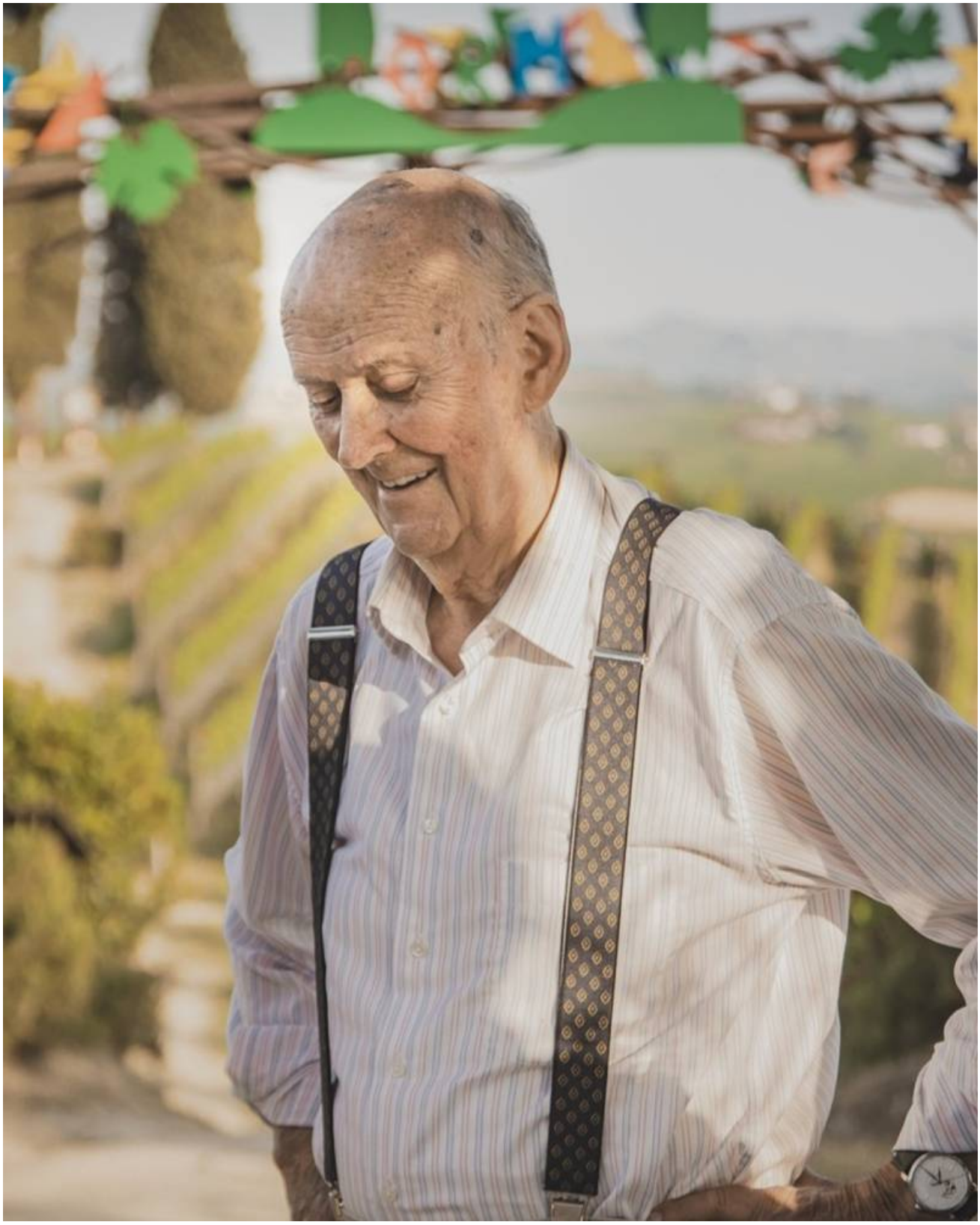
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Michele Chiarlo Marks Its 70th Anniversary by Spotlighting Family Succession

The Piedmont producer links the milestone to its role in elevating Barbera d’Asti, shaping Nizza DOCG, building wine tourism.

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Michele Chiarlo, the Piedmont winery founded in 1956 in Calamandrana, is marking its 70th anniversary this year with a review of its role in the development of modern winemaking in the region and with a renewed focus on family succession, vineyard identity, and hospitality.

The company, established by Michele Chiarlo when he was 23, said the anniversary is being presented not only as a milestone for the business but also as a way to revisit a broader period in the history of wine in Piedmont, from the postwar years of largely agricultural production to the international rise of the Langhe and Monferrato as major fine-wine areas. Over that time, the winery said, vineyard work, cellar practices, export strategy, and the idea of wine tourism all changed sharply, while its central approach remained tied to the value of individual vineyard sites.

