

Poderi Aldo Conterno

*Review by Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar
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Giacomo Conterno, who is responsible for the vineyards while his brothers Stefano and Franco take care of winemaking and sales, emphasized to me that this family winery is still old school. "My father [Aldo] always said that you need to wait if you want to have a great vintage. We wait for maximum phenolic ripeness, which normally comes two or three days after full sugar ripeness. Then you get the possibility of extracting a full range of aromas-not just fruit." In 2005, Giacomo went on, the terroir made the difference. "It was necessary to have ripe fruit before the big rain came. We picked half before and half afterwards and did two separate vinifications. We didn't find a big difference in color but there was a big difference in taste. The early-picked fruit gave elegant, pleasurable wines-not especially deep but very floral-but the late fruit showed unbalanced tannins and we sold it off in bulk." Conterno emphasized that the estate makes 40% less wine now than they did in the 1990s. He also admitted that there was a dip in quality here from 1995 through 1999. "The new generation [Giacomo and his brothers] did too much experimentation, and we picked too early. Now we're doing more and different pruning and we sacrifice production to make the best wines possible," he explained. Conterno likened 2006 to 1989 ("classic"), and 2007 to 1990 ("sweet"), but noted that a fierce hail storm in late May of '07 resulted in the loss of 100% of the Romirasco fruit, 70% of Colonnello and 40% of Cicala. As Gran Bussia comes mostly from Romirasco, this bottling will not be offered in 2007.

2006 Aldo Conterno Chardonnay Bussiador Langhe

90 points

(cropped at just 20 hectoliters per hectare, according to Conterno) Good deep yellow-straw color. Complex aromas of mirabelle, pineapple, apricot, coconut and vanilla, lifted by fresh herbs. Broad, lush and sweet, with the concentration of fruits and minerals to support the oak treatment (16 months in new barriques Finishes quite dry, even austere, with a nutty note and a slightly phenolic tannic edge. This should hold up nicely for eight to ten years in bottle. (Incidentally, the last vintage for Conterno's "Printanie" chardonnay was 2004. Says Giacomo: "We

wanted to focus on making a wine with minerality and freshness; otherwise there's no reason to make chardonnay in this region."

2006 Aldo Conterno Barbera d'Alba Conca Tre Pile

91 points

(aged 12 months in all new barriques Deep red-ruby. Captivating aromas of black raspberry, black cherry, licorice and game; some tasters may find this a bit too wild. Then sweet, juicy and serious, with intense dark fruit flavors complicated by mineral and animal nuances. Strong acidity appears to facilitate the integration of the wine's oak component. Finishes long and subtle, with very fine-grained tannins.

2005 Aldo Conterno Barolo

90 points

(since 2004, this bottling has been from 85% Bussia Soprana fruit and 15% fruit from the town of Barolo) Moderately saturated medium red. Scented nose of strawberry and dried flowers. Very fresh and nicely delineated, with harmonious acidity framing the flavors of red fruits, flowers, licorice and spices. Not especially deep or fleshy but attractive, brisk and youthful. Finishes with dusty tannins and lingering spiciness.

2005 Aldo Conterno Barolo Bussia Colonnello

92 points

Good full medium red. Deeper, more important aromas of black cherry, strawberry and minerals; more primary and brooding than the normale Bigger and richer too, with a creamier texture and an almost chocolatey character that carries through to the aftertaste. More complex but less fruity than the basic Barolo, with more apparent minerality. Quite silky in texture thanks to firm but well-integrated acidity. Most impressive today on the back end, which is long and scented, with a delicate but very persistent flavor of almost candied small red fruits.

2005 Aldo Conterno Barolo Bussia Cicala

92+ points

(the first vintage for this wine since 2001, as this vineyard was hailed on in 2004) Good full medium red. Wild aromas of redcurrant, black cherry, tar and leather; this smells tannic but the fruit element expands impressively as the wine opens in the glass. Then large-scaled and firm in the mouth, with powerful acidity currently suppressing the wine's sweetness. There's a boatload of fruit here, but today the wine's mineral and gamey elements dominate. In a very traditional style, and completely different from the Colonnello: more backward and more masculine (Conterno refers to it as "our rude boy"). The serious tannins build with air and currently cut off the wine's finishing fruit.

2005 Aldo Conterno Barolo Romirasco

94+

Good deep, dark red. Spicy aromas of black fruits, fresh herbs, licorice and minerals. Large-scaled, broad and rich, with superb depth of flavor and sweetness leavened by terrific energy. Impressively concentrated wine with atypical density and primary fruit character for the year. Finishes powerful and gripping but perfumed, with tongue-saturating tannins and terrific lift. The other 2005 Barolos were bottled in the summer of 2008 but this got an extra three months in used 25- to-70-hectoliter barrels. There will also be a small quantity of 2005 Gran Bussia but that wine will not be released for at least two more years.

2006 Aldo Conterno Barolo

90+

Medium red. Wild but reticent nose is still shocked by the July bottling, with its fruit suppressed. More classic in style but less differentiated in the early going than the 2005, with cedar and game notes, plenty of fat and sweetness and impressive richness. Best today on the juicy, persistent finish, which displays a strong tannic spine. Very young.

2006 Aldo Conterno Barolo Bussia Colonnello

94 points

Good deep red. Captivating, faintly decadent aromas of raspberry, game, rose petal and licorice. Silky and lush on entry, then quite gripping in the middle palate, with solid acidity and a more powerful tannic spine than the 2005. This highly concentrated wine really stains the palate on the rock-solid, very long finish. Shows the structured side of the vintage.

2006 Aldo Conterno Barolo Bussia Cicala

93+

Good deep red. Reticent, musky aromas of black cherry, game, tar and licorice; sweet but youthfully closed. Then much more backward and hard to taste than the Colonnello, showing a wilder quality and less early sweetness of fruit.

Serious tannins currently give the finish a toughness. This will need a decade of aging.

2006 Aldo Conterno Barolo Romirasco

95+

(14.75% alcohol) Good deep, saturated red. Wild cherry, caramel, licorice and minerals on the nose; an essence of Barolo. A compellingly sweet, opulent '06 with captivating minerality giving definition and verve to the very rich middle palate. The explosive finish features outstanding vibrancy and huge toothdusting tannins that reach the front teeth. The Romirasco vines date back to 1937, according to Giacomo. A great showing today.