

Guide to Italian Wines

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Looking towards Cerequio and Sarmassa Vineyards, Barolo
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2005 BARBARESCO

This past May, I attended the Alba Wines Exhibition, a series of tastings to show the new releases of Barolo and Barbaresco. The new vintage of Barbaresco is 2005, which is a very good to excellent vintage, but one that will suffer in comparison to 2004. That was an outstanding vintage with impressive fruit concentration and excellent aging potential.

The offerings of Barbaresco from 2005 do not have the depth of fruit of 2004, but otherwise they are on a similar quality level. The wines have beautiful structure for mid-long term aging (7-12 years) and have lively acidity and nicely defined bright fruit. While these are not powerhouse wines that immediately jump out of the glass, they are well made and generally nicely balanced.

Again, there are a few too many examples of Barbaresco that are quite oaky with noticeable bitter tannins. This is clearly an approach by certain estates not only to make a more modern wine (which admittedly some people like, but I usually do not) as well as an attempt to make a “bigger” Barbaresco, perhaps aiming to produce a Barolo. Whatever the reason, it would be nice if these producers cut back a bit on the oak and worried more about terroir than ripeness.

Regardless, the quality of the 2005 Barbarescos is quite high- enjoy!

***** OUTSTANDING

Rizzi “Boito”

Beautiful deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, strawberry and red spice. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Graceful wine with elegant tannins, big fruit persistence and lively acidity. Big, beautifully structured wine that should age well for 12-15 years. Another outstanding wine by this underrated producer.

Domenico Filippino “Sori Capelli”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, bacon and cumin. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Elegantly styled with lovely balance. Polished tannins, bright fruit and lively acidity with excellent fruit persistence. Hints of currant and red spice in the finish. Wonderful finesse- enjoy this in 7-10 years.

Cascina Morassino “Morassino”

Brilliant garnet color with a lovely nose- aromas of fresh cherry, sandalwood, coriander and orange peel. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate backed by a lengthy finish with young tannins and lively acidity. Excellent fruit persistence. Give time – best in 7-10 years – perhaps longer.

******* OUTSTANDING**

Fontanabianca “Sori Burdin”

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, rose petals, cumin, allspice and dried orange peel. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Beautifully structured with lively acidity, youthful tannins and an herbal finish with excellent fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years.

Bruno Nada “Rombone”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, persimmon and orange pekoe tea. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Excellent fruit persistence, nicely styled tannins and lively acidity. This will need some time to settle down, but I love the complexity in this wine right now! Best in 10-12 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

Cascina Morassino “Ovello”

Deep garnet with a beautiful note of truffle oil in the aromas along with notes of cumin, roses and dried cherry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate and a nig, beautifully structured finish. Excellent fruit persistence and lively acidity. Best in 10-12 years.

Elvio Pertinace “Vigneto Nervo”

Deep garnet with aromas of cumin, dried cherry, persimmon and allspice. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Ripe, but nicely balanced with excellent fruit persistence and balanced tannins. Best in 10-12 years.

Ada Nada “Cichin”

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, tobacco leaf, persimmon and dried cherry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Excellent fruit persistence. Big finish that is nicely structured. Ample oak. Best in 7-10 years- perhaps longer.

Castello di Verduno “Rabaja”

Beautiful color with lovely floral aromas of rose petal, caraway, orange peel and sandalwood. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lengthy finish with lively acidity, refined tannins and subtle oak. Nice expression of terroir. Best in 10-12 years.

Albino Rocca “Vigneto Loreto”

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of red cherry, vanilla and wild strawberry. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate. Lively acidity, ample oak and excellent fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years.

RATINGS

******* OUTSTANDING**

****** EXCELLENT**

***** VERY GOOD**

**** GOOD**

****** EXCELLENT**

Rizzi “Pajoré”

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of dried orange peel, red cherry and coriander. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice freshness, subtle oak, elegant tannins and lively acidity - beautiful wine. Best in 7-10 years.

Prunotto

Bright garnet with aromas of tobacco, caraway, coffee and dried cherry. Medium-full with good to very good concentration. Rich mid-palate with very good fruit persistence. Youthful tannins, so give time- best in 7-10 years.

