

Oldest daughter of Angelo Gaja, born 1979, grown up in Barbaresco of 600 people. Father very strict: rigor and precision. Studied economics, born into the career because of respect for family business. Started at age ~15 in the winery but just random errands. After graduation worked for 9 months in San Francisco with Southern Wine and Spirits. Came back to Barbaresco in 2004, first in office - marketing. Now focus more on the production other than traveling to promote wines.

Changes since 2004: produce own compost, start with manure, processed by worms we nest, with better understanding of enology, how to use old wood we cut during pruning: stems, part of skins - everything we take from vineyard and reuse in manure as compost to bring living micro organisms back alive to be used in the vineyards. Very different before 2004.

Since 1998-1999: changed all the canopy of the vineyards as the problem was no longer us not reaching enough sugar in grapes but rather to get to perfect phenolic ripeness (technical). We used have very high canopy - 2 meters - in Piemonte because it had never been a well-lit region, always foggy so you needed more leaf area to help photosynthesis to bring sugar level up in grapes but in the last few years we noticed it was no longer the case we need much less leaves now so we reduced the size of the canopy so that its shorter. We also work the topping differently: there used to be much more topping because with topping every time you cut the leaves at the top of the plant - the oldest part like solar panels but not working well any more - when you cut out those topping plants and pull out other baby leaves that are more vigorous thus more photosynthesis, you get more sugar in grapes. So by cutting topping 3-4 times in a year you get greater concentration in wines, which is no longer our concern any more. So this year for some regions, we did not cut the topping not even once. Nothing has been topped twice, which is much less than 10 years ago.

Green harvest practices changed too: there was more green harvest in the past now much less. We do a very short pruning, then a selection of bunch - in May/June when they had developed already, that's all.

We have a well-trained seasoned team of vineyard workers: no apprentices or seasonal workers. Our team only works with us - 70 people in Barbaresco, 20 are second generation so they are experienced in how to treat each plant differently where sometimes they have to cut ends of the bunches if too much. We might do green harvest with some plants but never systematically. Most of time work in May/June would take care of things.

Other interventions are only done to prevent diseases, eg. if one bunch is touching another, much less systematic than in the past.

This year has been very rainy, Jan-June in Piemonte we 800mm rain already normally for one year. Despite the rainy weather, we were able to refrain from chemical products only a little bit sulphur and copper - a bit more than last year and 2011 but we had to and we got good results - plants are more resistant to disease/stress.

Grass between rows are managed differently too. 10 years ago in our vineyards grass was much neater/precise looking, completely topped, perfect, not leaving a drop left and right, with grass cut like a garden. Global warming pushed us to work more to figure out new ways to keep the vineyard in balance. Now in July/Aug, you might find high grass as we don't top now - only once - more leaves now than before so vineyards are more heapy than a few years ago.

Leaving grass between rows impacts on soil: by and by we understood how to not manipulate the vineyard - human stamp on the vines. We grew in our understanding how not to intervene but to manage the soil to have the plants grow naturally. For instance with the grass in the past there was too much water in the soil so to manage that we had to constantly cut grass as soon as it grows out - by cutting it the roots were drinking to the grow the grass again and the cycle continues such the roots kept drinking thus water taken out from soil. Our problem now is that we need to keep the humidity in the soil, which means we let the grass grow and as it gets old less vigorous it will not as much water intake so humidity kept. Then we can grow a bigger roller?? we can grow it a bit and bend. By bending it the grass becomes a hat protecting the soil from the heat we have in July/Aug. In Aug you can put finger in the soil and dig it - not drid out by sun. Also a way to protect biodiversity/insect/lives in the soils. Tractors compacting the soil over time? Every time we need to get a tractor from winery to vineyard, we think hard whether it's absolutely needed: treatment/toppping - some intervention, is it really needed? Also tractors use energy not necessarily clean. And they compress the soil. We always work to keep the soils soft as much as possible. Even in Piedmonte where hills are steep we can't really go with light tractors as they are like tanks on steep hills - very dangerous esp in April also in summer. Tanks can be safer but heavy so we use as little as possible.

