

Aldo Conterno dies

31 May 2012 by Walter Speller

Today the sad news reached us that one of Barolo's most emblematic characters, Aldo Conterno, has died at the age of 81. Aldo Conterno, of the eponymous estate in the commune of Monforte d'Alba, was one of two sons of Giacomo Conterno, the other one being Giovanni. When Giacomo retired in 1961 he left the business to his sons, but a difference in philosophy caused a schism between the two resulting in Aldo founding his own domaine.

The difference of opinion between Aldo and Giovanni on how to do justice to the formidable Nebbiolo grape could easily be summarised as 'traditionalist v modernist', but that wouldn't do justice to the complex personae of both - although it is safe to say that Aldo was always the more extrovert one. After a period in the United States in the 1960s Aldo wanted to put some of his experiences into practice, which must have run counter to the staunchly traditionalist spirit of the Giacomo Conterno estate, religiously continued by Aldo's brother Giovanni.

It was thus that Aldo acquired Favot in Monforte d'Alba, which came with a generous slice of its most important cru, Bussia. Aldo created top-class Barolo, sought the world over, while isolating the best parcels in the Bussia vineyard and bottling them under their respective names, Vigna Cicala, Vigna Romirasco and Vigna Colonello. The iconic Barolo Granbussia, a selection of these three vineyards, is made in outstanding years only and considered a collector's item in its own right.

But it would not be correct to call Aldo Conterno a modernist. His wines remained subject to long ageing in large oak, although he did substantially reduce the total time his Barolos stayed on the skin. Never an admirer of French barriques, he nevertheless did not object when his three sons, Franco, Stefano and Giacomo, all of whom started to work at Favot, were keen to experiment with small barrels. It was his open-mindedness that prevented him from becoming entangled in the sometimes open conflict between the two different camps. Perhaps this is why he was seen as a teacher and father figure to traditionalists and modernists alike. To this very day, Favot is famous for its open door to anyone who has a keen interest in Nebbiolo and Barolo.

This great gentleman will be dearly missed, but some consolation is to be had from the fact that his life's work, Favot, will continue in the solid hands of his sons.

See Walter's [Aldo Conterno - latest wines reviewed](#) from last year. All next week Walter will be reviewing the latest releases in the Langhe in unparalleled detail.

Jancis writes: I have nothing but delightful memories of the time I landed at Favot with a massive television film crew in the 1980s while making one of our three series of *The Wine Programme*, the world's first TV series devoted to wine (I keep repeating this to see if anyone contradicts me). In the face of all the trials and superficialities that such visits impose, Aldo was courtesy itself. He leaves a wine world impoverished by his passing, which reminds me that I must publish notes on a tasting of some of the superb wines that his son Franco was kind enough to open in London last year.