An Interview with Pio Boffa

Description

Time flies, and the world of wines is no exception. It has almost been a year since I interacted with Mr Pio Boffa, who is the renowned yet humble wine producer from Piedmont in North West Italy. The occasion was the wine-makerâ??s dinner organized by the Prestige Wines and Spirits at The Leela Hotel, New Delhi.

Pio Cesare Wine Dinner at The Leela Hotel, New Delhi

During the course of the dinner Pio, the 4th generation owner of the famed Pio Cesare winery, introduced his wines with much passion, knowledge and a lot of anecdotes. Notable amongst the wine showcased were the Barolo, Barbaresco and Barbera of different vintages. Little did I know that a year on I would again be interacting with the famed wine maker to know more about his wines, Barolo in particular. More about it further in the write up, but first a brief report on the state of Harvest 2016 which has been much discussed in wine circles recently.

World Harvest-2016 World over the general perception has been of a tough harvest due to inclement weather conditions. El Nino in South America, frost and hail in France and poor weather conditions in South Africa, all these adversely affected the grapes in the vineyards. There was some saving grace towards the end of the growing season when certain parts of Europe witnessed a warm and sunny climate. The resultant expectation was of a good quality albeit reduced quantity of the produce.

On a macro level, the 2016 harvest can said to have produced lesser volumes of wines as compared to previous years owing to inclement weather conditions â?? almost a 20 year low as per some estimates, the exact figures should be out soon.

Piedmont Harvest 2016 However, in Piedmont things were different where the weather Gods granted a favorable weather to suit the viticulture requirements and this resulted in a bumper harvest. Wine producers have proclaimed it as an outstanding harvest and expect excellent quality wines particularly the Barolo. To Some the 2016 growing season reminds of 1964, one of Baroloâ??s legendary vintages, and if thatâ??s true then thereâ??s much to cheer amongst the Barolo enthusiasts world over.

A superb Barolo harvest in Piedmont prompted me to contact Mr Pio Boffa once again, this time on e-mail, to know more about the harvest and the wines. Not only did he respond promptly but provided pertinent information and his views. Excerpts of my interaction with the winemaker are as following.

Me How has been the Harvest 2016 with particular reference to Barolo?

Pio Boffa â??We are extremely happy, pleased and thrilled about the wines we have been able to produce in 2016, particularly the Barolo. It has been a perfect and an ideal harvest from the point of view of both quality and quantity. *My experience of more than 40 harvests here in the region has taught me that quality and quantity never go together. This year has been an absolute exception and we canâ??t be happier about itâ?•*

Me How have been the weather conditions during the harvest?

PB â??The weather was a bit rainy in late spring, but we did not experience any frost problem and the flowering started nicely and gently. We had enough rain to grant sufficient humidity beneath the soil and to the roots, which enabled us to face a very warm summer, with hot weather continuing for long time even during the harvesting, which was not as early as in 2015.

The grapes were all very healthy, ripe, with the correct amount of acids, ripe tannins and good sugars: *a dream for us growers*. We picked with almost no rainy days, with the exceptions of just a few during the entire harvest.

Me Tell something about the vinification?

PB â??Fermentations were carried on very regularly and correctly. Great color extraction, good, supple and ripe tannin extraction and the healthiness of the grapes and the skins allowed us to carry on very long macerations with wonderful extractionsâ?•

Me What is your expectation from the wines from 2016 harvest?

PB â??We will be having wines with great elegance, concentration and balance, with a great amount of rich ripe fruit and extracts, forward characters and an extremely long ageing potential. Wines would be well balanced and supported by fruit and tanninsâ?•

Me Any final words for Harvest 2016 ?

PB *2016 will be a fantastic vintage for wine lovers and collectors as also for the â??puristsâ?• who have a strong faith in the great and unique character of Nebbiolo.*

The winemakerâ??s delight and enthusiasm about an outstanding harvest has certainly rubbed off on me and would make me eagerly await the release of the Barolo 2016 vintage. However, that would take time since the minimum ageing requirement stipulated for Barolo is 2 years. But as I mentioned earlier, *time flies* and hope it flies fast this time. Till then keep loving the Barolo.

Cover Picture â?? â?? www.wineonthestreet.com