

Piedmont: Off The Beaten Path

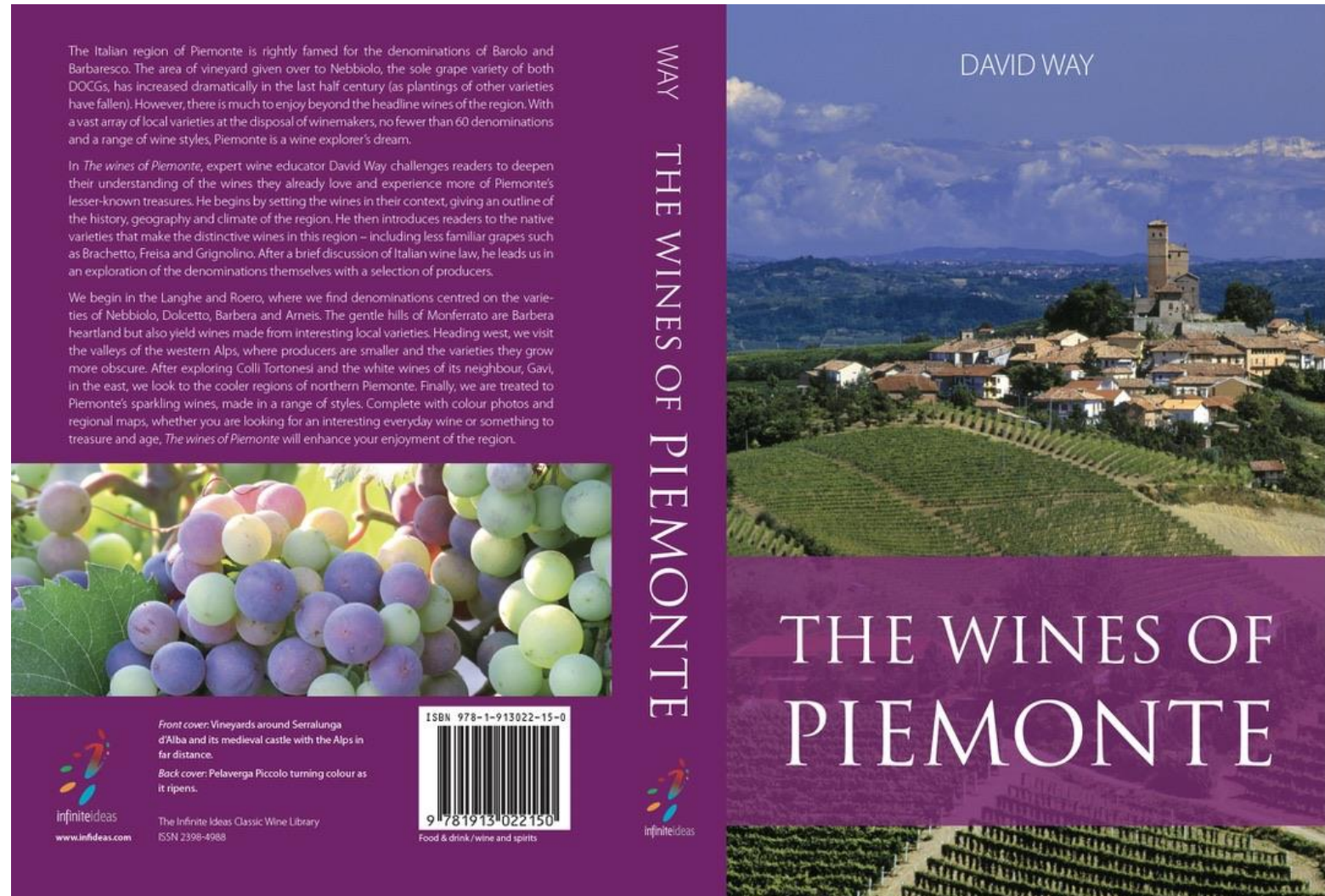


About

- Fell in love with the Italian language ... and then its wine
- Started to teach others informally about Italian wine
- Started my www.winefriend.org website in 2010
- Study, study, more study: Diploma 2013, MW Theory 2015
- Employed by WSET to research and write the new Diploma in Wines textbooks in 2015, updated them since 2019
- Book proposal for Piemonte accepted October 2019
- Now also tour guide for Wine Scholar Guild and content creator for Nebbia e Luce (Nebbiolo specialist)

The Wines of Piemonte

Published in
the Classic
Wine Library
series,
Académie du
Vin Library



Why write this book?