Ripeness for leaves/grapes means riper stems? Yes by having more balanced/healthy soil, the plants are more able to absorb all the natural nutrients they need and to ripen more homogeneously including stems, whether it be due to global warming or the balance we achieved in our vineyards. More often than not we work with stems in fermentation. Harder to get ripe stems from Nebbiolo, unlike Pinot Noir, Nebbiolo's stems are always a bit green. But in the last year we decided they are ripe enough to use in fermentation. We don't do it systematically - we use it in some vineyards and not use in some, but it became quite common a practice now. Another note about 2013 vintage that I really like: 2 weeks ago we were going into the vineyards to taste

Nebbiolo grapes to decide when to harvest. My father drew my attention to the fact that this year the grapes were still all attached to the plants whose leaves are changing colors - not green but turning gold/red. Father told me it had not happened for a long time. For lots of vintages we picked grapes perfect - right acidity, ripeness, sugar level - when the plants are still green. And the fact that the plants are turning color means the plants are coming to an end and the grapes still attached are taking in everything the plants have to give in the end. So 2013 is gonna be a great complex year because the grapes stayed until the end of the ripening, very similar to the rhythm of the plants.

Nebbiolo through malo: as soon as fermentation finishes, malo starts for Nebbiolo or within a few weeks at least. Happens much earlier than Pinot Noir. We've also had some strange years when malo and alcoholic fermentation happened at the same time, earlier for Nebbiolo. For Nebbiolo producers due to high acidity, we prefer malo happening as soon as possible so that when it's over we won't have volatile acidity later on. But we are also doing experiments: move the wine to the barrels in the cooler part of the cellar after alcoholic fermentation is done, so that start of malo is delayed/slowed down. We don't know yet - maybe by delaying malo it can help us retain acidity.

Angelo Gaja is one of the most famous names but a lesser known name Guido Vela in Gaja and Piemonte. Since he started in the 70s and you were around there a lot then. What was he like? Guido was part of the family and devoted his life to our winery. He started in 1971 so 40 years with us. He started young because he graduated from same school my father went to with winemaking degrees but much younger. My father is 73 and Guido is 64/63. After one year, after graduating from wine school he started working with us. Very different from my father who travels a lot and every time he comes back from traveling he had new ideas. He always wanted to apply those new ideas - even today his eyes sparkle when you mention something he never heard of. I like to work with father. He's always intrigued by new things. He said when in youth he was very much inspired by friends as he studied winemaking in Montpelier, by California, by Robert Mondavi, seeing all his efforts/belief/experiments, which gave strength to my father. He got back from California trip inspired. He proposed to try green harvesting, short pruning, fermenting in a different way, etc. Guido was always "no" - we were doing the same way just fine why change. So seeing what had been happening everywhere else gave father strength/belief to experiment in Piemonte, he had always been pushing Guido to change things. They are like driving a car, father is on the speed, Guido is on the brakes. Together they managed for 40 years. They have big discussions but for 40 years they work well.

Several really famous wines out of Gaja every year and their histories and where they are heading are well charted but a few lesser well known wines like Dolcetto/Pinot Noir blend: only selling in Italy, called **Cremes**. Father tried international grapes: in 1979 he planted a vineyard of Chardonnay (first in Piemonte), 1983 another vineyard Sauv Blanc. There's amazing potential for ageable white wines in Piemonte for me as we don't have local varieties suited for aging. I've had Arneis, Moscatel but nothing can compare to Nebbiolo. We have the climate/soil/env for making ageable red and whites. In 1978 my father's first trial was Cab Sauv for a wine called **Darmagi** which we still produce and are very happy with. We still produce all three wines - Chardonnay Sauv Blanc Cab Sauv, they are like adopted kids and raised to be Piemontese. There is one variety with which my father had more difficulty - pinot noir. He planted with Pinot Noir as well but never succeeded, never satisfied with final results. But we are still trying but never came out with a 100% Pinot Noir - but rather blended with Dolcetto, which is a wine we produce 800 cases in total and only in Italy.