According to the company, one of its earliest defining choices was to invest in the quality potential of Barbera d'Asti at a time when the wine was still largely seen as an everyday table wine. Michele Chiarlo's early work focused on showing that the denomination could produce wines with structure, elegance, and aging potential while staying true to its local identity. In the 1960s and 1970s, the winery said it increased experimentation in both vineyards and cellars and paid growing attention to the origin of the grapes.

The company traces a major turning point to 1978, when it created its first selected bottlings of Barolo, Barbaresco, and Barbera d'Asti. It said another important phase followed in the 1980s, when it adopted practices such as green harvesting, which at the time were still not widely used in the area and were aimed at improving grape quality rather than maximizing yields.

At the same time, the winery said it worked to expand Barbera d'Asti abroad, becoming one of the early producers to bring the denomination to North America and Asia. The company said its export strategy was built around promoting Barbera d'Asti as a place-based appellation rather than simply as a grape variety. That push continued through the 1980s and 1990s with the creation of Barbera d'Asti cru bottlings, a step the winery links to the later development of Nizza DOCG.

Michele Chiarlo said it was among the producers that helped shape the path to Nizza DOCG, working with a small group of other winemakers on the production rules for the denomination. The creation of Nizza DOCG has been one of the most important changes in the modern history of Barbera in Piedmont, separating a stricter area and style for wines made around the town of Nizza Monferrato and elevating the profile of

the category in export markets.

The winery’s anniversary account also places strong emphasis on the growth of its vineyard holdings in some of Piedmont’s best-known sites. In 1988, it entered Cerequio, one of the historic crus of Barolo. A year later, it added Cannubi, another widely recognized site in the denomination. The company described those acquisitions as central to its belief that the character of a wine is inseparable from the vineyard where it is grown.

That site-driven strategy expanded further in 1995 with the acquisition of Tenuta La Court in Monferrato, in an area that would later become part of Nizza DOCG. The estate became a key point in the winery’s work on Barbera and on the distinction between individual origins. Over time, the company built a portfolio that includes Cerequio, Cannubi, Asili, Faset, La Court, and Rovereto, spanning several of the region’s leading growing areas.

In recent decades, the winery has moved beyond production and export to invest more heavily in projects that connect wine with tourism, art, and the cultural identity of the countryside. In 2003, it opened Art Park La Court, an installation set among the vineyards of Castelnuovo Calcea that was designed to bring together agriculture, landscape, and contemporary art. In 2011, it opened Palás Cerequio, a hospitality project in the Barolo zone centered on the Cerequio cru.

That strategy continued in October 2024 with the opening of the Cannubi Path, an artistic route designed by Italian artist Ugo Nespolo on the Cannubi hill. The winery said the project fulfilled a long-held wish of Michele Chiarlo to create a space that would welcome visitors and create a new meeting point between the vineyard landscape and art.

For the 70th anniversary year, the winery said it is returning its attention to Cerequio through a project called Cerequio30, built around 30 vintages of Barolo Cerequio. The company described the initiative as a way to examine the evolution of the wine over time and to underline the long relationship between the estate and that vineyard.

Leadership of the company is now in the hands of Michele Chiarlo’s sons, Stefano and Alberto Chiarlo, who said the anniversary comes as the business is balancing continuity with adaptation. In comments released by the company, Stefano Chiarlo said the anniversary confirms a long-term project based on a deep relationship with the family’s vineyards. He said his father’s vision began with the belief that Piedmont’s territories and native grape varieties could produce wines with a strong identity and that the current challenge is to continue interpreting those places with respect while facing new pressures in viticulture.

Alberto Chiarlo said the winery’s history has always been linked both to the places where the wines are grown and to the effort to bring those wines to international markets. He said the company’s expansion abroad was built through durable ties with importers and distributors and that newer projects in art, hospitality, and landscape are meant to widen the way the territory is presented without weakening authenticity.

The company also said a fourth generation of the family is beginning to move closer to the business, with younger members completing studies and gaining early professional experience, including within the wine sector. It presented that transition as one of the main themes shaping the winery’s next phase.

The anniversary arrives at a time when Piedmont producers face a more complex environment than the one Michele Chiarlo entered in 1956. Over the last 70 years, the region has moved from local and national recognition to a position of global influence, helped by stricter appellation systems, more detailed vineyard mapping, stronger export networks, and a growing hospitality sector tied to wine tourism. The Chiarlo family’s account of its own history closely follows that broader trajectory, especially in the shift from volume-driven production to site-specific wines and from farm-based business models to brands that also rely on cultural experiences and direct visitor engagement.

Even so, the winery’s message around the anniversary is centered less on expansion than on continuity. From its earliest investment in Barbera d’Asti to its work in Barolo crus and Nizza DOCG, the company said its aim has remained consistent: to interpret Piedmont through its vineyards and to pass that work on to the next generation.