



Cascina Castlèt

The Red Lady's Quiet Revolution in Costigliole

On a golden late-summer morning, September 24, 2025, we arrived at Cascina Castlèt, nestled among the gentle hills of Costigliole d'Asti. The air carried the promise of autumn mists. We were greeted not by a formal delegation, but by Mariuccia Borio herself – an impressive lady radiating enthusiasm and unstoppable energy, her eyes sparkling with the same fire she has brought to this Cascina since inheriting it from her father in 1970 – and Alice Bianco, the charming head of wine tourism at the estate. **Mariuccia Borio produced her 55th vintage in 2025** at the Cascina.

What makes Cascina Castlèt ([link](#)) truly distinctive is that **women have always held the real power here** – a quiet but determined matriarchal thread running through its modern history. In a region and an era when land and vineyards traditionally passed only to sons, Mariuccia – an only child and a young woman – took command after her father's sudden death. Defying convention in the male-dominated world of 1970s Piemonte wine, **she refused to sell or dilute the family legacy**.

Instead, she transformed a modest holding into **one of the most creative and respected Cascinas** in

Monferrato: innovative yet deeply rooted, elegant yet bold. Her story is not just personal; it echoes through the Borio women before her and the courageous spirit captured forever on the iconic Vespa label.

Mariuccia welcomed us with open arms and an infectious passion that turned what could have been a standard visit into a genuine celebration of place, family, and vision. She led us through the ancient stone walls of the Cascina and the modern touches she has added over decades, all while telling stories of brave choices and the revival of a nearly forgotten variety – Uvalino, and a relentless pursuit of elegance in every bottle. Here was no ordinary winemaker: this was **a pioneer who proved that women could not only lead but redefine what leadership in Piedmont wine could mean**.

Why "The Red Lady"?

What makes Cascina Castlèt truly distinctive is that women have always held the real power here – a quiet but determined matriarchal thread running through its modern history. In a region and an era when land and vineyards traditionally passed only to sons, Mariuccia – an only child and a young woman – took command after her father's sudden death. Defying convention in the male-dominated world of 1970s Piemonte wine, she refused to sell or dilute the family legacy. Instead, she transformed a modest holding into one of the most creative and respected estates in Monferrato: innovative yet deeply rooted, elegant yet bold.

It is this combination that gives the subtitle "The Red Lady's Quiet Revolution" its beautiful double meaning: it honours both **Barbera d'Asti** – the elegant, velvety "Red Lady" of the Monferrato hills – and Mariuccia Borio herself, the visionary "signora di ferro" who has gently but firmly revolutionised the tradition of this iconic grape.



At the heart of Cascina Castlèt stand two wines that define its soul and carry the weight of its history.

Passum ([link](#)) – the timeless Barbera d’Asti Superiore DOCG born from partially dried grapes (**appassimento**) – is **the Cascina’s undisputed flagship**. Intense, structured, velvety, and capable of remarkable longevity, it carries the signature of Mariuccia’s vision: density without heaviness, power wrapped in refinement, and an almost architectural balance that has made it a cult wine among connoisseurs worldwide.

Barbera della Vespa ([link](#)) – the joyful, everyday Barbera d’Asti DOCG with its **iconic Vespa** label – is the historical heart of the Cascina. The label tells a tender family story: a snapshot from the 1950s shows young Mariuccia Borio - she's sitting in the back on the Vespa- and three little girls -her cousins- perched triumphantly atop the family Vespa in the courtyard during a holiday moment. What began as a playful carousel for children on a parked scooter became the symbol of post-war simplicity, family warmth, and the quiet optimism of a new beginning in Piemonte – and of the Borio women looking boldly toward the future. Evoking ripe red fruits, crunchy freshness, delicate floral notes, and unmistakable drinkability, it embodies the convivial spirit that has carried the name Cascina Castlèt for generations – a wine that invites sharing, laughter, and the comfort of roots.