Elvio Pertinace “Vigneto Marcarini”

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of orange peel, persimmon, red cherry and cedar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Very good acidity, young tannins and very good fruit persistence. Nicely structured – enjoy in 7-10 years.

Marco e Vittorio Adriano “Basarin”

Beautiful bright garnet color with lovely aromas of red cherry, red currant and persimmon. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate. Lengthy finish with very good fruit persistence and lively acidity. Best in 7-10 years.

Vigin “Noemy”

Beautiful garnet with aromas of cedar, tobacco leaf, red cherry and persimmon. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long finish with excellent fruit persistence and lively acidity. Quite ripe, this is a modern style Barbaresco, but nicely balanced. Best in 10-12 years.

Albino Rocca “Vigneto Brich Ronchi”

Deep garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, cumin and truffles. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate, balanced tannins and oak. Nicely structured – best in 10-12 years.

Poderi Colla “Roncaglie”

Bright garnet with aromas of rose petals, orange peel and red cherry. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Excellent fruit persistence, lively acidity and polished tannins. Very elegant tannins. Best in 7-10 years.

Cantina del Pino

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, roses and dried brown herbs. Medium-full with very good concentration. Generous mid-palate and excellent fruit persistence. Ample oak – give time. Best in 10-12 years.

Cascina delle Rose “Rio Sordo”

Light garnet with aromas of orange peel, caraway and sandalwood. Rich mid-palate and very good fruit persistence. Lively acidity and delicate tannins. Elegant wine for enjoyment in 7-10 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

Rizzi “Fondetta”

Bright garnet with aromas of orange peel, cherry and cumin. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, subtle oak and very good fruit persistence. Cedary notes in the finish. Very classy wine! Best in 7-10 years.

Sergio Barale “Serra Boella”

Deep garnet with lovely aromas of red cherry and strawberry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe fruit, but not overly done. Lively acidity, balanced tannins and nice use of oak. Very good fruit persistence in the finish. Best in 7-10 years.

Sottimano “Curra”

Deep garnet with aromas of herbal tea, orange peel, dried cherry and a hint of soy. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and forward, but well balanced throughout. Elegant tannins and a long finish. This needs a bit of time to show its best – enjoy in 7-10 years.

Cascina Luisin “Sori Paolin”

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cherry, orange peel and caraway. Medium-full with very good concentration. Elegantly styled with round tannins, lively acidity and very good fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years.

Battaglio

Garnet color with aromas of coffee, caramel, dried cherry and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice complexity and structure. Nicely defined tannins. Best in 7-10 years.

La Contea “Ripa Sorita”

Beautiful garnet color with classic aromas of persimmon, orange peel and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lovely wine with a touch too much oak, but otherwise elegant with lively acidity and bright fruit and balanced tannins. Best in 7-10 years.

Tenuta San Mauro

Lovely bright garnet color with aromas of ripe red cherry, roses and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lengthy finish with lively acidity and good fruit persistence. Best in 5-7 years.

Barbaresco Notes

Barbaresco is produced in three towns east of Alba: Barbaresco, Neive and Treiso. There is also a small amount of Barbaresco produced from vineyards in a small section of Alba known as San Rocco Seno D’Elvio.

***** VERY GOOD**

Ada Nada “Valeriano”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, red plum and caraway seed. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe fruit and ample oak. This is a bit rough now, so give time. Best in 7-10 years.

Marco e Vittorio Adriano “Sanadaive”

Bright garnet with aromas of toasted oak, brown spice and dried cherry. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Earthy, spicy finish with lively acidity. Best in 5-7 years.

Produttori del Barbaresco

Bright garnet with aromas of red cherry, cedar, caraway and tobacco. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lengthy finish with lively acidity- nicely balanced throughout. Best in 7-10 years.

Carlo Boffa “Casot”

Bright garnet with aromas of brown spice (cumin), dried cherry, caraway and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and modern with a lengthy finish. Best in 5-7 years.

Francesco Rinaldi e Figli

Light garnet with aromas of strawberry, red cherry, caraway and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely balanced wine with lively acidity and moderate tannins. Best in 5-7 years.

