Piedmont’s Grey Diamond in New York

Marina Melchionda (November 16, 2008)



The region of Piedmont and the Chamber of Commerce of Cuneo bring to the American gourmets two delicacies of their territories: the white truffle of Alba and the Barolo and Barbaresco wines

What if we told you that a rare diamond is on show in your city? Maybe in your neighborhood, or even next door? Wouldn’t you run to see it? And what if we told you that you can actually do much more than just see it, you can smell it, touch it, taste it!

Yes it doesn’t sparkle, it is not transparent. But still people who know what we are talking about call it "the grey diamond". It comes from Piedmont…and it is a mushroom. Well…maybe I should call it a truffle. Or, even more, the truffle. Because that is the most famous and appreciated representative of Piedmont’s regional cuisine. The white truffle of Alba. Its exquisite taste masters the most traditional dishes of these territories. These delicacies are appreciated at their best when accompanied by a nice glass of Piedmont wine. Barolo or Barbaresco? It’s not easy to choose, both being well-known worldwide for their smooth after-taste.

Truffles and wine were indeed the main ingredients of the Barolo & Friends event organized in New York by the Centro Estero Alpi del Mare [2], a branch of the Chamber of Commerce of Cuneo [3] founded in 1981: an occasio to celebrate and promote the excellence of Piedmont’s wine and food

planned in collaboration with the Italian Trade Commission [4] (ICE) and the Italian Tourist Board [5](ENIT) in New York.

"The aim of the initiative – Giacinto Ghiri, the Director of the Centro, explained us – is to enhance the demand of our products in the United States. Nowadays we count among our major clients Italian and French restaurants spread all over the country. But we also want to reach the average Ame rican citizens, their homes. That's why we promote both competitively priced and expensive wines here: we really believe that everyone has the right to have a little bit of Piedmont on his shelves".

Aniello Musella, Director of ICE, adds: "We are glad to collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce of Cuneo on organizing this event. This annual appointment, at its tenth edition, is a unique occasion for the companies employed in this sector to meet potential and actual clients. These former, on the other hand, have the opportunity to meet and make contacts with the latters while having a taste of the traditional wines of the region, unique in flavor, color and aroma. We believe that's the best way to concretely evaluate the receptivity of the American market".

i-Italy joined the sponsors of the event – the Ministry of Industry and Foreign Commerce [6], Unioncamere [7], Piedmont Region [8], Province of Cuneo [9] and Chamber of Commerce of Cuneo – the Italian and American press and tour operators, for a dinner offered at Barbetta Restaurant [10].

The location was not chosen by case. Barbetta, founded in 1906, is the oldest Italian restaurant in New York. Decorated with 18th century Piedmont antiques, it has always been and still remains the greatest representative of the region's cuisine. "We prepare the most typical and characteristic receipts of our territories, from the Roasted Organic and Herb-fed Rabbit to the diver scallops and the polenta" said Ms. Maioglio, the owner of the restaurant, when we asked her what the secret of their success is. "Americans love our traditional recipes, and some of them have become true experts. What they like the most? Well...I don't know...let's see...maybe the gnocchetti, they like gnocchetti very much.. or the agnolotti, the fonduta, the bagna calda, yes...
People come here to enjoy a nice dinner in an elegant environment. From this point of view we have always been an exception, representing a radical departure from the prevailing notion of the first years of the XX century, when my father opened this restaurant: Italian restaurants were invariably "rustic" and Italian food must be similarly "rustic".

The dinner we had that evening proved that the restaurant's fame is surely well deserved. The white truffle mastered the first two courses. First, the most delicate Gnocchetti anybody could ever taste accompanied by a Piedmont Cheese sauces and freshly shaved white truffles. Then, the Quail's nest of fonduta with Quail's eggs and shaved white truffles. A piece of art: the nest was filled with creamy Fonduta from which sprigs of savories protruded and over which fresh white truffles were shaved. The nest rested on straw-like shredded deep fried vegetables.

Both dishes were served with a Barbera d' Alba "Elena" 2006 and were followed by Beef braised in Barolo wine with two forms of polenta, loose and crisp. For this course the wine offered was an aromatic Barolo "Rocche" 1999.

Finally, two carts with multiple choices of desserts. We tried the baked pears, delightful with the creme zabaglione, while sipping a Moscato d' Asti "Salatio" 2007, a sweet and effervescent dessert wine.