- To deepen understanding of Barolo, Barbaresco and other top wines, not just score them
- Many books and articles about Barolo and Barbaresco, but little else
- First book to deal with the rest of Piemonte with the same depth as the two 'big beasts'
- Explain the history of sparkling wine in Piemonte
- Other topics we will cover in this session



Sparkling Timorasso and Pinot/Chardonnay

Nascetta: medium bodied, high acidity, delicate fresh floral and orange aromas; saline, stony and honeyed with age



Nascetta

- Strongly associated with the Barolo village of Novello, now planted beyond it
- Varies production from year to year; drops acidity quickly; oxidises easily; typically aged in stainless steel and no MLF

2023 Mirafiore Nascetta Langhe

- 5.5 ha site in Serralunga d'Alba on the Fontanafredda estate;
- free-run juice; FT 60°F, on lees until spring

View from the Cogno winery, Novello



Themes to emerge in the research

- Minor native varieties make delightful wines
- Vinous treasures in hidden places
- Terroir vs. winemaking choices (especially maceration times)
- DOC/DOCGs: point of pride or endless confusion?
- The diversity of sparkling wine in the region



Timorasso

full bodied, high acidity, pear/melon/citrus + petrol, smoke, nut with age



Timorasso – emerging star

- May be mentioned in a document of 1209 but only 7 acres by 1980, now 1,000 acres
- Vegetatively vigorous, low yields, ripens late and unevenly, prone to botrytis
- Revived by Walter Massa from 1987, almost by accident; 2–3 days on skins and stems, aged on lees in stainless steel tanks for a year.

Vietti, Timorasso Derthona Colli Tortonesi, 2022

- Part in ceramic (very slow oxidation, neutral), part in steel, part in cask (more oxidation), aged in the three parts for 10 months with bâtonnage, unusually no MLF
- In the process of creating 'Colli Tortonesi DOC Derthona'



Walter Massa

Main sub-regions and grape varieties

- Piemonte ≠ the Langhe
- Monferrato: Barbera, Moscato, local varieties
- North: Erbaluce and Nebbiolo
- East: Cortese and Timorasso



Grignolino

- Historic variety (may be mentioned in 1249), much valued in the past
- name may derive from the Asti dialect word, grignòle, pips, because the berries usually have more pips (3–4 times more) than many other varieties; or ‘grating one’s teeth’
- small berries and high pip-to-juice ratio = low yields
- Style? dark rosé or light red?
- Typical fresh and fruity style: fermented on the skins for 3–5 days only; aged in stainless steel only
- Revival of ‘Monferace’ style



Fermenting Grignolino

Grignolino

Pale ruby, medium bodied,
refreshing, can be tannic, floral,
raspberry and spice notes; can be
chilled; versatile

**Borgo dei Laneri, Grignolino d'Asti,
2023**



Ruchè

Intensely
aromatic rose,
ripe red cherry
to black fruit,
high tannins,
high alcohol, full
bodied