Together, **these two wines encapsulate Cascina Castlèt’s philosophy**: respect for the land’s heritage, fearless creativity guided by **women’s vision and hands**, and an unwavering commitment to quality – from the accessible everyday joy of Vespa to the profound elegance of Passum. As Mariuccia poured the first glasses, her smile said it all – this is not just wine; this is legacy in every sip.

The Tasting

The tasting took place on-site, and nine wines were served, representing the full range of wines produced on the Cascina’s 31 hectares.

A Taj Chardonnay 2021 [\(link\)](#), Piemonte DOC

100% Chardonnay from Cascina vineyards in Costigliole d'Asti (planted historically since the late 18th century in the area). Vines trained in Guyot or similar systems on clay-limestone marl soils at around 300 m altitude. Hand-harvested; fermentation in temperature-controlled stainless steel or partial barrique; maturation typically in steel tanks with possible brief oak contact for structure. Alcohol around 13–13.5%. Bottled after stabilization; production limited as a small parcel white wine.

“In our dialect, A TAJ means useful, beautiful, or something that’s there when you need it most. So, it’s the perfect name for a new, young wine that’s a great companion for those who appreciate good food.”

13.5% alc. A very lovely, intense, and pleasant nose—fresh and inviting, with some depth and fruity, floral scents. Notes of yellow apples, lemon zest, white peach, and white blossoms waft from the glass. On the palate, it is dry and well-structured, with a pleasant acidity that lends freshness, as well as a medium- to full-bodied, thoroughly balanced profile. Good concentration and plenty of flavour, with a medium-long, salty/spicy finish. A wine that’s here to be a lot of fun, and it succeeds very well. **17–17.25/20** (88–90/100).

This wine costs € 10.50 at [Bremer Wein](#) in Germany and CHF 14.80 at [Casa del Vini](#) in Switzerland.



Castlèt Rosé 2024 [\(link\)](#), Vino Rosato

100% Barbera from Cascina vineyards. Vines cultivated with Cordon Training on permeable clay-limestone soils at ~300 m altitude; density around 4,500 vines/ha; low yields maintained. Hand-harvested; direct pressing or short maceration for rosé colour extraction; fermentation in stainless steel at controlled low temperatures to preserve freshness. Alcohol typically 13–13.5%. Bottled young for vibrancy.

A fresh, elegant, and lively rosé made from Barbera grapes, whose fragrant bouquet bursts with vibrant notes of raspberry, strawberry, and blackcurrant, as well as delicate floral hints of lavender and rose. It’s truly a delight. On the palate, it is dry, smooth, and flavourful, with a light, delicate structure and lively acidity that provides freshness and length, keeping the wine crisp and harmonious. Perfect as an aperitif or with light dishes—very approachable and lively in its youth. A rosé that truly convinces. **17.25/20** (90/100).

This wine costs € 10.90 at [Bremer Wein](#) in Germany.





Barbera della Vespa 2024 [\(link\)](#), Barbera d'Asti DOC

100% Barbera. From Cascina vineyards in Costigliole d'Asti on clay-limestone marls at 300 m. Guyot training; ~5,000 vines/ha density; hand-harvested in September/October. Vinified in stainless steel with temperature-controlled fermentation; short maceration on skins for extraction; aged briefly in tank before bottling. Alcohol 13.5–14%. Designed as an accessible, early-drinking expression.



A very beautiful, harmonious, inviting, pure, and fresh nose unfolds. While not exceptionally complex, it offers seductive, approachable scents of juicy cherries and strawberries, blackberries, violets, and other floral notes, not to mention a hint of liqueur. Delicious, juicy, balanced, and fresh on the palate, an all-around elegant and very refined wine. Flavourful, crisp fruit, silky tannins, and very well-integrated acidity. A very good, lingering finish that invites you to pour a second glass. A very lovely wine for hedonists, not for technical connoisseurs. **17.25-17.5/20** (90-91/100).

This wine costs € 10.50 at [Bremer Wein](#), € 14.90 at [Toscana, der Weinladen](#) and € 16.45 at [Wineot](#) in Germany. In Switzerland it costs CHF 15.50 at [Casa del Vino](#) and CHF 14.95 at [Flaschenpost](#).



