

Elvio Cogno

PIEDMONT

Novello flies under the radar compared to some of Barolo's more famous communes like Serralunga, La Morra and Castiglione Falletto, but Valter Fissore is changing that.

Valter Fissore takes an unusual approach in a region where many producers showcase terroir variations by bottling wines from several crus: He makes all three of his Barolos with fruit from the Ravera cru, considered Novello's best, and uses the differences in vine age, exposure and clonal selection to show how one cru can produce highly distinctive wines. Most of the estate's vineyards lie within sight of the Cogno farmhouse atop the Ravera cru, allowing Fissore to closely monitor every vine during growing seasons as different as the three represented in this year's tastings. Fissore just completed a 2,700-square-foot addition to his cellar that gives him more flexibility to bottle and release wines when they're ready. It's just one of the many adjustments Fissore is always making to boost the quality of his wines, pushing Novello's profile ever higher. — S.J.

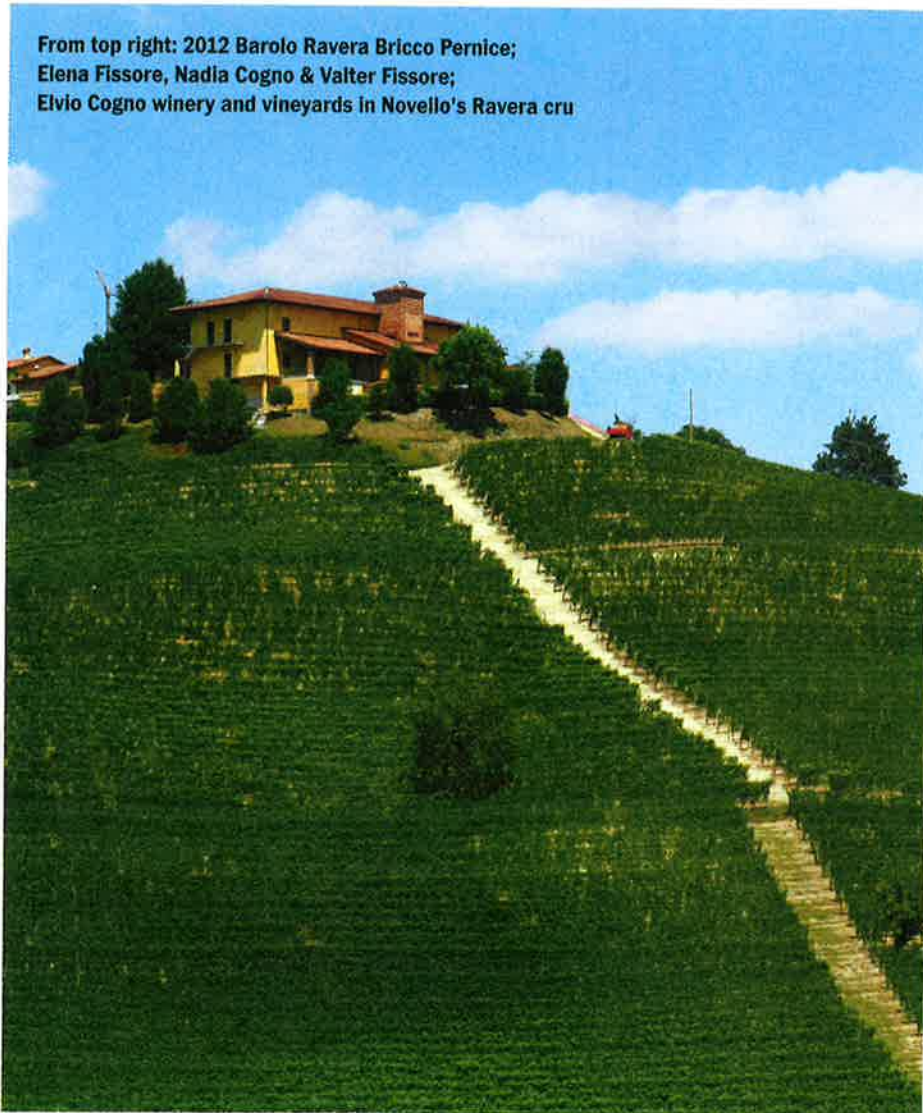
2012 Barolo Ravera Bricco Pernice (\$122, 95 points) Bricco Pernice is a two-acre plot in the warmest section of the Ravera cru, its vines protected by a high hill that blocks cold winds sweeping up from the mountains to the south. In vintages

with cool springs, like 2012, this protection helped deliver a wine that feels ripe and balanced. The vines, 30 and 50 years old and all Lampia clone, are rooted in compact clay-and-limestone soils that build wines with rigid tannins. Those tannins gradually recede, revealing notes of licorice, sage and mint that frame the wine's vivid cherry and plum flavors.

2013 Barolo Ravera (\$82, 94 points) Fissore counts 2013 as one of the longest growing seasons in memory, with hot, dry days and cool nights that yielded a wine with mouthwatering acidity and fresh cherry flavors tinged with blood orange, licorice and mint. The tannins are finely polished, yet powerful enough to remind you this is Barolo.

2011 Barolo Ravera Vigna Elena (\$128, 93 points) In 1991, Fissore planted his 2.5-acre Vigna Elena plot to nebbiolo rosé, once thought to be a clone of nebbiolo but now considered a closely related though genetically distinct variety. Many producers abandoned the variety because it gives wines with less color and structure than nebbiolo, but Fissore's embrace of nebbiolo rosé pays off in warm vintages like 2011, when Vigna Elena exhibits its signature rose-petal scents while gaining deep layers of licorice and spice. The tannins are gentle and sweet, offering plenty of immediate appeal.

From top right: 2012 Barolo Ravera Bricco Pernice; Elena Fissore, Nadia Cogno & Valter Fissore; Elvio Cogno winery and vineyards in Novello's Ravera cru



Founded: 1990 • **Winemaker/viticulturist:** Valter Fissore • **Owners:** Nadia Cogno, Valter Fissore • **Acres owned:** 27.18 • **Annual production:** 7,000 cases • **Estate grown:** 100% • **Importer:** Wilson Daniels, St. Helena, CA