While enjoying the last moments of our evening at the Barbetta restaurant, we had a chance to exchange a few words with Giacinto Ghiri, Director of Centro Estero Alpi del Mare.
He told us a very funny story about one of the first trips Piedmont's delegation took in New York: "It was ten or twelve years ago, I don't remember exactly. We wanted to share with our fellow Americans the fun of truffle hunting. So we decided to hide these precious tubers in Central Park, but some wild animal ate them right after we finished burrowing. As a result, our dog couldn't find them! There was also another delicate problem: its name was Bill, and at that time Bill Clinton was still President of the US! How could we tell it to the journalists? We were afraid to find on American newspapers comments like "these people from Piedmont are so disrespectful: they named a dog after our President". So we changed the dog's name in "Leo". But it was used to be called Bill, so he

never answered to the name "Leo". Thus there was no way to obtain obedience from him…and in the meantime the squirrels kept eating our tubers. We never found them, we gave up after a while. So we decided to invite our American friends to have dinner with us here at Barbetta: we thought that was the only way to overcome that embarrassing situation. And we were right: this beautiful setting and the delicious Piedmont typical dishes served became the principal ingredients of that fantastic evening, after which our relationship grew more and more strong".

Piedmont's cuisine and products could not have been celebrated in a better way than this one. Riccardo Strano, President of ENIT, and the Vice-Consul Maurizio Antonini agreed with us: "Evenings like this one are an incomparable occasion to consolidate the region and Cuneo's market in the United States. These extraordinary delicacies deserve to encounter American palates. And vice versa."

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Wine producers participating to the 2008 edition of BAROLO BARBARESCO & FRIENDS:

AURELIO SETTIMO S.S.A.
Fraz. Annunziata, 30 12064 LA MORRA (CN)
Tel: 0173-50803 Fax: 0173-509318
E-mail: aureliosettimo@aureliosettimo.com [11]
Web site: www.aureliosettimo.com [12]
Wines: Barolo DOCG 2004 Barolo DOCG "Rocche" 2004 Langhe DOC Nebbiolo 2005 Barolo DOCG riserva "Rocche" 1999 Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2006

BENOTTO AZ. VITIVINICOLA
Via San Carlo, 52 14055 COSTIGLIOLE D'ASTI (AT)
Tel: 0141-966406 Fax: 0141-962421
E-Mail: benottovini@virgilio.it [13]
Web: www.benottovini.it [14]
Wines: Barbera d'Asti DOC superiore "Rupestris" 2003 Barbera d'Asti DOC superiore "Balau" 2003 Barbera d'Asti DOC superiore "Casot" 2003 Barbera d'Asti DOC 2005 Piemonte DOC Cortese "Lacrime di Gioia" 2007

CA' DU RABAJA'
Località Rabajà, 52 12050 BARBARESCO (CN)
Tel: 0173-635016 Fax: 0173-635970
E-mail: renzoalutto@cadurabaja.com [15]
Web site: www.cadurabaja.com [16]
Wines: Langhe Bianco DOC "Meriggiare" 2007 Langhe Arneis DOC 2007 Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2007 Barbera d'Alba DOC "Bricco di Nessuno" 2007 Langhe Nebbiolo DOC "Uno" 2007

CANTINA SANT'EVASIO
Via San Nicolao, 88 14049 Nizza Monferrato (AT)
Tel: 0141-726259 Fax: 0141-727404
E-mail: info@santevasiovini.com [17]
Web: www.santevasiovini.com [18]
Wines: Barbera d'Asti DOC 2007 Moscato d'Asti DOCG 2007 Barolo DOCG 2004 Gavi di Gavi DOCG 2007 Monferrato Rosso DOC "Tramonto" 2004

CASCINA DEL MONASTERO AZ. AGR. di GRASSO GIUSEPPE
Fraz. Annunziata, 112/A 12064 LA MORRA (CN)
Tel: 0173-509245 Fax: 0173-509245
E-Mail: info@cascinadelmonastero.it [19]
Web: www.cascinadelmonastero.it [20]
Wines: Barolo DOCG 2001 Barolo DOCG "Bricco Luciani" 2004 Langhe Nebbiolo DOC 2004 Barbera d'Alba DOC "Vigna Parroco" 2005 Langhe Rosso DOC "Monastero" 2005

