monte Aribaldo in nearby Treiso. For nearly two centuries, the di Gresy family produced and sold their prized grapes in the Alba grape market each autumn.

Alberto di Gresy assumed control of the estate in the 1960s. Not surprisingly given di Gresy’s drive and determination, he grew weary of seeing others reap the rewards of converting the fruits of their labors into wine. In 1973, in the early days of Angelo Gaja’s successful Herculean efforts to place Barbaresco on the same world stage as the older, larger and much revered Barolo denomination, di Gresy produced his first distinctive wines labeled with the family’s crest.

With excellent fruit from four estates in the Langhe and Monferrato zones, di Gresy grew his portfolio

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to 16 red and white wines. Thanks to his dedication to the terroir and the highest standards of vineyard and cellar practices, Marchesi di Gresy’s wines now reach discerning Barbaresco lovers across the globe.



MASTERING THE CELLAR

Chilcott's tenure with Marchesi di Gresy began in 1991. He didn't settle down full-time at the winery until 1998, following a few years of "door knocking" that led to work in Burgundy and wine regions of New Zealand and Italy. As cellar master, Chilcott manages the day-to-day operations in the cantina, but he also has an important marketing function as one of the winery's Anglophone emissaries.

The seasons have blurred for Chilcott and there is always something for him to do. Neither grapes nor wines can wait when attention is needed. Throughout the year, Chilcott works closely with winemaker Matteo Sasso and oenological consultant Piero Ballario. After the rigors of the harvest and demanding work in the cellar thereafter, Chilcott returns to New Zealand for well-deserved rest and visits to his native country's expanding wine regions.

It's on the return portion of his recent New Zealand trip that Chilcott is stopping briefly in Colorado.

VINOUS TRIUMVIRATE

The first wine in the Marchesi di Gresy flight is 2011 Dolcetto d'Alba from vineyards that ring Monte Aribaldo. Although Langhe's Dolcetto sadly is falling out of favor, due in part to a greater choice of white wines in the region, Marchesi di Gresy and their customers have enjoyed increased sales in the United States. Chilcott describes the 2011 Dolcetto as "quite rich for a Treiso Dolcetto."

The warm vintage with a lower crop yield produced a "nice extract, made just right in tanks without too much skin contact." Dolcetto is perfect for daily enjoyment as an aperitivo or at any stage of the meal. Although they make world famous wines, it's humble Dolcetto that graces family tables of Langhe winemakers.

The global popularity of Nebbiolo from

all regions of Piemonte, particularly the Langhe and Roero, continues to climb.

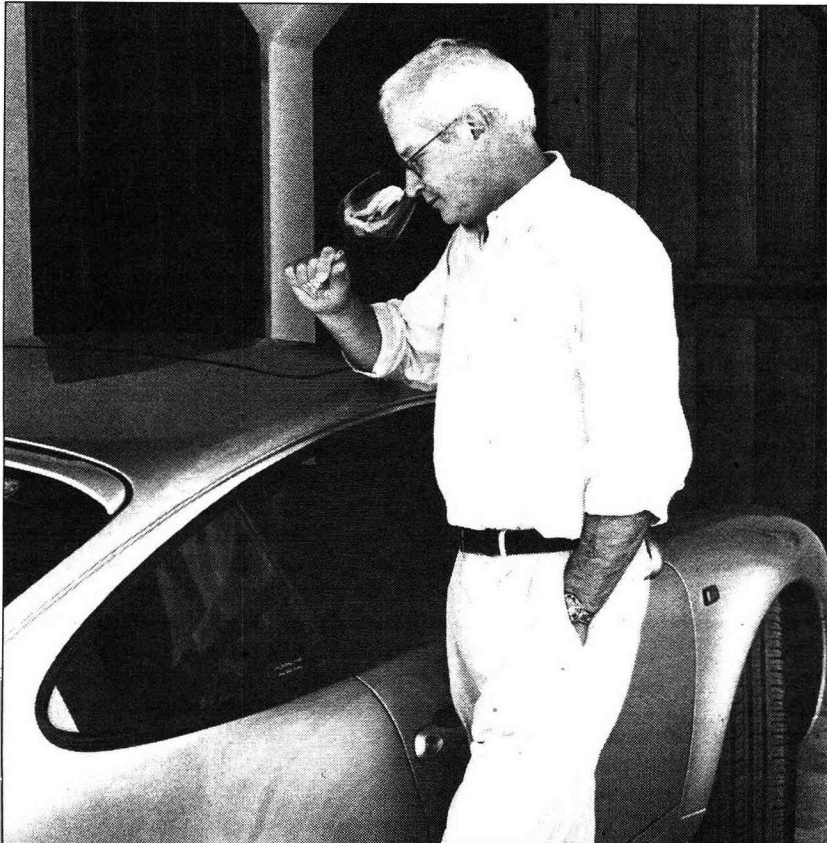
Made from the same varietal as its big brothers Barbaresco and Barolo, this wine sells for a much lower price, yet has the potential to age. The ruby red 2013 Langhe Nebbiolo is from a vintage that worried many producers in the early rainy months of the growing season, but finished strong after the sun emerged in June to produce an excellent, late-picked crop. Unlike Barbaresco, this Nebbiolo sees no oak and ages in cement tanks. In spring 2014, the winery bottled this Nebbiolo Chilcott describes as "classic and very inviting, an almost extra-virgin style, great for casual dining." Chilcott suggests Langhe Nebbiolo for frequent enjoyment of the powerful varietal.

The grand finale of this well-chosen triumvirate of Marchesi di Gresy wines is 2010 Barbaresco Martinenga. Chilcott believes this wine "gives a great opportunity to show why Barbaresco is enjoying a good time in the marketplace beside the strong character Barolos."

Labeled as a "super balanced vintage," 2010 produced Barbaresco possessing great aging potential and displaying "super correspondence between nose and palate."

On a personal note, the wines from Marchesi di Gresy were the first Piemonte wines my husband and I purchased in 2000. Recently, we opened all three of the winery's Barbarescos from 1997. Made from grapes from different parts of the same vineyard, each wine maintained its bright, garnet color and had its own distinctive aromas and flavors ranging from red fruits to barnyard and earth. Fifteen years after bottling, the wines are fabulous representatives of the hot, yet highly-regarded vintage.

Suzanne Hoffman is a freelance writer specializing in food, wine and travel. Her blog is www.winefamilies.com.



MARCHESI DI GRESY | SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

Proprietor of Marchesi di Gresy, Alberto di Gresy, enjoys the aromas of his award-winning Barbaresco. On Tuesday at vin48, Jeffrey Chilcott will pour flights of three of Marchesi di Gresy's wines.



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At Marchesi di Gresy, Nebbiolo vines in Martinenga's natural amphitheater slumber under winter's snow and beneath Barbaresco's Antica Torre.