Cascina Luisin “Rabaja”

Deep garnet with aromas of ripe cherry, orange peel and cumin. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate, nicely balanced tannins and good acidity. Very good fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years.

La Ca' Nova “Montestefano”

Light garnet with aromas of sandalwood, red cherry and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Graceful wine with lively acidity, moderate tannins and good fruit persistence. Best in 5-7 years.

Terre da Vino “La Casa in Collina”

Bright garnet with aromas of caraway, persimmon, dried cherry and tobacco peel- very nice! Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate, good fruit persistence and young tannins. Give time- best in 7-10 years.

Domenico Filippino “San Cristoforo”

Light garnet with aromas of orange peel, persimmon and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Elegant, flavorful wine with refined tannins and lively acidity. Notes of tobacco in the finish. Best in 5-7 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

Antichi Poderi di Gallina “Vigneto L Ciaciret Gallina”

Bright garnet with aromas of orange peel, caraway, herbal tea and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, young but balanced tannins. Earthy finish – best in 7-10 years.

Roberto Sarotto “Gaia Principe”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, vanilla and cigar. Medium-full, this is quite ripe with ample oak, balanced tannins and good acidity. Nice mid-palate. Best in 5-7 years.

La Ganghija

Garnet with aromas of cedar, persimmon and a touch of leather. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Ripe and fresh with ample oak, good acidity and excellent fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years.

Cascina Vallegranda Ca del Baio “Valgrande”

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, tobacco leaf and truffles. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate. This is a bit astringent now, so give time – best in 5-7 years.

Montaribaldi “Sori Montaribaldi”

Bright garnet with aromas of spicy cherry, vanilla and caraway. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and fresh in a modern style with ample oak but not overdone. A touch astringent now- give time. Nest in 5-7 years.

Montaribaldi “Pallazina”

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of orange peel, sweet brown spice and ripe cherry. Medium- full with very good concentration. Ample oak, lively acidity and balanced tannins. A touch alcoholic, but otherwise nicely balanced. Very good fruit persistence. Best in 5-7 years.

Pelissero “Nubiola”

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of balsamic, dried cherry and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Explosive, ripe fruit and ample oak, this is a bit tannic now, so give time. Best in 5-7 years.

La Spinetta “Vursu Vigneto Staderi”

Deep garnet with aromas of sandalwood, caraway, cherry, caramel and ample oak. Medium-full with very good concentration. Modern, quite ripe with big oak and good acidity. Give time – best in 7-10 years.

Bruno Rocca “Rabaja”

Deep garnet with aromas of vanilla, ripe cherry and truffle. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big layers of fruit and big, overdone oak. This has impressive concentration, but the problem as usual with this wine is it is so oaky and ripe. Will this age gracefully? Perhaps in 7-10 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

Fratelli Molino “Ausario”

Light ruby red with aromas of vanilla, red cherry and red licorice. Medium-full with very good concentration. Modern and ripe with balanced tannins, good acidity and very good fruit persistence. Best in 5-7 years.

Orlando Abrigo “Rocche Meruzzano”

Bright, deep ruby red with aromas of vanilla, black cherry and coriander. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Ripe and forward in a modern style, this sports big tannins and needs time- best in 7-10 years.

Orlando Abrigo “Vigneto Montersino”

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of vanilla, cumin and red cherry. Medium-full, this is quite rich and ripe, though a bit one-dimensional. Modern style with young tannins. Best in 5-7 years.

Ca’ Romé “Maria di Brun”

Bright garnet with aromas of caraway, tobacco seed and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good fruit persistence, earthy finish and balanced tannins. Best in 5-7 years.

Rivetto dal 1902 “Cé Nenin”

Light garnet with aromas of cigar, caraway and persimmon. Medium-full with very good concentration. Bright fruit and lively acidity in an elegantly styled wine. This is quite ripe, but otherwise nicely balanced. Best in 5-7 years.

Cascina Saria

Deep garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry and vanilla. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Ripe, modern style with plenty of oak. A bit astringent now- best in 5-7 years.