CASTELLO DI GABIANO
Via S. Defendente, 2 15020 GABIANO MONFERRATO (AL)
Tel: 0142-945004 Fax: 0142-945332
E-mail: calvi@castellodigabiano.com [21]
Web: www.castellodigabiano.com [22]
Wines Gabiano DOC riserva "A Matilde" 2004 Rubino di Cantavenna DOC "Rubino" 2005 Monferrato Rosso DOC "Gavius" 2006 Barbera d'Asti DOC "Braja" 2007 Barbera d'Asti DOC superiore "Adornes" 2004

CUSMANO VINI – LA CORTE
Reg. Quartino, 7 14042 CALAMANDRANA (AT)
Tel: 0141-769109 Fax: 0141-75312
E-mail: raimondo@cusmano.it [23]
Web: www.cusmano.it [24]
Wines: Moscato d'Asti DOCG "Preludio" 2007 Barbera del Monferrato DOC "La Birba" 2007 Barbera d'Asti DOC "La Grissa" 2006

DESTEFANIS MARCO AZ. AGR.
Via Mortizzo, 8 12050 MONTELUPO ALBESE (CN)
Tel: 0173-617189 Fax: 0173-617189
E-mail: destefanis.vini@libero.it [25]
Web: www.marcodestefanis.it [26]
Wines: Dolcetto d'Alba DOC "Bricco Galluccio" 2007 Dolcetto d'Alba DOC "Vigna Monia Bassa" 2003

MARCHESI INCISA DELLA ROCCHETTA
Via Roma, 66 14030 ROCCHETTA TANARO (AT)
Tel: 0141-644647 Fax: 0141-644942
E-mail: info@lacortechiusa.it [27]
Web: www.lacortechiusa.it [28]
Wines: Barbera d'Asti superiore DOC "Sant'Emiliano" 2004 Monferrato Rosso DOC "Angelus Novus" 2006

MAURO SEBASTE
Via Garibaldi – Fr. Gallo, 222 12051 ALBA (CN)
Tel: 0173-262148 Fax: 0173-262954
E-mail: maurosebaste@maurosebaste.it [29]
Web site: www.maurosebaste.it [30]
Wines Barolo DOCG "Prapo' " 2004 Barolo DOCG "Brunate" 2004 Barolo DOCG "Monvigliero" 2004 Nebbiolo d'Alba DOC "Parigi" 2006 Roero Arneis DOCG 2007

MONTAGNETTA AZ. AGR. DI DOMENICO CAPELLO
Fraz. Bricco Capello, 4 14018 ROATTO (AT)
Tel: 0141-938343 Fax: 0141-938907
E-mail: info@lamontagnetta.com [31]
Web: www.lamontagnetta.com [32]
Wines: Monferrato Bianco DOC 2007 Freisa d'Asti DOC "Bugianen" 2006

PODERE RUGGERI CORSINI
Fraz. Bussia-Corsini, 106 12065 MONFORTE D'ALBA (CN)
Tel: 0173-78625 Fax: 0173-78625
E-mail: podereruggericorsini@libero.it [33]
Web: www.ruggericorsini.com [34]
Wines: Barolo DOCG "Corsini" 2004 Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2007 Barbera d'Alba DOC superiore 2006

ROBERTO SAROTTO AZ. AGR.
Via Ronconuovo, 13 12050 NEVIGLIE (CN)
Tel: 0173-630228 Fax: 0173-630366

E-mail: roberto@robertosarotto.com [35]
Web site: www.robertosarotto.com [36]
Wines Gavi di Gavi DOCG "Bric Sassi" 2007 Barolo DOCG "Briccobergera" 2004 Barbaresco DOCG "Gaia Principe" 2004 Moscato d'Asti DOCG "Solatio" 2007 Barbera d'Alba DOC "Briccomacchia" 2006

SCRIMAGLIO SNC
Via Alessandria, 67 14049 NIZZA MONFERRATO (AT)
Tel: 0141-721385 Fax: 0141-726500
E-mail: export@scrimaglio.it [37]
Web: www.scrimaglio.it [38]
Wines Barolo DOCG 2003 Moscato d'Asti DOCG "Grani di Sole" 2007 Monferrato Rosso DOC "Alfa Romeo" 2006 Barbera d'Asti DOC "Croutin" 2005 Barbera d'Asti DOC superiore "Roccanivo" 2006