Litina 2021

Litina 2021 ([link](#)), Barbera d'Asti Superiore DOCG

100% Barbera from selected Cascina parcels. Vines on clay-limestone soils; density ~5,000 vines/ha; average yield ~7 tonnes/ha (yielding ~4,900 liters/ha wine). Hand-harvested in early October. Fermentation with skin contact; maturation in oak (barriques or larger barrels) for added structure and softness. Alcohol 14.5–15%. Bottled after sufficient aging for balance and persistence.

Alice notes that this wine has everything it takes to win over women wine lovers. Not just them, I would say. With an open, refined nose—particularly elegant and deep—it offers a delightful array of red fruits, including strawberries and cherries, dark chocolate, floral notes of violets, and spices such as mint. I also detect hints of plum and blackberry. A nose that is seductive and distinguished. Full-bodied, juicy, smooth, and balanced on the palate with excellent structure—indeed, a step above the delicious Vespa. Spicy notes emerge over time within the red, berry-like aroma profile. A long, broad finish where the spice really comes into its own. **17.5-17.75/20** (91-92/100).

This wine costs € 14.64 at [Weine-Südtirol](#), € 15.90 at [Bremer Wein](#) and € 17.90 at [Toscana, der Weinladen](#) in Germany. In Switzerland it costs CHF 18.90 at [Casa del Vino](#) and CHF 18.95 at [Flaschenpost](#).





Policalpo 2020 ([link](#)), Monferrato Rosso DOC

Blend of 70% Barbera and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon from the Policalpo vineyard parcels. The vines are over 30 years old. Cascina-grown on clay-limestone soils in Costigliole d'Asti. Hand-harvested; varieties vinified together for integration. Fermentation in stainless steel or concrete; aged 12 months in French barriques, followed by at least 6 months in bottle before release. 15% alcohol. Emphasizes the marriage of local and international varieties.

A successful blend of a native grape variety and an international one. An intense, deep, refined, and polished nose that perfectly highlights the fruit's ripeness. Beautiful aromatic complexity with cherries, plums, wild berries, black olives, vanilla, and other spices, with a hint of tobacco. It's easy to be seduced by this wine. Full-bodied, fresh, velvety, polished, and just as dry on the palate as the previous wines. The characteristics of both grape varieties come through very well, with the whole presenting itself as thoroughly harmonious. Very beautiful, promising structure; acidity is perfectly integrated. Plenty of substance, with delicate tannins. The oak is noticeable but will integrate beautifully over time. Very long, spicy finish with perceptible tannins (dt. Gerbstoffe). **17.25-17.75/20** (90-92/100).

This wine costs € 16.68 at [Weine-Südtirol](#), € 44.- the magnum bottle at [Toscana, der Weinladen](#) in Germany.



Passum 2020 ([link](#)), Barbera d'Asti Superiore DOCG

100% Barbera. Selected grapes undergo partial drying (appassimento) in small crates post-harvest to concentrate sugars and flavours. From Cascina vineyards on marly-clay-limestone soils. Fermentation with extended maceration; aged in oak barrels (barriques and/or larger formats) for extended periods to develop complexity and longevity. Alcohol 15%. Known for structured, age-worthy profile.

15.5% alcohol. A fascinating nose, reminiscent of an Amarone, though due to the Barbera grape variety rather than the classic Corvina, Rondinella, Molinara, etc. Initially reserved, it then opens up, though it remains youthful—waiting five to ten years is definitely recommended—deep, complex, refined, full of finesse, concentrated... Pure, delicate, and seductive scents of plum, wild cherries, raspberries, and spices—including cloves, preserved currants, and a hint of chocolate—pour from the glass; the whole experience is entirely focused on pleasure and offers promising complexity, while persistent tears form on the glass. The palate is full-bodied, lush, juicy, thoroughly harmonious, and polished; the tannins are soft and velvety, an exquisite creaminess flows across the mouth, while the flavours work in unison with those in the bouquet. The acidity is juicy and perfectly integrated, delivering freshness. A long-lasting, subtly sweet and spicy finish. Clearly a masterpiece. **17.75-18.25/20** (92-94/100).