For a while produced Nebbiolo Nouveau - **Vinot**, our dialect for "little wine". First vintage 1978. Father tried to make Nebbiolo in Novello like Beaujolais Nouveau wine ready for release in November. It was the first Novello of Italy. Then one year later, Antinori started/came out with a Novello. After a few years we stopped because initially we made to be consumed within a year but you can age it for 7-10 years which proves that Nebbiolo is not meant as an easy drinkable wine but for aging - so it was a mistake and we went back to make ageable Nebbiolo.

Then Freisa for a while, called *illusione*, in our dialect - illusion because it was a little wine like an illusion of wine not yet a wine. It's a wine I like very much but we had problems on the market because it's a simple wine you should drink soon. But it was a Gaja wine, people who buy it were aging it and complained. Gaja had always been associated for 3 generations with Barbaresco, aging ability. The market was not acceptable to us producing easy wines. So we stopped it as well.

Chardonnay 1979. Inverse: the great Chardonnay vintages for Gaja are the opposite of the great Barbaresco/Barolo vintages. Why? First Chard vineyard was in Treiso. The Barbaresco area consists of three villages: Barbaresco, Neive, Treiso. Treiso is higher in altitude so then in 1979 the highest vineyard we had was in Treiso. Father chose to plant Chardonnay there as it's cooler better for white grapes. In 1988 we added another vineyard in Serralunga in Barolo. Serralunga is again a cooler higher area. One of the greatest vintages of Gaia & Rey was 1984 - actually most sold in New York. You can find more of those old bottles in US than Italy. In 1984 we didn't make Barbaresco but made Gaia & Rey. Another was 1992 not good for reds but great for whites. Also 1994. But also vintages great for both colors 1999, 1997. Everything can change within a month - September - for Nebbiolo from good to bad. For instance in 2007 could really be like 2009 big hot year was saved by the end of August and early September we had a few rains which saved the vintage.

1994 we could have had a fantastic vintage but had a lot of rains in early September ruining the production of Nebbiolo, but didn't ruin Gaia & Rey because it's the first grapes we pick and sometimes before rain comes. Gaja vineyards are distinct: rows on hillside go vertically up and down as opposed to horizontal. Traditional way to planting vineyard is horizontal - like making terraces, a way to prevent erosion. In the past most work was done by animals who only work left and right not up and down the steep hills. One problem with planting horizontally - "giapoggio" - you always have to leave some more space - at least 2 meters? or 4 between rows because it's steep and if your rows are too close your soil can move and if another row is immediately behind there'd be damage so you need more space. That's why traditionally planting has always been of low density - 2400-2600 plants per hectare. So father had an idea to try higher density, which isn't possible with horizontal planting but doable with vertical - "ritokino". So he replanted all the vineyards that needed replanting in 1970s with vertical direction so 5800-6000 vines per hectare is reached. When you do high density planting, vineyard management is totally different: more homogenous ripening of grapes. If it rains during harvest the roots due to high competition are deeper so they will not drink the water immediately. If in Aug still hasn't rain much the deep roots are less likely stressed. When plants are close to one another due to competition the plants grow more micro-roots to take in as much as they can from the soil so leads to better expression of the soil. By planting vertically one problem is erosion: water taking soil down the rows. We solve it with keeping grass between rows and passing tractors as little as possible because when you use tractors up and down, you smash the structure of the soil, make dust leading to more erosion of soil. Importance of grass: powdery mildew fungal diseases are present in the soil. In the past when working in the vineyards you never used tractors that stir up dust so much less passing the vineyards than now. Today by always passing with tractors stirring up soils the fungal diseases are more likely to infect plants from the soil. We had been lucky to by chance to have done things right. In May/June when rainy, with high grass between rows that act as barriers against fungus. So we have much less mildew attacks than before.