**** GOOD**

Michele Chiarlo “Asili”

Light garnet with aromas of cedar, dried cherry, orange peel and caraway. Medium-full with good concentration. Earthy style that is a bit simple, though balanced. Best in 5-7 years.

Carlo Boffa “Vitalotti”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, caraway, orange peel and cumin. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and a bit oaky, this is slightly bitter and a bit astringent- give time. Best in 5-7 years.

2004 BAROLO

The 2004 Barolos are now upon us and we have to ask the question: Are these the finest bottlings of Barolo in the last fifteen years? It's a difficult question to answer, as the Barolos from 1996, 1999 and 2001 are all outstanding, so 2004 is at least the fourth great vintage since 1989. I'm not sure I have a definitive answer right now, as the wines are young, but I can tell you I've never had such a collection of Barolos that were this good this young.

2004 was a cool year, a welcome situation for the producers who have seen a warming trend in the weather over the last decade, meaning that harvests have been earlier than normal. 2004 returned things to a more typical note, as the harvest was in late October. This meant healthy acidity, proper color and beautifully structured wines.

What really stands out with these wines are the aromas- there are so many floral notes along with beautifully defined cherry and strawberry fruit in the aromatics. You get this sometimes from wines from La Morra, which are known for their perfumes, but in 2004, the wines from every commune share this trait. These are elegant wines with bright fruit and most importantly for aging, excellent depth of fruit and lively acidity. You will read in my notes that I have recommended 20-25 years for a few of the wines. Pietro Ratti, owner of the Renato Ratti winery told me he believes "some of the best wines will age for 40 years."

This year with so many great wines, I have decided to arrange them by commune as well as star rating.

***** OUTSTANDING

Serralunga d'Alba

This commune produced some of the most terroir driven and complex bottlings of Barolo from the 2004 vintage. Serralunga d'Alba with its old, thin soils yields wines that are beautifully structured and age well for decades.

Cascina Cucco "Vigna Cucco"

Beautiful deep garnet with lovely aromas of red cherry, red licorice, vanilla, red roses and orange roses. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate and great complexity. Uprturned acidity, graceful tannins, beautifully integrated oak and fruit that goes on and on. Tremendous winemaking and expression of Nebbiolo fruit. Best in 20-25 years.

Cascina Cucco "Cerrati"

Beautiful garnet color with intriguing aromas of coffee, red cherry, cumin and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Tons of fruit on the palate. Nicely styled with a graceful entry, lively acidity and great fruit persistence. Wonderful expression of terroir. Best in 20-25 years.

******* OUTSTANDING**

Serralunga d'Alba

Gemma

Deep garnet with distinct aromas of truffle, red cherry, cigar and date. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Layers of fruit, lively acidity and youthful tannins. The oak is ideally used. Outstanding complexity and great richness. Elegantly styled, this has the power to drink well for 20-25 years.

Paolo Manzone "Serralunga"

Beautiful deep garnet color with complex aromas of truffle, red licorice, wild strawberry, red pepper, rose petals and orange pekoe tea. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lively acidity, polished tannins and subtle oak. Quite distinct, this is a wonderful expression of Serralunga terroir. Graceful and elegant, this will drink well for 15-20 years.

Guido Porro "Vigna S. Caterina"

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of cinnamon, red pepper, red cherry and cumin. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big fruit concentration and persistence. Well-structured finish with lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. Fine expression of terroir. Big wine than needs time- best in 20-25 years.

Massolino "Vigna Rionda"

Lovely garnet color with rich aromas of red cherry, red currant, orange peel and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Layers of flavor and a graceful entry on the palate. Big fruit persistence and a finish that goes on and on. Oak is nicely integrated, as are the tannins. This is a Riserva Barolo and will not be released for at least another year. It should drink well for 15-20 years.

Ascheri "Sorano Coste e Bricco"

The grapes from this wine come from the best part of the Sorano vineyard. Beautiful garnet with aromas of red cherry, cedar and cigar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big, big fruit persistence and an extremely graceful finish with silky tannins and lively acidity. Beauty and finesse! 15-20 years.