Ruchè turning colour



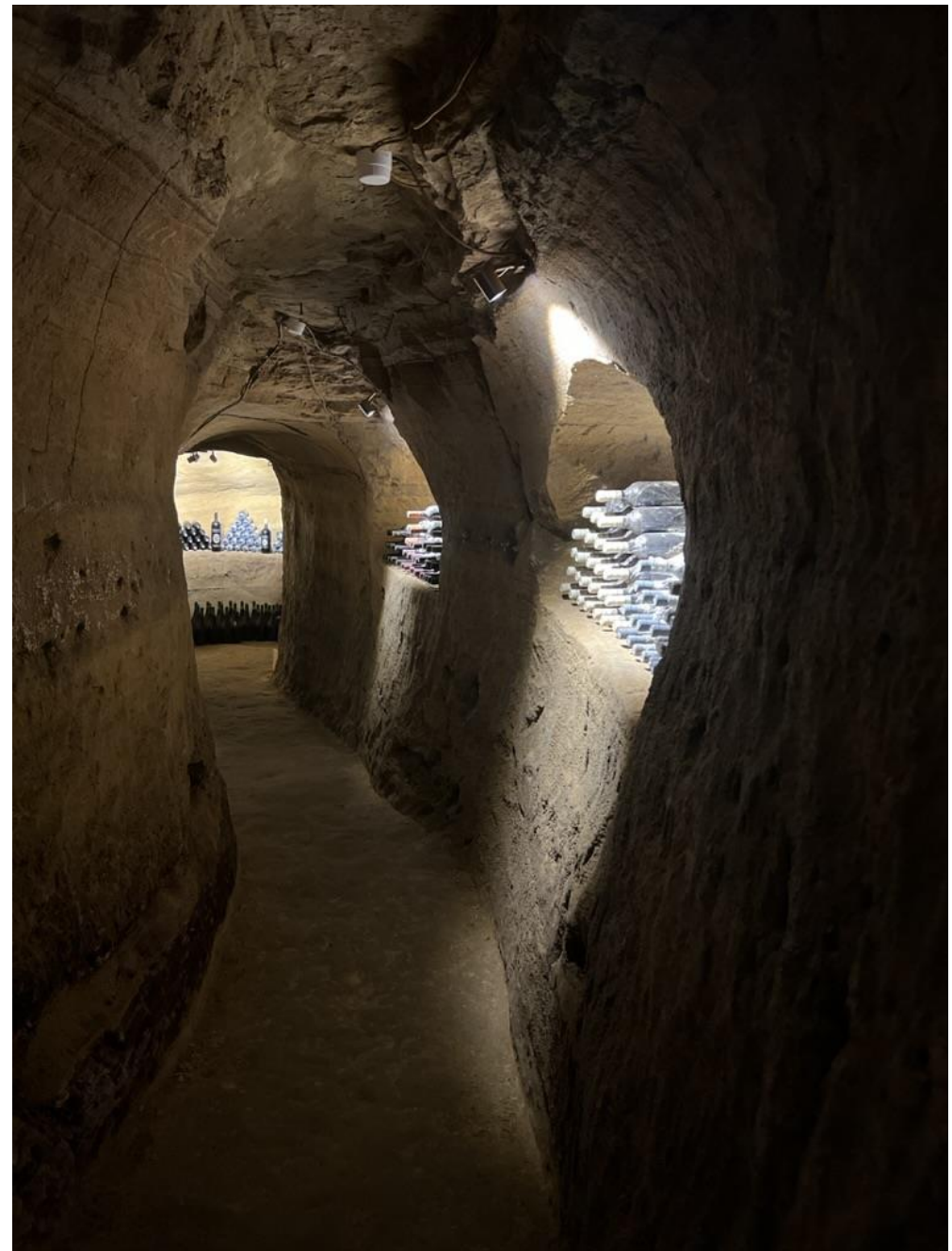
Ruchè

- offspring of Croatina and Malvasia aromatica di Parma
- Rescued from oblivion by Don Giacomo Cauda in 1960s; now 530 acres
- very vigorous foliage, need to get the level of shading right

2022 Montalbera Laccento Ruche di Castagnole Monferrato

- Montalbera have the most extensive plantings of the variety, 200 acres
- Laccento: 20% picked over-ripe; stainless steel only

Infernot: dig your own cellar!



