AZIENDA AGRICOLA
COGNO

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Location, location, location

The winery of Elvio Cogno commands a hill top - Bricco Ravera and like a vinous skirt the vines unfold across the slopes beneath it.

This is Piedmont the kingdom of Nebbiolo used to make the wines of Barolo and Barbaresco, wines which have much in common with those of Burgundy. Both have a single capricious grape variety which can capture the essence of a place. Like Burgundy the land has been divided into parcels each with their own personality. The Elvio Cogno estate produces wine from Novello in Langhe and more specifically from the cru of Ravera where the soil is a calcareous clay with not much sand and the character of the wine is determined by the mix of clay and limestone, the aspect of the slope and the altitude as the vines scale the hill from 280 to 400m.

Valter Fissore is the fortunate chap who tends these vines. It's a family affair - the Cogno family. Valter married Elvio's daughter Nadia. He's surprisingly youthful for someone with 24 vintages under his belt, maybe because he doesn't believe in wasting energy. "I make wine in an enlightened, traditional style," by which he means using innovation and technology to minimise the effort of making wine in this style.

Valter, like his father-in-law, favours a long maceration for a total of 40 days and ages the wine for three years, required by DOCG regs, in traditional large old oak botte (those behind Valter, Nadia and daughter Elena in the photo below). He eschews the modernist approach of shorter fermentation and new oak barriques famously favoured by Angelo Gaja. "We want the tannins of the grape and seed, not wood."

Elvio Cogno make 4 Barolo. The Barolo Ravera comes from a parcel of 5 hectares within the Ravera cru. It is quite high at 380m and the wine is delightfully scented. It is elegant showing a refined touch. Texturally smooth it has lithe tannins. The forrest fruit is threaded with freshness and energy and it finishes on a petally perfume. It has a touch of grip for sure, but not the austerity of Barolo which needs, nay demands a decade before approaching.

Valter describes Nebbiolo as "a macho grape that needs good maturation." The 2009 was a challenging vintage, (hot and complicated by uneven ripening) over-shadowed by the vaunted 2010, but the Barolo Ravera is not over-ripe thanks to the altitude of the vineyard. "In warmer vintage," says Valter, "we have the advantage of freshness and the tannins are not as heavy and dusty as warmer communes such as Barolo village."

Nebbiolo can have a wonderful translucency to the terroir. The body building Barolo fashionable in the Nineties tended to mask the terroir, at least for a while, where a more paired back wine made with a lighter approach allows the limestone soils and cool elevation to speak. There may be a very good

reason why… back to Valter “our life, out food has changed. We no longer eat rich heavy dishes and now the wines need to be more elegant and drinkable. For us in Italy, wine is for food.” Here, here

www.elviocogno.com

Barolo Ravera 2011 £47.25. 2009 £48