

## FONTANAFREDDA

**By Paul Foster**

Here's a silly question. How would you like to buy, for \$21.99, a red that has been included in *Wine Spectator's* 100 Best Wines in the World list? It's the Barbera from the Briccotondo vineyard of the historic Fontanafredda house, a producer that was itself nominated by the US magazine *Wine & Spirits* as one of the top 100 wineries of 2008. And, should you be wondering, it is a wonderful wine.

Home turf is the district of Piemonte in the sub-alpine region of northwestern Italy that's immediately south of France. The sun-facing slopes of the south-facing hills in that part of the world are covered with carefully contoured rows of vines and Barbera, probably a native, is one of the three major red varieties. Anyway, for centuries the variety has been cultivated here and Barbera is responsible for some of Italy's most loved reds, wines that can range in style all the way from the light-hearted to the dense and dastardly tannic.

Having once been owned by Savoy royalty the 250acre Fontafredda estate has its own share of history to tell and, most recently, was bought (for 90 million Euros) by two local fine-food businessmen. The winery is large and, frankly, spectacular and includes a series of majestic nineteenth century brick-built cellars. It produces a range of wines that can fairly be called exciting, top examples of what can be done when state-the-art technology and tradition are suitably matched.

Of the Fontafredda whites No.1, for me, is its fresh-as-fresh Arneis. Arneis itself is an ancient indigenous variety and in the cool of the Langhe district near the city of Alba, where it's grown at between 400 and 600 metres, the ripe fruit has excellent acid retention. The result is a tight wine that typically explores a range of flavours from almond to ripe pear and the best boast elegance with depth and significant length. It is a grape that had once all but disappeared but since the 1970s has enjoyed a dramatic resurgence in popularity. In Australia, it is finally finding a home in spots like the Adelaide Hills and northern Victoria's King Valley.

**Fontanafredda *Briccotondo* Piemonte Barbera 2009**

Perfumed, dark, delicious. Beautiful black cherry fruit in a long palate. Tea leaf, tobacco and savoury spice. Smooth, supple middle with the sweetest of ripe grippy tannins to finish. A work of art. \$22

**Fontanafredda Langhe Arneis 2009**

Bright, brilliant. Almond, grapefruit and pear flavours. A crisp, dry and all but crunchy palate. True length and a lingering lemony taste. For those who have a taste for Chablis. Seafood wine par excellence.  
\$27

Available from The Wine Society.