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Written By Joyce Lin

FEDERICA BOFFA PIO: SHAPING THE FIFTH GENERATION OF PIO CESARE



Federica Boffa Pio hosts dinner at her family home in Treiso, Piedmont, Italy | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Through three meetings, a birth-year Barolo and the wines shaping Pio Cesare's next chapter, Joyce Lin follows Federica Boffa Pio as she honours the family legacy while bringing her own voice to its future

1997 Barolo at the Family Table

At her family's home in Treiso, within the Barbaresco DOCG and beside the family's Il Bricco vineyard, Federica Boffa Pio shared a 1997 Pio Cesare Barolo, the vintage of her birth. Its fruit had moved towards dried rose, leather and forest floor,

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Across from her sat her mother, Nicoletta, who had welcomed us into the family home and cooked dinner. The meal spoke in the intimate language of home: fried zucchini flowers, anchovies with butter, agnolotti del pin, Nicoletta's veal-and-pork stew, and baked peaches with almonds. I felt extraordinarily fortunate to experience Italian home cooking for the first time through the Pio family's generosity.



Federica Boffa Pio shares Pio Cesare Barolo 1997, the birth of her vintage at the private dinner in her family home in Treiso, Piedmonte, Italy. | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin



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Tradition, Spoken in a New Voice

Pio Cesare's fifth generation is building upon the wines and values that define the house. Federica, her cousin Cesare Benvenuto Pio, and a long-serving team continue to champion the full portfolio: Classics, single-vineyard bottlings, Signature Whites, Discoveries, and the family's historic Revival wines. Yet new priorities are coming into view: a major investment in white wine, closer attention to climate adaptation, and a more direct conversation with visitors and younger drinkers. Federica's voice is emerging through a deep understanding of the family legacy and a clear vision for carrying it forward.



The fifth generation of Pio Cesare — Federica and Cesare, with the valuable support of their cousin Augusto — manage the Family's winery. | Photo Credit: Pio Cesare

When the Future Arrives Early

I first met Federica in New York in June 2022. It was her first visit to the United States after the pandemic and her first without her father, whom the family had lost to Covid-19 in 2021 at the age of 66. Pio Boffa had long been a prominent ambassador for both his family's estate and Piedmont. His absence was felt at every level: as a father, a proprietor, and the person expected to guide the transition.

Federica already knew the business from within. She began working alongside her father in 2017 and joined the company full time after graduating in 2019. Yet the transition arrived far sooner than anyone had expected. In New York, she presented recent vintages shaped by her family's knowledge and the estate's long-serving team. I saw a living tradition: Federica honoring its values while bringing her own perspective.


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stands out from typical Italian or Western cuisine served at wine-industry lunches. It was thrilling to see someone step beyond convention, explore new ways to experience food and wine, and open the conversation to a whole new audience. The pairing revealed unexpected dimensions in the wines and showed just how exciting and inclusive the world of wine can be.



Then, Barolo, Barbaresco, and Barbera were served alongside Chinese dishes, a combination I rarely encountered in over eleven years of winemaker lunches and dinners. The wines seemed to awaken in a different register. As someone who has long advocated for wine with Asian cuisine, I recognized the significance: a historic house could enter a different cultural



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Federica Boffa Pio presents current release of Barolo 2020, Barolo Mosconi and Barbaresco Il Bricco, along side with back vintage of Il Bricco Barbaresco from 2015 to 2004 at Hutong in NYC. Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Four years later, I finally arrived in Piemonte for the first time. After years of presenting Pio Cesare's wines to my audiences, walking into its historic cellar in Alba and seeing Federica again on her home ground felt both thrilling and strangely familiar. She guided us through the new facility dedicated to white wine, the vineyards, and a series of technical tastings with an ease that belonged to the place.

At our final dinner in Treiso, the conversation became more personal. I asked how she and her mother were doing. Federica paused, then shared that when she faces a major decision, she thinks about how her father might have viewed it, how he would have approached it and what he might have done. Then she added something that stayed with me: she also thinks about what she would say to him.

What touched me most was realizing that their conversation had not ended; it had simply taken a new form. Her father's voice remained a compass, while her own experience had given that conversation a new dimension. Federica speaks from within the family legacy with a voice unmistakably her own.

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Federica Boffa Pio shows us the underground historic cellar in Alba, Piemonte, Italy | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

A New Voice in a Historic House

At Pio Cesare, tradition has never meant standing still. Founded in 1881 by Cesare Pio, the estate still makes wine in the center of Alba. Its historic cellar descends beneath the city, winding through rooms built around the ancient Roman walls of Alba Pompeia. Casks, barriques and bottles rest within these layers of time. Here, history is not held at a distance; it remains part of the winery's everyday life.


