



Winemaker: Federico Stella
Generation: 4th



PODERI ELIA

Barbera d'Asti DOCG Superiore Abletti

Federico Stella has very old Barbera vines on his Barbaresco estate, and he refuses to tear them out in favor of the more valuable Nebbiolo, as the wines they produce are so tremendous. Hence, his Barbera d'Asti - smooth, nuanced, and neo-classically styled. Freshly pressed cranberries on the nose are accentuated by lush, bright pomegranate. And, as always with the wines of Federico Stella, the tannins are very softly integrated, always granular and unimposing. A truly sophisticated take on this iconic variety.

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

Federico Stella is one of those pensive, unflagging producers who has contributed to Piedmont's sterling reputation for wine. Everything he creates is the result of meticulous thought and patience, with his opus of Barbaresco slowly building over time.

ENOLOGIST

Federico Stella



TASTING NOTES

- Color** Intense ruby
- Nose** Ripe red fruit including raspberry
- Palate** Elevated, with dark plum, cherry and "discreet" tannins
- Finish** Layered and mouth-watering



VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

Vineyard Location	Barbera d'Asti DOCG, Piedmont
Vineyard Size	4 ha
Varietals List	100% Barbera
Farming Practices	Sustainably farmed, including dry-farmed; grapes picked by hand
Elevation	300 m
Soils	Calcareous clay
Maturation Summary	Bottled for 1 month
Alcohol	14.0 %
Acidity	6 g/liter
Residual Sugar	2 g/liter
Annual Production	18,000 bottles



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PIEDMONT

As the name might suggest, Piedmont (trans. 'foot of the mountain') lies in the NW corner of Italy, with Alps shielding it on two sides. 40% of the region is in fact mountainous, and an additional 30% covered in subalpine hills. Borders are shared with Switzerland to the north and France to the west, with the Mediterranean coastline just 90 minutes south. This dual proximity lends itself to bold, structured wines that stand the test of time: ice-cold air from the Alps blows down at night, replacing the warm afternoon temperatures afforded by Mediterranean breezes. These significant diurnal swings allow grapes to develop over longer periods of time, often deepening their natural tannic structure.

Often described as the "Burgundy" of Italy, few would fail to place Piedmont among the world's very finest wine regions. This reputation has been earned in part thanks to its numerous small-scale, family-operated wineries and a near obsessive focus on quality. With entire villages dedicated to the production of wine, it's not unusual to hear stories of winemakers who "sleep amongst their vines", or profess goals such as "making better wine than the French".

Importantly, the region is home to more DOCGs than any other in Italy. Barolo and Barbaresco (accounting for just 3% of Piedmont's production) are just the tip of the iceberg. The Nebbiolo grape alone makes up 13 DOC/DOCG certified wines, and, thanks to topographical variation, the differences between one tiny town and the next can be astounding. With their different altitudes and expositions, for example, the Langhe hills around the town of Alba are Italy's answer to the Côte d'Or. Even though Nebbiolo has a reputation for big tannins and long-term aging, many of the sub-regions (i.e. Langhe, Alba) produce softer styles with a similar weight to whole-cluster Pinot Noir. Single vineyards in close proximity can produce very different wines, which is also why we see so many single-vineyard bottlings.

BARBERA D'ASTI DOCG

Spanning the soft hills of the Asti and Alessandria provinces in eastern Piedmont, the Barbera d'Asti appellation was prehistorically covered by a shallow sea. To this day, ancient shells can even be spotted in certain subzones, and the soils are largely calcareous. (A second soil type does exist in the DOCG's southern areas, where sandier soils can lead to lower acidity and a lighter color in the glass.) Fortunately, the high acid, low tannin, deeply-hued Barbera grape thrives in this milieu, producing zingy, vibrant, food-friendly wines that have gained in prestige over the past few decades. The original DOC established in 1970, for example, was elevated to DOCG in 2008.

With some 3400 hectares under vine, the Barbera d'Asti appellation is roughly 3 times the size of the Barbera d'Alba DOC, its neighbor to the NE. In comparing the 2 subregions, wines from Asti are generally viewed as a shade more accessible and refined than Barbera d'Alba, known in turn for its bigger acidity and structure. Soil plays a role, of course, as does altitude: Barbera d'Asti wines are typically situated on hilly terrain, but at a lower average elevation (90-300 m). Legally, wines from Asti must be made from at least 90% Barbera (vs. 85% in Alba), spend 4 months aging (often in stainless steel) and register at 12% alcohol or above. Today, bottles may also include the name of the 'vigna' or recognized subzone, in which case the minimum alcohol is 12.5%.



PODERI ELIA

Simply put, winemaker Federico Stella is a man with an inner drum. Meticulous beyond belief in the cellar, this talented Barbaresco producer possesses an uncanny instinct for balancing taut structure with smooth tannins and remarkable accessibility. Respectful of Piemontese varieties, but unrelenting in his desire to improve, Stella experimented with over 30 combinations of oak before settling on his cooperage formula (an incredible expense for a small estate)! Consistently, he takes all of his wines right up to the edge of modernity, but then masterfully hovers there, never once crossing the line nor stumbling. Moreover, the partial use of French oak (for most of his reds) aside, Federico employs highly traditional methods - his wines, for example, are neither filtered nor clarified.

Sitting down to taste wine at the family's dinner table, we also get to see the patience and love Federico shows his family. While affable, he always remains serious while discussing his vision. (Indeed, even when the subject of conversation drifts away from Poderi Elia, one always has the distinct impression that, privately, Federico is still thinking about his wine.) With 9 hectares of vines all managed by hand, no corners are cut - yields remain at one bottle per plant regardless of price point. Doubtless, his great grandfather - who founded the estate in 1890 - would be enormously proud.

One of just four villages that comprise the Barbaresco zone, Neive sits perched in the subalpine hills just NE of Alba and some 90 minutes north of the sea. Also, it lies within the Langhe Hills - famous for their Nebbiolo - in the province of Cuneo (which also includes the Alba and Barolo growing zones). Unusually, Neive itself also has some overlap with the Asti designation, which is why we sometimes see Barbera d'Alba or Barbaresco producers making Moscato d'Asti on the same, single estate. Like much of Italy's north, this entire area once lay under the sea, and its "blue tufo" (the shell-strewn, calcareous clay that promotes big tannins and fierce acidity) still bears a name that recognizes its prehistoric, oceanic beginnings.