Great older vintages commented by father sometimes contrary to what people think about them. Run through of recent vintages: 2013 balance complexity super excited. 2012 and 2011 both considered warmer vintages fruit forward esp 2011. 2010 classic: not fruit forward, not austere in tannin, precise, focused, good expression of Nebbiolo. Beautiful to drink now. I have a different way of drinking Barbaresco in contrast to Barolo. Barbaresco has softer tannins, ethereal and floral - I like to drink it immediately after release. The number of the vintage + 4. So 2010 until the end of 2014 in my experience would be alive/blossom, full of energy. Then the wine shuts down - like a teenager, for example 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006 are getting there. I may not drink them now - whether you will have a very good experience is a ?. If you want to be really sure the wine will not disappoint you will have to wait at least 7-8 years from the vintage on the label. So now 2004, 2001 and 90s are beautiful now. I love wines between 10-12 years old, that's when you can enjoy both the youth and complexity.

Compare 2009 and 1999, there are similarities: 2009 has big tannin structure like 99. Generally those with bigger tannins shut down for longer. I don't think 2010 which has a lot of acidity and soft tannins would stay shut for 7 year - probably shorter. 2009 has a similar austere tannin structure. 2008 is beautifully balanced delicate like 1998. 2007 more lush fruit forward like 1997. 2006 higher acidity like 1996.

After success in Piemonte, father decided to move to Montalcino and later Bolgheri. Why? First father started to receive invitations from other winemakers to do joint ventures eg in California, Chile, Italy. Father thought a lot about them but did not. Such opened his mind about such opportunities - making wine in other regions. In 90s we had a lot of tough vintages: 1991 didn't produce Costa Russi/Sori San Lorenzo/Tildim, and Barbaresco production dropped; 1992 nothing except Gaia & Rey (Chardonnay) and Alteni di Brassica (Sauv Blanc); 1993 cut 30% production; 1994 no single vineyards. So on one hand father wanted to do something new, on another, we were held back by weather in Piemonte. So when he decided to do something new he looked elsewhere. Father always had savings and me and my sister were born - also brother born in 1993. Complete family now father was excited. Scared of touching Gaja as it was working beautifully as it was - we didn't want to ruin Gaja's reputation what we built, and enlarging vineyards in Piemonte means scaling up the winery hiring bigger team which was scary we started from anew somewhere else. Montalcino was acquired in 1994, an opportunity presented to us then, grandfather was great in selecting vineyards in Barbaresco, father was great in selecting property in Pieve Santa Restituta in Montalcino - a plot with all the potential to make a great Brunello. We don't focus on producing Gentile or Rosso Montalcino but devote all our strength to make what we think the property is best for - Brunello. We confirmed with all the teams there. We made a lot of mistakes - many vintages we didn't produce: no Sugarille (SOO-gah-REEL-leh, derived from the Latin suber, meaning cork oak, possibly because cork trees were found there)/Rennina (rehn-NEE-nah) for 2002, 2003, 2005, 2009. Those were the tough vintages and we didn't have the experience to make it right - those were sacrifices aka not releasing them. We have the ambition to become a leader there.

Ca'Marcanda - totally different story, happened 2 years later in Bolgheri - Italy's California. There's an expression in Italy: when you married the right guy/gal, when you start a successful business, we have an expression: you discovered the America. America is hope, bright future, opportunities, everyone has an aunt or uncle who left Italy to immigrate to America and had better life. Our America is Bolgheri. Father is always

excited in new things, he has beliefs in modernity in every point of view - the reason why traditional grapes succeeded, success in modern market, etc. Modernity helped everyone make clear wines, reflecting fruit purity unlike rustic/dirty wine of the past. US was the place where innovation blossomed and helped Europeans improve. Bolgheri is a new world for us, with a tradition but open to new folks like us from Piemonte. My father was passionate about it since day one.

Old restaurateurs say Gaja would come and promote not only Gaja wine but also Italy. Great vision/framework to elevate Italian wine up to French wine standard. Italy is a country of artisans. Artisan economy. I think the greatest thing of Italy is not the terrior or native grapes etc but its social structure of wine industry - the number of artisans. There are at least 35k winemakers in Italy, artisan family-owned taking care of everything from vine to wine. They put themselves behind what they do, strive to be the best of his/her own style. New things/revolution usually starts from industry but from artisans/individuals who risk and experiment a lot.