Luigi Baudana "Baudana"

Light garnet with aromas of orange peel, red cherry and caraway. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lively acidity, polished tannins and nicely integrated oak. An elegant, subtle Barolo with beautiful complexity. Long finish with excellent fruit persistence. Very classy! Best in 15-20 years.

Ettore Germano "Prapo"

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, coriander, red pepper and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate, graceful tannins, lively acidity and a lengthy finish. Excellent fruit persistence and beautiful complexity. Best in 15-20 years.

***** OUTSTANDING

Monforte d'Alba

The Barolos from Monforte always represent the local terroir well. Like Serralunga, the soils here are thin and old, yielding wines that are tannic when young, but have the ability to age for a long period of time. Although the 2004 Barolos from Monforte d'Alba were not as brilliant as from 2001, this is still a very impressive group of wines.

Aldo Conterno "Romirasco"

This esteemed producer has released one of the most impressive lineups of Barolos from the 2004 vintage. He works with small parcels within the large Bussia vineyard in Monforte d'Alba. The Romirasco site is the one that makes up at least 60-70% of the blend when the winery produces their famous Gran Bussia bottling of Barolo (as in 2001). As there will be no Gran Bussia from 2004 (I was told this by Franco Conterno, but I have no idea why he made this decision), the Romirasco is being released as a separate bottling from this vintage. Deep garnet-light ruby red with intense aromas of red cherry, truffle, cumin, tobacco and cedar. Full-bodied with excellent concentration. This is a mouthful of wine! Outstanding fruit persistence, lively acidity, nicely integrated oak and young, but balanced tannins. Great expression of terroir! This is among the three or four best bottlings of 2004 Barolo I have tasted. This will need time to display its best characteristics- best in 20-25 years.

Gemma "Giblin"

Bright garnet with nice perfumed aromas of vanilla, red cherry, red currant and a hint of tobacco leaf. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Great fruit persistence – lots of fruit on the finish. Lovely wine with a graceful finish. Lively acidity and subtle oak. Best in 15-20 years.

Tenuta Rocca "Vigna San Pietro"

Beautiful color with lovely aromas of red cherry, cumin, tobacco leaf and cigar wrapper. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Great fresh fruit character on the nose and palate! Lengthy finish with lively acidity, subtle oak and beautiful balance of all components. Best in 15-20 years.

La Morra

As opposed to Serralunga d'Alba, the Barolos from La Morra are less tannic with more floral aromas. More Barolo is produced from La Morra grapes than that of any other commune and the wines in 2004 are excellent to outstanding.

Rocche Costamagna "Bricco Francesco"

Garnet with lovely aromas of truffle, orange peel, dried cherry and red roses. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lovely harmony of all components. Lengthy finish with very good fruit persistence, lively acidity and elegant tannins. Beautifully made wine that expresses the La Morra terroir extremely well. Best in 12-15 years.

******* OUTSTANDING**

La Morra

Gianni Voerzio “La Serra”

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla and red currant. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Beautifully structured wine with excellent fruit persistence. Good acidity, notable oak and lively acidity. Young tannins, but nicely integrated. Give time – best in 15-20 years.

Castiglione Falletto

This small commune has older, thinner soils like Monforte and Serralunga, so the wines display rich tannins, yet the wines in general are a bit more approachable than those examples.

Vietti “Rocche”

Deep garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, allspice, orange peel, currant and cedar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Beautifully structured finish with great fruit persistence, lively acidity and refined tannins. Classically styled with outstanding complexity. Best in 15-20 years.

Barolo

The wines from Barolo tend to be in the middle style; the tannins are not as firm as those from Serralunga or Monforte, while the wines tend to have good perfume and floral aromatics, though not as pronounced as those from La Morra.

Damilano “Liste”

Garnet color with aromas of orange peel, hint of tar and coriander. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate. Lengthy finish with lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. Nice complexity and finesse. Best in 12-15 years.

Novello

There are only a few Barolo producers in Novello, with the firm of Elvio Cogno being the best. The wines are floral with youthful, but refined tannins.