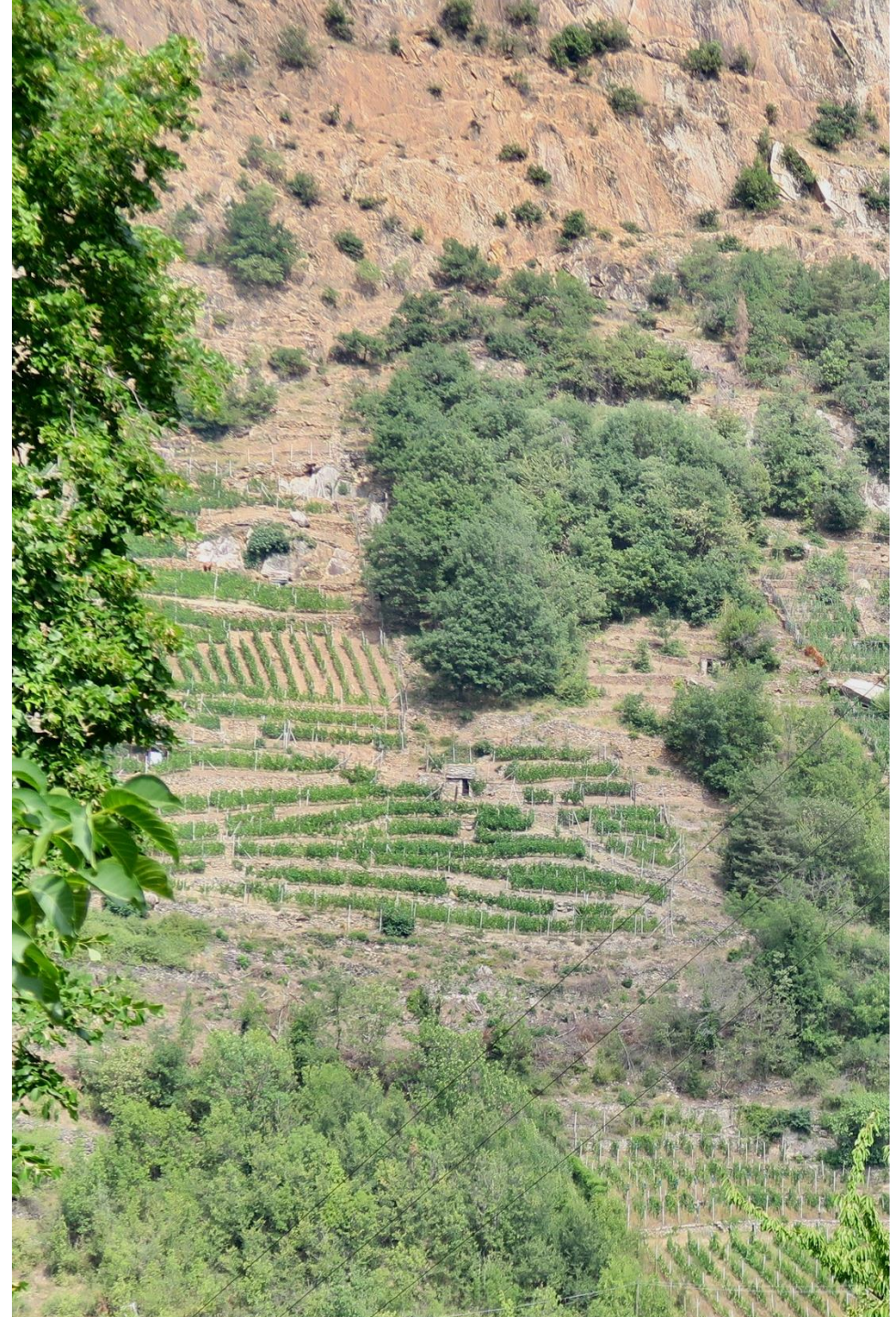
Infernot at Ferraris

Vinous treasures in unknown places

Albugnano DOC: Nebbiolo to the west of
Turin

Valsusa DOC

- 100 ha in C19 to 10 ha
- Fashionable white, **Baratuciat**: delicate grassy to white stone fruit, lightly tannic; versatile (still, sparkling, sweet)
- Black varieties:
 - large-berried, red-fruited medium tannin **Avanà**;
 - Small-berried, black-fruited, high-tannin **Becuet**;
 - Therefore, best blended



