

Piedmont winery changes name in 35th year

Unless you are a wine buff extraordinaire, you've probably never heard of Piedmont wines produced by Michele Chiarlo.

That's just fine, because you're in our company. We just recently discovered these wine gems from Italy's famed Piedmont region.

Until now, the wines of Michele Chiarlo have been sold in the United States under the brand name Gran-

duca. In fact, you will still find several of these wines under this brand name. That's OK, too, because these are the wines of Michele Chiarlo.

The firm of Granduca was founded in 1956 by Chiarlo, the son of seven generations of esteemed grape growers. To celebrate 35 years of winemaking dedication, the name of the winery has been changed to Michele Chiarlo, reflecting the pro-



focus on wine
Eleanor and Ray Heald

ducer's personal pride in presenting top-quality wines.

"It has always been my philosophy and overriding passion to rigorously select grapes from the most reputable growers in the most-favored vineyard areas," Chiarlo said. "For our estate vineyards, only hillside locations with unique soils and micro-climates have been chosen."

THE CERQUEO vineyards in Barolo have long been renowned for their exceptional wines. Here, Chiarlo owns the Antico Poderio Averame, one of the finest nebbiolo vineyards for Barolo production. To ensure excellence at the time of harvest, the estate Cannubi vineyard, with its 38 to 50 percent grade, has been terraced at major capital investment.

Previously, this vineyard was painstakingly farmed by hand labor.

"If there is a single finest vineyard in Barolo, and the consensus is that there is, that vineyard is Cannubi," said the Italian wine authority Sheldon Wasserman in his book "Italy's Noble Red Wines."

In the vineyard, Chiarlo practices severe pruning during the winter dormant period and cluster thinning

in mid-summer to limit the crop, and uses organic fertilizers.

Because Chiarlo sources grapes throughout the Piedmont region, he operates wineries in three different locations to ensure that the harvested grapes reach the processing location in the shortest time possible. Once at the winery, the grapes are crushed and pressed, in the case of white varieties. Temperature-controlled fermentation with natural yeast is used for both red and white grapes.

After fermentation, the new red wines are racked into Yugoslavian oak ovals or small French oak barrels. The cooperage selected is determined by repeated tasting and notes on the vintage and varietal.

THE WHITE WINES are kept in refrigerated tanks to maintain their fresh, fruity grape aromas until bottling.

In Italy's Piedmont, Chiarlo is respected by his winemaking peers for his work in improving standards in Italian winemaking, having introduced procedures in the 1950s, which were eventually codified by the DOC

laws governing Italian winemaking practices.

He has created a trademarked wine, in limited supply, known as "Barilot," which is a distinctive blend of 60 percent barbera and 40 percent nebbiolo.

Italy is among the world's leaders in fashion. Producers, like Chiarlo, are designing wines that are at the cutting edge of consumers' taste preferences. The exceptional vineyard sites and extra care taken to maintain vine and wine quality are expensive. These factors are reflected in the price of wines from Italy's finest producers. Chiarlo is among them.

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— Michele Chiarlo

WINE SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK

The following wines of Michele Chiarlo from Italy's Piedmont are uniquely styled.

1989 Fior di Revere Gavi (\$23.50) is an artful presentation of the Cortese di Gavi grape from the tiny Rovereto di Gavi area. Produced from 35- to 40-year-old vines, it is an attractive wine with pear-like fruit impressions, lengthy finish and balanced acidity. It will complement poultry or fish dishes with rich sauces.

1985 Barolo (\$25.50) is a handsome wine now but portends the aging potential of another 10 years. The lively red fruit, with cocoa and tobacco nuances, finishes smooth and velvety.

1982 Barolo Riserva (\$29.25) is a rich wine deserving the designation "Riserva." It mirrors the character of the 1985 Barolo described above, but additional age has enhanced it to full maturity.

WINE BULLETIN BOARD

Tasting Premium California Wines will be the topic of a five-week wine course 7:30-9:30 p.m. Wednesdays, May 8 to June 5, at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills. The class will focus on classic wine varieties including chenin blanc, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, zinfandel, cabernet sauvignon and merlot. Total cost is \$90. Instructors: Eleanor and Ray Heald. For more information telephone OCC, 471-7561.

Detroit's Rattlesnake Club has initiated an ongoing attraction for wine buffs called the "Wednesday Wine Bar." According to Sommelier Madeline Triffin, each week's tasting will feature five to six wines and several of Chef Jimmy Schmidt's tasty appetizers. The cost, inclusive of wine, appetizers, tax and gratuity, is \$15 at the door. Come casual any time between 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.; no reservations are needed. Triffin will be in attendance, as well as a winemaker or supplier. For more information regarding wine themes, call the Rattlesnake at 567-4843.

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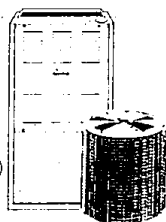
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