This wine costs € 29.90 at [Toscana, der Weinladen](#) in Germany, while the vintages 2017, 2019 and 2021 are available at [Weine-Südtirol](#). In Switzerland it costs CHF 32.80 at [Schüwo](#), CHF 33.50 at [Casa del Vino](#) and CHF 32.95 at [Flaschenpost](#).





Passum 2007 ([link](#)), **Barbera d'Asti Superiore DOCG**

Complex, deep, dark, fresh, and open—one is easily seduced by this impressive bouquet, which has simply taken a great deal of time to fully unfold. It clearly still has potential for several more years. An authentic Christmas pudding, with molasses-like black fruit, roasted nuts, tobacco and smoke, dried cherries and dried herbs, and floral elements. This definitely leaves no one indifferent. Notes of leather and dried meat round out the picture. Full-bodied, juicy, energetic, and concentrated on the palate; the dense tannins are very delicate, every component is in its place and contributes to the wine's success. Very dry—1 g residual sugar—with a very long finish. A wine full of character, of which I bought a case. **18/20** (93/100).



Uceline 2018 ([link](#)), **Monferrato Rosso DOC**

100% Uvalino (rare autochthonous variety revived by the Cascina). From dedicated ~1.5 ha parcels at ~280 m altitude; late-ripening, low-yielding vines trained in Guyot. Hand-harvested; vinification with skin contact for extraction; aged in oak barrels (barriques) to build structure. Very limited production (~5,000 bottles/year); emphasizes the grape's intensity and heritage preservation.

A very fresh, intense, deep, pure, concentrated, and harmonious nose that offers good complexity. Delicate aromas of dark, including dried, berries, cherries, and a hint of preserved plums, as well as sweet spices and earthy notes, are discernible. Full-bodied, fresh, and pure on the palate, with very well-integrated acidity, plenty of flavour, and again dry, with present, finely sweet tannins and astringency in what I consider a somewhat striking, long-lasting finish. I'm curious, in a positive sense, to see how this wine will age. **17.5+/20** (91+/100).

Uceline 2011 [\(link\)](#), Monferrato Rosso DOC

The 2011 Uceline showed beautiful evolution, confirming the variety's excellent ageing potential, though time constraints limited more detailed notes. **17.5-17.75/20** (91-92/100).

The Cascina: Roots, Soil, and Soul

The Essentials at a Glance

Cascina Castlèt is a family-owned Cascina in the heart of the Barbera d'Asti zone, entirely shaped by the vision and determination of Mariuccia Borio since 1970. What began as a modest family farm has grown into a **benchmark for elegant, terroir-driven Monferrato wines**.

- **Location:** Costigliole d'Asti (Asti province, Piemonte) – all vineyards surrounding the Cascina on gently sloping hills at ~300 m above sea level.
- **Size:** 31 hectares of vineyards consistently reported on the official site [\(link\)](#).
- **Ownership & Leadership:** Borio family for generations; Mariuccia Borio inherited and leads since 1970 – a pioneering figure in Piemonte wine.
- **Philosophy:** Deep respect for the land ("**our land**"), revival of local heritage varieties, balance between tradition and innovation, sustainable practices without certification hype.
- **Key Grapes & Focus:**
 - Barbera (dominant, for Vespa, Litina, Aviè, Passum)
 - Moscato (for sweet Moscato d'Asti)
 - Uvalino (rare, revived autochthonous variety; ~1.5 ha)
 - Nebbiolo (small amounts)
 - Cabernet Sauvignon & Chardonnay (international varieties with local history; Chardonnay planted in Costigliole since late 18th century, since 1970 at the Cascina)

Grape Variety	Approx. Share / Hectares	Key Wines	Style & Role
Chardonnay	Small	Ataj	Fresh, mineral; historic in Costigliole
Barbera	Majority (~20+ ha)	Vespa, Litina, Aviè, Passum	Fresh & accessible to intense & age-worthy
Moscato	Small	Moscato d'Asti	Sweet, aromatic, classic Piedmontese
Uvalino	~1.5 ha	Uceline	Rare, intense, wild-fruited; revival project
Cabernet Sauvignon	Small	Policalpo (blend)	Structure & depth in cuvées
Nebbiolo	Very small	Small production	Added complexity

Key Facts in Bullets:

- All vineyards form one contiguous area around the estate → optimal control and homogeneity.