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Courtyard of Pio Cesare Winery | Photo Credit: Pio Cesare

Each generation has shaped Pio Cesare in its own way. Under Pio Boffa's leadership, the family made two defining commitments with the 1985 vintage: Piodilei, a Langhe Chardonnay created to express the region's complexity, structure, and longevity, and Barolo Ornato, the family's first single-vineyard wine. Barbaresco Il Bricco followed with the 1990 vintage, and Barolo Mosconi with 2015. Each represented a purposeful step forward for the estate. Yet all remained grounded in the depth, balance, and sense of place that define Pio Cesare.



Pio Boffa, the fourth generation of Pio Cesare | Photo Credit: Pio Cesare

In the early 2000s, Pio Boffa conceived a plan to extend the historic cellar to a site across the road. The expansion would provide much-needed space while keeping the winery in the heart of Alba. Federica and Cesare carried that vision forward.

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Pio Cesare's newly expansion across the road from the historical location. | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Underground tunnels beneath Corso Nino Bixio and a private elevated walkway spanning the road now link the new facilities to the historic complex. These connections allow both sides to function as one winery while minimizing disruption to street traffic. The additional space houses a dedicated white-wine cellar, along with areas for bottling, packaging and bottle aging.

For Federica and Cesare, completing the expansion is both an act of continuity and a foundation for what comes next.

The dedicated white-wine cellar gives Piodilei and Derthona their own space in a house long known for its reds. Alongside them is a team that worked with Pio Boffa for decades. The fifth generation now brings fresh energy and vision to the future.



The new cellar of Pio Cesare is dedicated to making white wines: Chardonnay and Timorasso. | Photo Credit: Joyce


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A New Chapter in White

Walking through the underground tunnel from the historic cellar into the new space felt like moving through the estate's history towards its next chapter.

The room opened before us, bright, spacious and newly completed. We were told that ours was the first press group invited to taste there. Soon, it would become the dedicated home of the family's white-wine production.

We began with Timorasso, a project that grew from Pio Boffa's desire to make a Piedmontese white with the depth and capacity to develop in bottle. Having already worked with Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, the family found in Timorasso a native variety capable of carrying that ambition forward.

The estate acquired a south-facing site in Vho, near Tortona, in 2018 and planted the vines in 2021. Before those vines came into production, the team made a series of small trial vintages from purchased fruit beginning in 2019, choosing to keep the wines in the cellar rather than release them.



What a privilege to taste wine in the newly constructed cellar located just across the road from Pio Cesare's historical cellar. | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

We tasted six vintages, from 2019 to 2024. Each marked another stage in the team's understanding of Timorasso: how much texture to draw from the skins, how best to preserve freshness, and how long the wine needed in the bottle before its character came into focus.

The first official Pio Cesare Derthona Colli Tortonesi Timorasso Riserva is the 2023, made from the family's own Vho vineyard. The south-facing site lies at about 250 meters on calcareous clay and marl.

A small portion of the fruit receives brief skin contact. The wine then spends a year in stainless steel and almost two years in bottle. In the glass, celery leaf and coriander seed rose above firm acidity and a savory, mineral core.


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harvests became six years of learning about the site, skin contact and bottle ageing. The 2023 vintage was the first released to the public, shaped by the trials that began in 2019.

Tasting Pio Cesare Timorasso multivintages from 2019 to 2024 | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Piodilei anchors the family's long white-wine story. Pio Boffa officially presented its first vintage in 1985, at a time when Chardonnay was still unusual in Piedmont. He believed the region's hills could produce a white wine with structure, complexity, and aging potential. Its name means 'Pio for her', a dedication to the women of the family.

Since the 2019 vintage, Piodilei has blended Chardonnay from Bricco di Treiso in Barbaresco and Mosconi in Monforte d'Alba. Bricco di Treiso adds freshness and finesse, while Mosconi brings ripe fruit and spice. The parcels are vinified separately before blending. Fermentation begins in stainless steel and finishes in French oak barriques. The wine then matures on its lees in barrel before further ageing in bottle.

A vertical of 2024, 2021 and 2016 showed how beautifully the Chardonnay can evolve. The 2024 carried stone fruit and fresh pineapple, with the oak still visible at the edges. The 2021 had begun to draw those elements together. The 2016 showed what bottle age can bring: the fruits, oak, and creamy lees character have been integrated into a poised, savory whole, layered with dried fruit and nuanced tertiary notes. Its striking energy carried the wine through its greater depth and complexity, while freshness remained at its core.

Today, Federica and Cesare carry the vision onward. In the new cellar, Piodilei and Derthona continue unfold their promise, as the fifth generation gives the family's legacy a fresh and luminous chapter.


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Tasting a vertical of 2024, 2021 and 2016 Piodilei Chardonnay. | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Continuity in Red

Pio Cesare's classic Barolo brings together Nebbiolo from nine vineyards across Serralunga d'Alba, Monforte d'Alba, Novello, La Morra and Grinzane Cavour. After a long maceration on the skins in stainless steel, the wine ages for nearly 24 months, mainly in large French and Eastern European oak casks, with a small proportion in French barriques. The classic Barbaresco draws on four vineyards in Barbaresco region: three in the village of Treiso, and one in Alba. As Federica explained, these 'Classics' allow different vineyard expressions to be tasted together. Blending vineyards across the region, rather than focusing on a single site, brings together diverse soils, exposures and communes to create wines with breadth and balance.



