



## PATRIARCA FRANCO

Country: Italy

Region: Piedmont

Appellation(s): Gattinara DOCG

Producer: Franco Patriarca

Founded: 3 Generations Ago

Annual Production: 250 cases

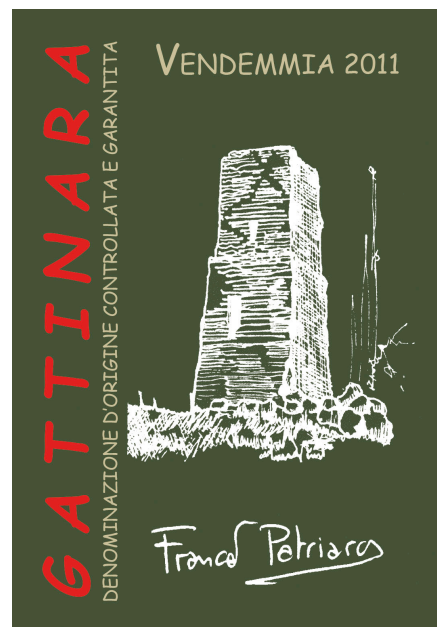
Farming: Sustainable

It wouldn't be true to say that the area of Piedmont known as the "Alto Piemonte" is undergoing a renaissance because the planted acreage is still microscopic compared to a century ago. However, there is starting to be a groundswell of interest and activity in the region that is promising for the wine world as the *terroirs* are very good. The region is located just southwest of Lake Maggiore in the foothills of the Alps, south of the border between Switzerland and Italy, two hours north of Barolo. Gattinara is probably the best-known wine among the nine DOCs and DOCGs of the Alto Piemonte and one of its only two DOCGs.

In the late nineteenth century the vineyards of the Alto Piemonte were Italy's best known and largest. The vineyard surface at the time of 40,000 hectares was equal to the entire planted surface of all of Piedmont today! As the Langhe area of Piedmont's wine production surged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, led by Barolo and Barbaresco, the Alto Piemonte suffered from a mass industrial exodus that took a vibrant wine producing culture along with it. However, the land is still there, and as the wines of a few ancient artisans and a few new explorers can attest, the potential is important and hopefully economics will support the continued revitalization of the area.

The wines of Gattinara require the most Nebbiolo (known locally as Spanna) of all of the wines of the Alto Piemonte at 90% minimum. The *terroir* here is porphyry, an igneous rock similar to granite that is loaded with minerals and crystals and is often red or purple in color. Rustic and powerful when young, Gattinara is long-lived and requires lengthy aging in wood and bottle before it softens and develops finesse with time.

Franco Patriarca is a member of the ancient artisan category of growers in the Alto Piemonte. Franco followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and tends the family's old Spanna vines, vinifying them in the tiny cellar below his home in Gattinara. His cellar is so small that he can only vinify one third of the production from his 2.5 hectares of vineyards. Franco does everything by hand, including the unfiltered bottling, and the result is an archetypal example of the DOCG with zero artifice. Franco reminds me of our very own Silvio Giamello in Barbaresco—almost no one has heard of him, including the locals, yet there is treasure in his cellars.





# KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

## PATRIARCA FRANCO (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
<b>Gattinara DOCG</b>	98% Spanna (Nebbiolo), 2% Vespolina/Uva Rara	30 – 60 years old	Porphyry (Volcanic soil)	2.5 ha
<b>Costa della Sesia DOC</b>	70% Spanna (Nebbiolo), 30% Uva Rara Bonarda Piemontese	30-40 years old		.25 ha
<b>Qualcosa di Rosso</b>	70% Spanna (Nebbiolo), 30% Vespolina			.15 ha

\* “ha”=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and one half acres

## VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

### Gattinara DOCG:

- All grapes harvested by hand, sorted in the vineyard
- Fermentation lasts 10 to 18 days in stainless steel
- Wine ages for 36 months in 10 or 20 HL *botte* that are between 15 and 30 years old
- Bottled unfiltered

### Costa della Sesia DOC:

- Fermentation in old *barrique* for 16 days
- Aged 18 months in old *barrique*

### Qualcosa di Rosso:

- Fermentation in old *barrique* for 13 days
- Aged 12 months in old *barrique*