Appreciating the chemical profiles of Barbera and Nebbiolo

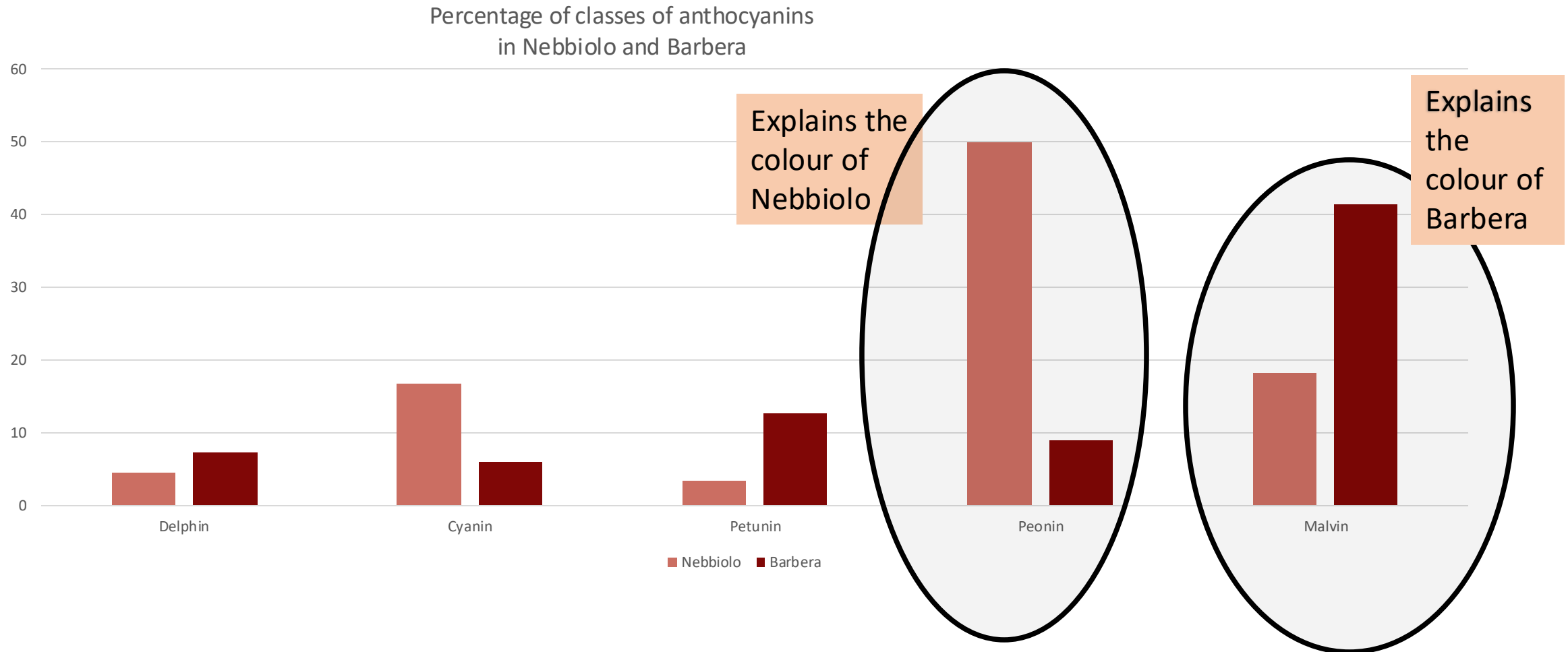
Anthocyanins (colour molecules)

Barbera – high levels of anthocyanins, including 40% of stable malvins, hence the deep colour

Nebbiolo – high proportion of peonins (50%) which fade to garnet quickly (Gerbi 2004)



Classes of anthocyanins (colour molecules)



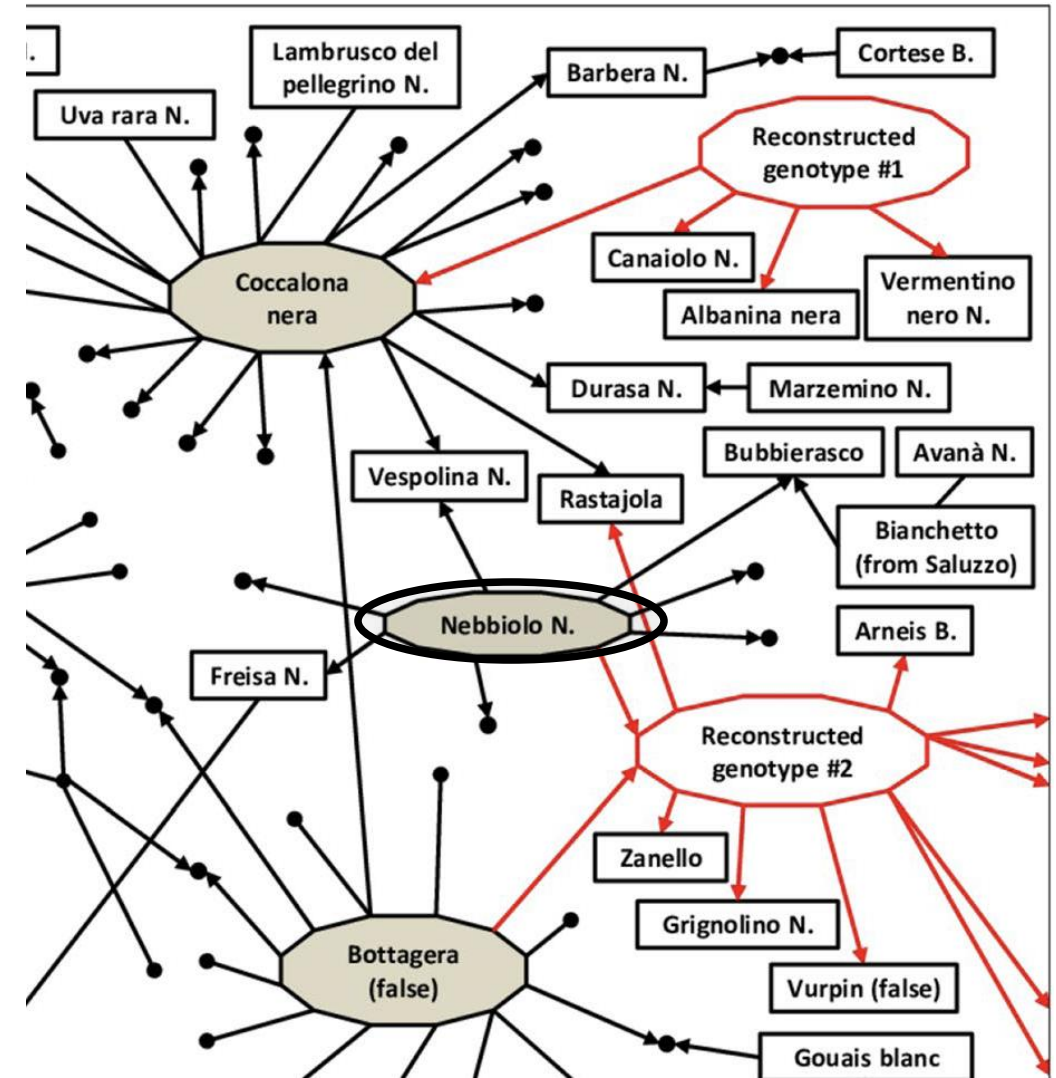
'Traditional' vs 'modernist' winemaking?