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Pio Cesare's vineyard map | Photo Credit: Pio Cesare

The 2022 Barolo Pio was immediately expressive: red and dark cherries lifted by fresh acidity, with tannins unfolding in a broad, graceful sweep. The 2021 Ornato, from warm, south-facing limestone-and-clay plots in Serralunga, drew the gaze closer. More concentrated and reserved, it revealed rose petals and blood orange, framed by firm, ripe tannins. One gathered the breadth of the region; the other brought us close to the character of a single hillside.



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Comparison tasting of classic Pio Cesare Barolo and Barbaresco verses single vineyard expression of Barolo and Barbaresco | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Mosconi offered a third perspective. In 2014, the family acquired the vineyards in the historic Mosconi MGA in Monforte d'Alba. These vineyards included parcels of very old Nebbiolo vines. The first Barolo Mosconi followed with the 2015 vintage. Across 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021, Mosconi's power changed shape with each year. At eleven years old, the 2015 showed graceful evolution, with savory, leather tertiary notes and black tea carried by tannins that had softened with time. The warmer 2017 spoke of earth and spice. Ripe cherry and blood orange brightened the 2019 and lingered through a long finish. Then came 2021: concentrated red and black cherry, tea and flowers, held by firm tannins. For all its density, the wine moved with remarkable grace.

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Vertical tasting of Pio Cesare single vineyard Mosconi Barolo in Monforte d'Alba from 2015 to 2021 | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Tasted together, these wines define the house style. The classic blends capture the range of Barolo and Barbaresco, while Ornato, Il Bricco and Mosconi bring individual hillsides into focus. Each wine has its own personality, and the single-vineyard bottlings show how profoundly a site shapes Nebbiolo's structure and flavor. Pio Cesare's identity comes through in their dialogue: a consistent house signature that lets each vineyard speak with greater force and distinction.

Climate at Vineyard Scale

For Pio Cesare, sustainability includes people as well as land. The estate employs around 15 vineyard workers year-round instead of relying only on seasonal labor. This provides stable work and builds valuable vineyard knowledge. As hotter seasons, water stress, and sudden storms alter the growing cycle, that knowledge helps the estate understand what each parcel needs.

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During our vineyard visits, we saw how the estate is adapting to climate change. Weather stations in key vineyards provide precise data for each site, helping the team adjust irrigation, canopy management, and harvest timing. Protective nets help shield the vines from hail and excessive sun.

In 2021, the family planted about one hectare of Nebbiolo at a higher elevation in Alta Langa. The young vines produced their first small harvest in 2023. This long-term experiment will help the family understand how Nebbiolo responds to a cooler site.



Protective nets are used to against hail, excessive sun, and birds in Pio Cesare's vineyards. | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Cellar practices are adjusting too. Federica has described using shorter macerations and gentler extraction in warmer vintages. These choices help preserve Nebbiolo's balance and freshness as warmer seasons bring riper fruit and more powerful tannins.

As conditions evolve, the fifth generation is responding with curiosity and care, preserving the freshness, balance, and vineyard character that have long defined Pio Cesare.

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Group photo with Federica Boffa Pio at La Ciau del Tornavento in Treiso, Italy | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

Across those four years, what I felt most deeply was admiration. By 2026, Federica carried her authority with a warmth and ease that felt entirely her own. Her leadership was visible in the work: completing the cellar her father envisioned, strengthening Pio Cesare's commitment to white wine, testing Nebbiolo at altitude, and welcoming new drinkers into the Pio Cesare world. Each decision honored the estate's heritage while carrying it forward in her own voice.

That evening, the 1997 Barolo offered more than the beauty of maturity. It revealed a profound truth about becoming. Time softened its tannins and brought forth layers that only age could uncover, allowing the wine's identity to shine. People evolve in much the same way. Experience deepens who we are, bringing the perspective, courage, and wisdom to grow into ourselves.

At Pio Cesare, heritage serves as a foundation for thoughtful evolution. The values that have guided the house for generations now inform decisions shaped by today's realities. Through those choices, Federica is carrying the estate forward with its identity intact and opening new possibilities for its future.

Like the 1997 Barolo, Pio Cesare carries its legacy forward, gaining depth, energy, and possibility as Federica shapes the future in her own voice.



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At La Ciau del Tornavento, a one-Michelin-star restaurant in Treviso, we tasted an incredible lineup of Pio Cesare's Barolo, Barbaresco, Timorasso, Piodilei, and Barolo Chinato during our last dinner in Piedmont, Italy. | Photo Credit: Joyce Lin

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