- Soils: Clay-limestone marls with sandy inclusions – remnants of the ancient Pliocene Sea (UNESCO “Hills of Moscato & Barbera”).

- Training: Guyot system, planting density ~5,000 vines/ha (typical for quality).

- Production: Small-scale and artisanal;

Focus on quality rather than quantity.

Yearly production: 250'000 – 300'000 bottles



More in Depth: From Family Farm to Women-Led Pioneer

From Bulk Roots to Bottled Identity – A Timeline in Brief

- 18th century: The Borio family begins winegrowing in Costigliole; Chardonnay already introduced by Marquis Filippo Asinari di San Marzano.
- Post-war period: Traditional family estate focused on local varieties; most wine sold in bulk.
- 1970: **Mariuccia Borio** (only child) takes over after her father’s death – a break with patriarchal inheritance; she **refuses to sell and instead invests in quality**, cellar technology and international markets.
- 1970s–1980s: First bottled wines; development of Passum (appassimento Barbera, first official production 1977; 40th anniversary celebrated in 2017).
- 1990s–today: Revival of rare varieties (Uvalino rescue through university research and own plantings); creative labelling (Vespa as emotional symbol); expansion to 31 ha; **international recognition as the “Red Lady” of Monferrato.**



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The Land & The Sea's Legacy – Terroir & Soil

The vineyards lie on gently undulating hills at around 300 metres, with perfect south/south-east exposure. **The soils are classic Monferrato marls:** clay-limestone with sandy elements, formed by the ancient **Pliocene Sea** that once covered the area (hence the UNESCO status of “The Hills of Moscato and Barbera”). **This geology delivers elegance, minerality and vibrant acidity even to powerful Barberas.** Individual parcels carry their own micro-names (e.g. Bricco Borio for newer plantings), allowing precise vinification.

The Grapes: Local Heroes and Thoughtful Guests

- **Barbera** dominates as the backbone: everyday joy (Vespa) and profound depth (Passum from selected, partially dried grapes in small crates).
- **Uvalino** – the estate’s quiet triumph: almost extinct; Mariuccia rescued it with ~1.5 ha in two parcels at 280 m (Guyot-trained, late-ripening, small berries); the result is Uceline, a rare cult wine.
- International varieties: Cabernet for structure in blends (Policalpo); Chardonnay, present in Costigliole since the late 18th century, yields the fresh, mineral Ataj.



Philosophy in the Vineyard & Beyond

Mariuccia’s guiding principle: **“We love happy vineyards.”** Minimal intervention, respect for nature, avoidance of aggressive chemicals; focus on perfect ripeness, balance and longevity. The estate remains fully family-run, with Mariuccia as its enduring force – living proof that women’s leadership can bring both deep tradition and bold evolution to Piedmontese wine.



The Cellar & The Withering Room: Where Tradition Meets Precision

Mariuccia Borio has always believed that **great wine is born as much in the cellar as in the vineyard.** At Cascina Castlèt the cellar is not a show-piece but a functional, thoughtfully designed space that reflects decades of quiet evolution: respect for the past combined with modern control.

The estate features two distinct ageing environments. The **old cellar**, located in the historic underground part of the cascina, houses large traditional oak barrels (botti). Here the wines mature slowly in a naturally cool, stable environment that echoes the old Piedmontese way of winemaking. Adjacent to it lies the **new ageing room**, created with the spirit of the old cellar in mind: solid brick ceilings paired with a clean, contemporary touch. This space is dedicated to barriques (225 litres) and tonneaux (500 litres), allowing precise oak integration for wines that need structure and complexity.