- 'Barolo Boys' (1980s on) criticised the methods of their parents
- Hygiene in the winery: fundamental for quality
- Green harvesting: enables Nebbiolo to ripen
- Rotofermenters to shorten maceration times (a couple of months in the past) and make earlier drinking, deeper coloured wines
- New French oak barriques, not *botti grandi*: soften tannins, may add oak flavour
- Today: convergence: moderate maceration times, return of large oak or a mix



Nebbiolo

- Native to northwest Italy (Freisa, Vespolina)
- **Lampia**, Michet + Nebbiolo Rosé
- First to bud, last to ripen; needs (needed) a good site; drought and *flavescenza* resilient
- Massive increase in plantings (+115% in vineyard area, 2000–24), especially 'Nebbiolisation of the Langhe'
- Outstanding quality potential; better viticulture (canopy); better winemaking (gentler extraction, use of oak)
- Two contrasting examples in our tasting



Nebbiolo in Alto Piemonte

- Historic region, massive decline after industrialisation and phylloxera
- Marginally cooler than the Langhe + Volcanic, marine sands, clay and alluvial
- Tradition of blending with Vespolina, Uva Rara, Croatina
- Fragmentation: 1,300 acres between 10 denominations, one quarter the size of Barolo



Nebbiolo in Alto Piemonte: Gattinara DOCG

- Largest of the Nebbiolo denominations, minimum 90% Nebbiolo (Spanna)
- Travaglini: crooked bottle; 130 acres;
- 5th generation; Cinzia, Massimo, Alessia and Carolina

Travaglini, Gattinara, 2020

- historic wine, 100% Nebbiolo; also make TreVigne and Riserva
- 2-3 weeks on the skins, 30 months in Slavonian oak *botti*



The good news about Barolo and Barbaresco

- Warming climate is a benefit to late ripening Nebbiolo (though frost, hail, erosion)
- Now produced by several generations of highly trained grape growers and winemakers
- Much better understanding of how to handle hot vintages
- The wines are ready to drink much earlier than they were in the past
- Nebbiolo has the structure and flavour intensity to handle 14–14.5% abv
- 20 top producers are expensive but there are many, many good producers that are good value for the quality



