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ELIO GRASSO WINERY

MONFORTE D'ALBA * PIEMONTE

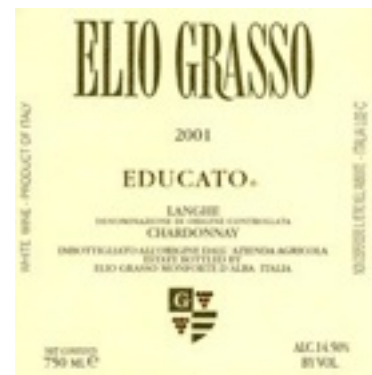
Elio Grasso is one of the best producers of Barolo. His estate, a beautiful house and cellar surrounded by improbably steep vineyards, is outside the town of Monforte, on the eastern side of the Barolo appellation. Elio works mostly in the vineyards, increasingly leaving the cellar work to his son Gianluca, who recently graduated from the enology school in Alba.



www.eliograsso.it/

CHARDONNAY

'Educatore' This crisp yet complex estate-grown Chardonnay was 'educato' in small barrels, in the Burgundian tradition. I like it quite a bit; very French in style, particularly compared to some New World examples of this variety. Great food wine.



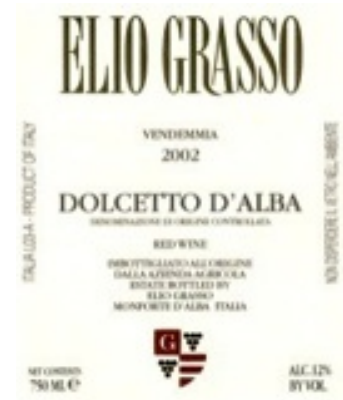
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DOLCETTO D'ALBA

This wine is made in a modern style, with excellent concentration, inky purple color, and some of the Monforte tannins (it seems to me that Dolcetto styles change according to where they are grown, as Barolos do). The new technique of micro-oxygenation was first used here for the 2000 Dolcetto, and the Grasso's feel that it will give softer tannins and better color.



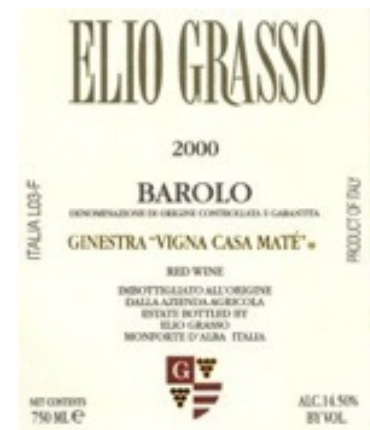
BARBERA D'ALBA

'Vigna Martina' Grasso's Barbera is barrique aged, with good fruit/oak balance (it's not over-oaked; some producers are overusing new barriques on Barbera.) It is round and lush on the palate with good acidity; one of the better Barbera d'Albas I have drunk. Very limited.



BAROLOS

There are three Grasso Barolos, Ginestra 'Casa Maté,' Gavarini 'Vigna Chiniera' and 'Runcot' (also from the Gavarini cru.) The new Atlas of the Langhe Vineyards describes the grapes from 'the majestic Gavarini vineyard' as 'prized by the best winemakers in the Langhe for their undoubted quality.' The Gavarini vineyard is wholly owned by the Grasso's; the wine is described as 'slow to open in comparison to the Ginestra' and I agree; I cellar both and will drink the wines from Ginestra while I am waiting for the Gavarini. The Runcot is a reserve wine, aged entirely in new barriques, and released a year later than the 'Chiniera.' I have to admit that I was concerned that Gianluca had overdone the oak with this wine (1996 is the first vintage) but I am now convinced that



he is right, the oak is being absorbed nicely. All of these Nebbiolos show the classic aromas and flavors of flowers, tar, red currant and hints of various spices and licorice, merging with age into the harmonious whole that is Barolo.

