

HOW TO MEET A LEGEND

Unsurprisingly, even Gianfranco Soldera's website is unequivocal. "Selling only to personal acquaintances". Yes, but how exactly do you become a 'personal acquaintance'? Our champion was Roberto Conterno from the iconic Barolo Estate, Giacomo Conterno. Roberto is another legend of course but is also a friend. In truth, I cannot think of many friends who would drive you the 5 hours from Piedmont to Montalcino to make the introductions, observe our respective performances at the theatre of dinner without criticism (noble self-restraint) and then drive us all the way back again – the whole when the man was running a temperature and should have probably been in bed... which, shortly after midnight on the 17th July 2012 is where he headed leaving the Corney & Barrow lambs to a late night slaughter.

Gianfranco Soldera.... takes no prisoners. His opinions are not floated over; they are hammered into the audience with a relentless self-belief that even the use of an interpreter fails to gentle. Occasionally we agreed, even more rarely mounted a token counter attack but more often than not just dug in and kept our heads down before the start of yet another onslaught. He was testing us of course, looking for that flare of disagreement, that lack of unity, the falsity of ingratiation. We passed... just, to the relief of Roberto the next morning.

In subsequent meetings other sides to Gianfranco's powerful character became apparent – a wicked sense of humour, a reflective thoughtfulness, a kindness to others, a genuine sense of hospitality, a strong love of family and an awareness of man's mortality. The wanton and near total destruction of nearly six vintages of Brunello di Montalcino 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 in an act of criminal vandalism tested this extraordinary man's character to the limit. It is a testament to Gianfranco's resilience – and his family's, that he asked us to come out to see him at the end of January 2013 to discuss the launch in Hong Kong of Corney & Barrow's newest Asian exclusivity – Soldera. It is, more importantly, a tribute to the Asian market that, despite suspending the sale of his wines from 3rd December 2012 until further notice, Gianfranco has agreed a preferred allocation of the fabulous 2006 vintage which is the subject of this offer. In such beliefs are great relationships born.

We are very proud to have been given exclusive representation of Soldera, Case Basse, Brunello di Montalcino in Hong Kong, Macau and Mainland China.



Adam Brett-Smith
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