Chiara Boschis

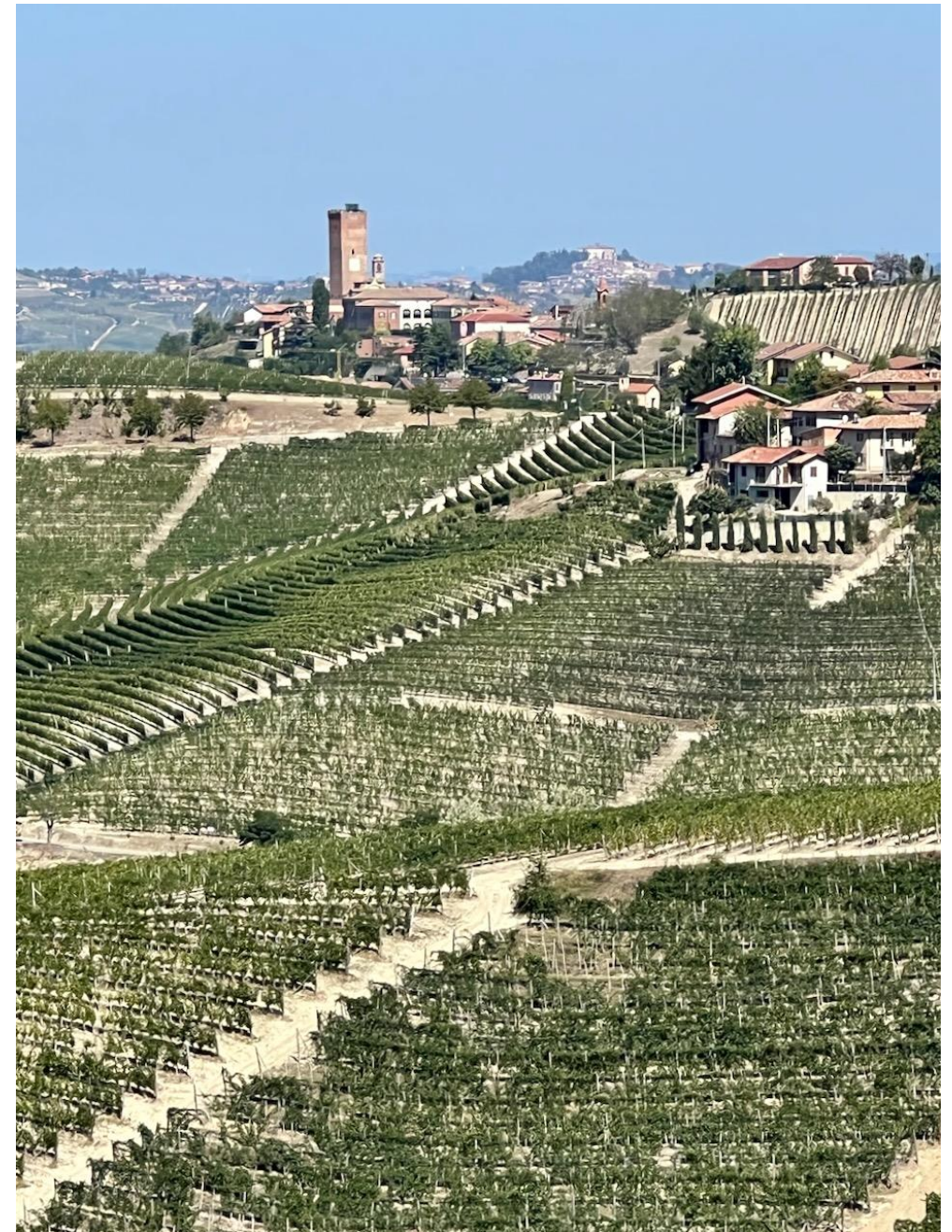
- *The Barolo 'girl' of the Barolo Boys!*
- Lowered yields, one of the first trained women winemakers: timely racking, cleanness, stainless steel, temperature control, rotofermenters;
- barriques suited small-scale production, the spirit of experimentation, better micro-oxygenation for softer wines that could be drunk after 3 years, not 20;
- **2020 E. Pira + Figli Chiara Boschis Barolo DOCG Mosconi:** marl and clay soils, 1,200 feet, S & SE-facing. 2 years in barriques, nowadays 20–30% new