Giovanni Gaja (-2002): respectful of everyone even when a lot of bad fake wines in Italy. He was always confident in what he does. Respect nature, others, heritage. Lead by examples.

Tradition vs modernism are thankfully two terms no longer relevant for wines from Piemonte. I often find myself uncomfortable using these terms because the meanings always change. When father started making wine 52 years ago - a traditional wine then is not a good wine: unripe grapes, not much structure, bitter, no sweetness, often stinky old wood character. To which the reaction was to have grapes fully ripe, clean cellar, healthy new wood - so by and by "modern" term was used - la modernita - which focused on cleanness, purity, clarity, balance in wine w/o wood. Then came a phase when traditionalists observed and improved and some modernists went too far so suddenly tradition evolved to be good: rooted in the culture whereas modern tilted towards negative: sometimes overripe too much covered by new wood. Now things are converging. Also why quality of Piemonte wines improved dramatically and I can name so many people making excellent wines.

New York market is the most historical market of Gaja: first time he came to US was in 1976 to NYC and first meeting was with Sherry-Lehman in 1968 - went very kindly had a bottle of Bolinger, but also told father the market was not ready so they didn't buy any wines but father insisted on educating consumers and progress was made little by little. NYC was our first important market due to its Italian immigrant culture and large Jew companies like Sherry-Lehman and Zachy's were here. Italy was the land of cheap wines then - Lambrusco, Soave, Chianti, and Barolo/Barbaresco have always been sophisticated - consumers need to know which producer/vintage to buy and back then we did not have many good vintages as we do today. If you are a Napa drinker and bought a Barbaresco 1962 or 1963, you might never go back. If you knew better, you'd buy 1961, 1964, 1967 - that's it in the 60s. Later more better vintages more good producers and now theres a trends towards delicacy.

Romano Levi: Grappa producer, used to make Grappa in an Alembic pot of first generation aka direct fire. My hero, a man who remained pure in a world more and more chaotic and yet he remained humble and even naive. Unfortunately in last few years there were many people gravitating around him - they were using him. But he remains so clean??supreme??, candid. I have a lot of memory of him because he lives close by in Neive, one of the most beautiful places. I was born on May 10 - mother had to wait, was due late April, early May. Every morning in 1979, mother wakes up, takes a picture of the rising sun because she wants a pic of rising sun of my birthday. Then one month later, father came back with Romano with a big pile of pictures of rising suns and they started to find the one on May 10. All the rising suns were beautiful but 10 May it was cloudy, born in a storm. Father didn't care still loved it, and Romano said Angelo so sorry and he turned the picture and wrote "but the sun will always win the cloud". He is like that, whatever he says is meaningful even though he never travelled in his life, never had a driver's license, etc. but so wise. And a big lover of animals, his house has huge old webs everywhere because those are for spiders. The road leading to his house has a sign saying "be careful and??end?? crossing" and you look down the road there's a crossing. He had a little lake near his house, with karpa - a kind of catfish - living in the lake. The catfish was trained: as he goes near they will bit his hands. He is a special/unique man. Making Grappa with live fire in the old way - fire in direct contact with Alembic. Not using petrol/wood. To start fire he uses his own kilts 100% recycled. He had a little box where he keeps matches. He once told me that little box was the box he had since the first day he started making Grappa. Every year he was using only one match to start the fire and didn't want to finish making Grappa. The box filled up twice but he always filled it up with new matches because he wants to continue making Grappa for many more years to come. Every label was different, every was poetry. One day some visitors came to his house when he had no more Grappa. This group of German people begged for the one bottle at the window sill through the gate. Romano took it and said I can't sell it to you because when I was bottling a mosquito went inside. In the end they left with the bottle with mosquito. One year later people came back asking for Grappa with mosquito. So every time someone asked for it, Romano writes "Grappa with invisiabile mosquito".