What truly sets Cascina Castlèt apart, however, is **The Withering Room** – the heart of the estate’s most iconic wine, Passum. Mariuccia was the first in Piemonte to revive the ancient **appassimento** technique on a serious scale for Barbera. Every year, usually in mid-October, carefully selected Barbera bunches are hand-picked and gently placed in small crates. They are then transferred to a dedicated, well-ventilated “fruit house” – a temperature- and humidity-controlled drying room. Here the grapes rest for over a month (the exact duration varies with the vintage). Slowly they lose water, sugars concentrate, and flavours intensify while acidity remains remarkably fresh. The oenologist monitors the bunches daily, checking sugar levels and health, ensuring the withering process enhances rather than overwhelms the natural character of the fruit.

Once the desired concentration is reached, the semi-dried grapes are destemmed only partially and undergo a long fermentation (around 20 days) with extended skin contact. The resulting wine then moves into oak for several years of patient ageing – first in barriques or tonneaux, later sometimes in larger barrels – before final blending and bottling. This meticulous process gives Passum its signature density, velvety texture and remarkable ageing potential while preserving the vibrant acidity that makes Barbera from Costigliole so distinctive.

The same attention to detail applies to the entire range. Even the more everyday wines benefit from temperature-controlled stainless-steel fermentation and careful lees management. For the rare Uvalino in Uceline, extended maceration and barrel ageing build the grape’s natural intensity and firm yet sweetening tannins. Nothing is rushed; everything is guided by Mariuccia’s philosophy of balance, elegance and respect for the land.

In this cellar, innovation does not mean flashy technology but quiet mastery – the same mastery that turned a nearly forgotten drying technique into Piemonte’s most celebrated modern Barbera.



Uvalino will be starring in a tasting dedicated to rare wines at vinalty 2017

©Cascina Castlèt

The Phoenix of Monferrato – Mariuccia Borio and the Resurrection of Uvalino

Uvalino is one of Piemonte's oldest and most enigmatic red varieties. Mentioned in records as far back as the 17th century, it was once valued in the Asti and Turin areas for its intense character and was traditionally used in blends or as a special-occasion wine – often gifted to priests, doctors or given at weddings and baptisms. Its name derives from its extremely late ripening: grapes were sometimes harvested after the leaves had already fallen, leaving much of the crop to the birds (uccelli → Uvalino / Uceline).

By the mid-20th century, however, **Uvalino had all but disappeared.** Low yields, difficult viticulture and the dominance of more productive varieties like Barbera pushed it to the brink of extinction. Only scattered old vines remained in forgotten corners of the Monferrato hills.

Enter **Mariuccia Borio.** Having taken over the estate in 1970 as a young woman in a male-dominated world, she **remembered the special Uvalino wines from her childhood.** In the early 1990s she began a determined rescue mission: she collaborated with oenologists (**including Renato Ratti**, who had small experimental plantings nearby) and **funded university research for over 27 years.** The goal was not just to preserve the variety, but to understand it fully – propagation, vineyard management, vinification – and bring it back to commercial viability.

Key milestones

- 1992: First experimental plantings on the estate (today ~1.5 ha in two dedicated parcels at ~280 m altitude, Guyot-trained).
- 2002: Official re-registration of Uvalino in the Italian national grape variety registry, thanks in large part to Cascina Castlèt's efforts.
- 2004–2009: First commercial vintages of **Uceline** (Monferrato Rosso DOC) – a pure-varietal wine that immediately stood out for its depth, firm yet sweetening tannins, volcanic intensity and remarkable ageing potential.
- Today: Cascina Castlèt remains essentially the sole significant producer worldwide, bottling only around 5,000 bottles annually.

Uceline is more than a curiosity. It embodies Mariuccia's core philosophy: true innovation often means looking backwards to rescue what modernity almost erased. The grape's late ripening, small berries and concentrated flavours produce a wine of wild fruit intensity, dark spice and haunting persistence – a living link to the ancient terroir of Costigliole d'Asti.