Chiara Boschis with other 'iconic women producers of Barolo' in Verona this year

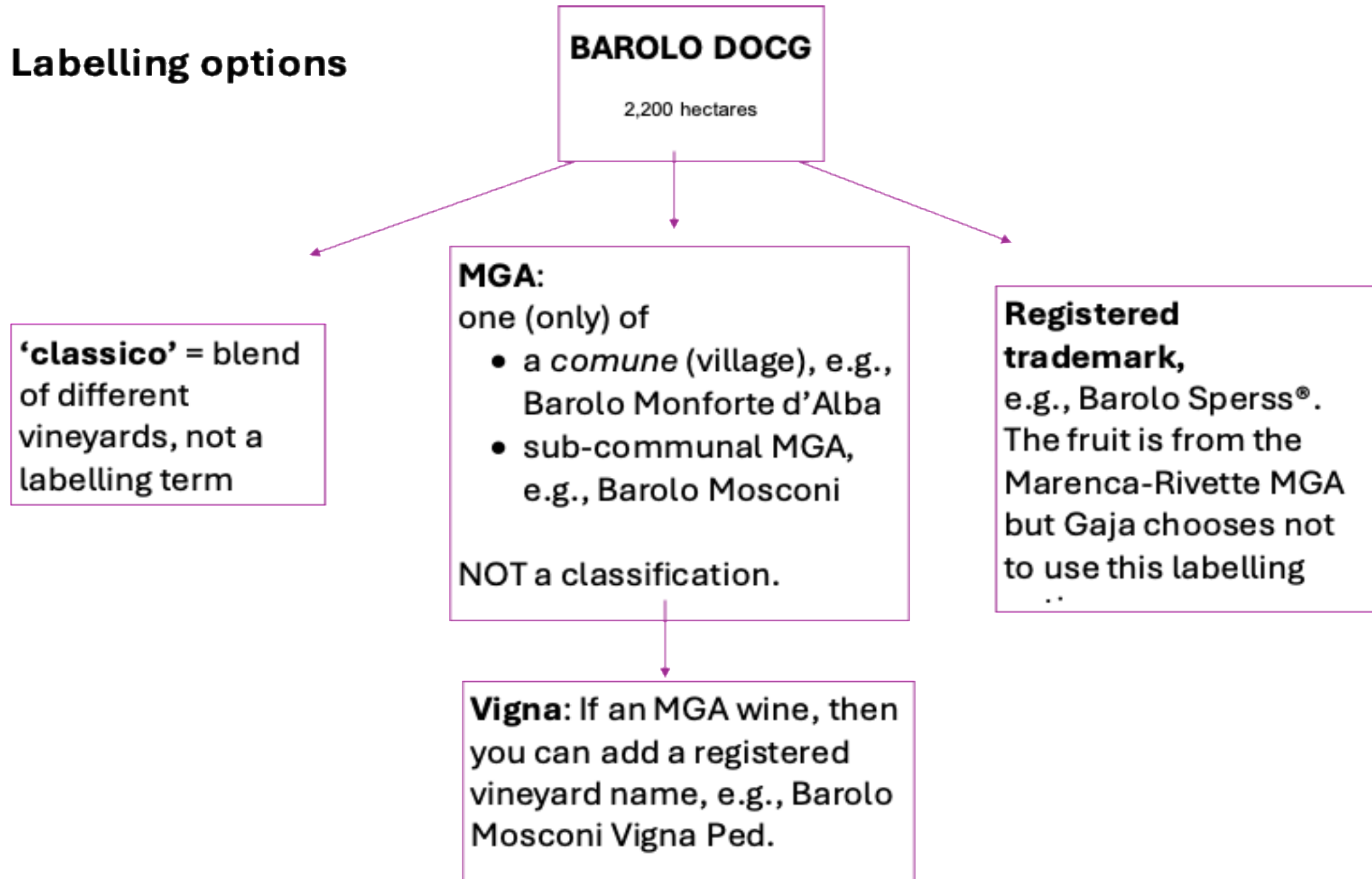
Developments in Barolo & Barbaresco

- ‘Nebbiolisation’ of the Langhe:
 - warming of the climate;
 - loss of Dolcetto
- Move to a ‘modernised traditional’ winemaking approach
- MGA wines: biggest development of the last 15 years
- MGA = further subdivision of a legally defined area



Towards Barbaresco village

Labelling options



Things we don't have time to talk about!

- The magical Nebbiolo DOC which is Carema
- Baratuciat and the unique blends of the valleys of the western Alps
- Why the best Gavi can age for 10 years or more
- The success of Riesling, Viognier and (occasionally!) Chardonnay in Piemonte
- Traditional method and tank method sparkling wines



Jessica du Puy in Forbes

‘Armed with over a decade of Italian wine expertise, educator David Way invites readers beyond Piemonte's famed Barolo and Barbaresco to uncover the extensive diversity across this dynamic wine region. As a lead writer behind the Wine & Spirit Education Trust's prestigious Diploma textbook, Way boasts both scholarly insight and an accessible teaching voice - qualities that distinguish his latest guide. ... A must-have for Nebbiolo devotees and curious adventurers alike.’

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Académie du Vin Library