SPAMA S.R.L. "CA' DELL'OZIO"
C.so Vittorio Emanuele II, 1 12100 CUNEO
Tel: 0171-605459 Fax: 0171-605459
E-mail: chiaratrombin@bfpharma.com [39]
Web site: www.cadellozio-spama.com [40]
Wines Barolo DOCG 2003 Barbaresco DOCG 2004 Piemonte Brachetto DOC 2007 Roero Arneis DOCG 2006 Gavi DOCG 2007

STROPPIANA ORESTE AZ. AGR. di STROPPIANA DARIO
Fr. Rivalta San Giacomo, 6 12064 LA MORRA (CN)
Tel: 0173-509419 Fax: 0173-509419
E-mail: info@cantinastroppiana.com [41]
Web site: www.cantinastroppiana.com [42]
Wines Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2006 Barbera d'Alba DOC superiore 2006 Barolo DOCG "Leonardo" 2004 Barolo DOCG "Gabutti Bussia" 2004 Barolo DOCG "Vigna San Giacomo" 2004

TENUTA NUOVA CÀ DA MEO DI MAGDA PEDRINI
Via Pratolungo, 163 15066 GAVI (AL)
Tel: 0143-667923 Fax: 0143-667929
E-mail: nuovacadameo@virgilio.it [43]
Web: www.magdapedrini.it [44]
Wines: Gavi del comune di Gavi DOCG "Magda Pedrini" 2007 Gavi DOCG "Cà da Meo" 2007 Gavi del comune di Gavi DOCG "Domino di Cà da Meo" 2006

TENUTA SAN MAURO
Loc. San Mauro, 1 14054 CASTAGNOLE DELLE LANZE (AT)
Tel: 333-8759382 - Tel: 333-1431444 Fax: 0141-877283
E-mail: info@il-tenutasanmauro.com [45]
Web site: www.il-tenutasanmauro.com [46]
Wines Barbaresco DOCG 2003 Barbera d'Asti DOC superiore 2004 Barbaresco DOCG 2004 Moscato d'Asti DOCG 2007 Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2006

UGO CHIOLA AZ. AGR. MONFORTE
Località San Sebastiano, 68 12065 MONFORTE D'ALBA (CN)
Tel: 0173-789269 - Tel: 338-7345198 Fax: 0173-789269
E-mail: ugochiola@aol.com [47]
Web site: www.azienda-monforte.com [48]
Wines Barolo DOCG 2004 Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2006 Barbera d'Alba DOC 2006 Nebbiolo d'Alba DOC 2006 Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2006 Roero Arneis DOCG 2006 Vino rosè da tavola "Amour" 2007

VIGNE DEI MASTRI S.A.R.L.
Strada Loreto s.n.c. 14055 COSTIGLIOLE D'ASTI (AT)
Tel: 333-1210071 Fax: 011-9658218
E-mail: info@vignedeimastri.it [49]
Web site: www.vignedeimastri.it [50]

Wines Barbera d'Asti DOC "Arturo" 2006 Monferrato Bianco DOC "Chiara" 2007 Monferrato Rosso DOC "Marcello" 2007 Vino rosso da tavola "Rodatà" 2006

VILLA GIADA DI ANDREA FACCIO
Reg. Ceirole, 10 14053 CANELLI (AT)
Tel: 0141-831100 Fax: 0141-829756
E-mail: info@andreafaccio.it [51]
Web: www.andreafaccio.it [52]
Wines: Barbera d'Asti DOC "Suri' Rosso" 2007 Barbera d'Asti DOC superiore Nizza "Bricco Dani" 2005 Moscato d'Asti DOCG "Andrea" 2007

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[11] mailto:aureliosettimo@aureliosettimo.com
[12] http://www.aureliosettimo.com/
[13] mailto:benottovini@virgilio.it
[14] http://www.benottovini.it/
[15] mailto:renzoalutto@cadurabaja.com
[16] http://www.cadurabaja.com/
[17] mailto:info@santevasiovini.com
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[19] mailto:info@cascinadelmonastero.it
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[22] http://www.castellodigabiano.com/
[23] mailto:raimondo@cusmano.it
[24] http://www.cusmano.it/
[25] mailto:destefanis.vini@libero.it
[26] http://www.marcodestefanis.it/
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[28] http://www.lacortechiusa.it/
[29] mailto:maurosebaste@maurosebaste.it
[30] http://www.maurosebaste.it/
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[32] http://www.lamontagnetta.com/
[33] mailto:podereruggericorsini@libero.it
[34] http://www.ruggericorsini.com/
[35] mailto:roberto@robertosarotto.com
[36] http://www.robertosarotto.com/

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