This revival project also ties directly into the estate's broader story of women-led pioneering. In a region where land traditionally passed only to sons, Mariuccia not only took the reins but used her position to safeguard biodiversity and cultural heritage. **Her work with Uvalino has been celebrated at events like Vinitaly** (dedicated rare-grape tastings) and within the Donne del Vino network, where she has long been an active voice.

In every bottle of Uceline one tastes not only the ancient soils of Monferrato, but also the determination of one woman who refused to let a piece of Piemonte's soul disappear.

Closing bullets / Key Takeaways

- Uvalino was nearly extinct by the late 20th century; Cascina Castlèt single-handedly brought it back from the edge.

- 27+ years of self-funded research with universities.
- Only ~1.5 ha planted; tiny production of ~5,000 bottles/year.
- Uceline proves that preserving rare varieties can yield wines of unique character and high collectible value.
- A powerful example of how individual vision and patience can rewrite a region's viticultural history.



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Women in Power: The Matriarchal Thread at Cascina Castlèt

In the hills of Costigliole d’Asti, where land and vineyards have traditionally passed from father to son, Cascina Castlèt tells a different story. Here, **for more than half a century, women have quietly but firmly held the real power** – a matriarchal continuity that began long before the term “women’s leadership” became fashionable in the wine world.

The turning point came in 1970. When her father died unexpectedly, Mariuccia Borio – an only child – inherited the family estate at a time when women in Piemonte wine were still rare exceptions. In a deeply patriarchal region and industry, she made a courageous decision: she would not sell, not divide, and not step aside. Instead, she took full command of what was then a modest 5-hectare holding (part of the larger 20 hectares divided among her uncles). With determination and vision, she transformed it into the 31-hectare estate we know today.

Mariuccia quickly became known as the **“signora di ferro”** – the iron lady of Monferrato. She introduced innovative vineyard practices, revived the ancient appassimento technique for Barbera with Passum, and embarked on a decades-long mission to rescue the nearly extinct Uvalino grape. Her bold, often provocative label designs (starting with the iconic Vespa in the 1980s) challenged the conservative aesthetics of the time and helped put Cascina Castlèt on the international map.

Yet her influence reaches far beyond her own cellar. In 1988 she was one of the **founding members of Le Donne del Vino**, the national association of women in Italian wine. For nine years she served as regional delegate for Piemonte, energising the network and strengthening the collective voice of women producers. In 2023 the association honoured her with a special award for 35 years of active membership, recognising not only her entrepreneurial achievements but also her international solidarity projects – including the purchase of 50 hectares of Amazon rainforest in Ecuador to prevent deforestation.

What makes Cascina Castlèt’s story particularly powerful is that the “women in power” theme is not limited to one generation. The iconic Barbera della Vespa label itself immortalises four little girls – including young Mariuccia – perched triumphantly on the family scooter in the 1950s. It is a tender yet defiant image: the next generation of Borio women already claiming their place, looking boldly into the future while drawing strength from family roots.

Today, Mariuccia continues to lead with the same energy and passion that has defined her for 55 vintages. She remains living proof that true leadership in wine is not about gender – but when a woman defies convention in a male-dominated world, **the results can be revolutionary**: elegant wines, preserved heritage, and a legacy that inspires a new generation of women winemakers across Piemonte and beyond.



Mariuccia Borio & Alice Bianco, chief wine tourism



Passum 1970

Key Milestones of Women's Leadership at Castlèt

- 1970: Mariuccia Borio takes over the estate as a young woman in a patriarchal system.
- 1988: Founding member of Le Donne del Vino.
- 1990s–2020s: Nine years as Piemonte delegate; drives Uvalino revival and innovative labelling.
- 2023: Special award for 35 years of commitment to Le Donne del Vino.
- Ongoing: Active voice for biodiversity, sustainability and women's solidarity in wine.

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Further reports about the Monferrato wine region:

- ▶ [Monferrato: Beyond Barolo, The Beating Heart of Piedmont's Viticultural Soul](#)
- ▶ [Azienda Accornero: An Unexpected UFO in the Hills of Monferrato](#)
- ▶ [Cascina Gilli: The Alchemists of Monferrato](#)

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