Cogno “Ravera”

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry, orange peel and dried roses petals. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Excellent fruit persistence and a big finish with graceful tannins, lively acidity and subtle oak. Beautiful complexity throughout. Best in 12-15 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

Serralunga d'Alba

Bruna Grimaldi “Badarina Vigna Regnola”

Bright, beautiful garnet with aromas of balsamic, red cherry, vanilla and cigar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big fruit persistence. Nicely integrated tannins, ample oak and lively acidity. Nicely styled- best in 15-20 years.

Massolino “Margheria”

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry, balsamic, allspice and a hint of sage. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lengthy, beautifully structured finish with very good fruit persistence. Lively acidity and youthful, balanced tannins. Notes of tobacco and cedar in the finish. Best in 15-20 years.

Luigi Pira “Vigna Margheria”

Deep garnet with subtle, complex aromas of dried cherry, cedar, cumin and a hint of coffee. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lively acidity and refined tannins. A touch too much oak and perhaps a touch alcoholic, but otherwise very well made. Best in 15-20 years.

Ascheri “Sorano”

Beautiful garnet with aromas of white pepper, red cherry, orange peel and sandalwood. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lively acidity, subtle oak and refined tannins. Nice harmony of all components. Rich fruit, but a velvety, finesseful wine. Best in 15-20 years.

Cascina Luisin “Vigna Margheria”

Beautiful garnet with lovely perfumed aromas featuring orange peel, red roses, red cherry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate, upturned acidity, nicely integrated oak and tannins. Graceful, elegant wine that will be at its best in 12-15 years.

Rivetto dal 1902 “Giulin”

Beautiful garnet with aromas of red cherry, turmeric, wild strawberry and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate with delicious red cherry fruit. Excellent fruit persistence and nicely integrated tannins. Elegant, graceful wine- best in 15-20 years.

Mauro Sebaste “Prapo”

Lovely pale garnet color with aromas of mandarin orange, soy and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Upturned acidity and a long finish with excellent fruit persistence. Subtle oak and polished tannins. Nicely styled wine that should be at its best in 12-15 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

Serralunga d'Alba (continued)

Brovia “Leon”

Bright garnet with aromas of orange peel, red roses, vanilla and red cherry. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate and a very long finish with excellent fruit persistence and lively acidity. Elegantly styled wine that should be at its best in 15-20 years.

Fontanafredda “La Rosa”

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of truffle, red cherry, cumin and a touch of soy. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Very good fruit persistence, lively acidity and ample oak. A bit tannic now, so give time. This will be at its best in 15-20 years.

Fontanafredda “Serralunga”

This is the Fontanafredda Barolo made from grapes from various sites within Serralunga. Beautiful garnet with aromas of red cherry, strawberry and red roses. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate. Uprturned acidity, ample oak and lightly bitter tannins. Very nicely styled wine at its best in 12-15 years.

Guido Porro “Vigna Lazzairasco”

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of truffle, cumin, vanilla and red pepper. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Big spicy finish with well-integrated tannins, subtle oak and a nice expression of terroir. Best in 12-15 years.

Luigi Baudana “Cerretta”

Deep garnet with big aromas of red cherry, vanilla, tangerine and molasses. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Excellent fruit persistence, Nicely integrated tannins, ample oak and lively acidity. Give this plenty of time. Best in 20-25 years.

Ettore Germano “Cerretta”

Lovely light garnet color with aromas of red cherry, a hint of red pepper and cedar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Stylish, supple tannins, lively acidity and subtle oak. Lengthy finish with very good fruit persistence. Lovely food wine. Best in 12-15 years.

Giovanni Rosso “Serralunga”

Lovely garnet color with intriguing aromas of orange peel, wild strawberry and red currant. Medium-full with very good to excellent fruit persistence. Graceful, polished tannins and notes of mandarin orange on the finish. Nicely made wine – best in 12-15 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

Monforte d'Alba

Monti “Bussia”

Beautiful light garnet with aromas of cedar, date, orange peel and truffle. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate and excellent complexity. Big finish with very good fruit persistence, vibrant acidity and polished tannins. Very impressive. Best in 15-20 years.

Aldo Conterno “Colonello”

Lovely garnet color with aromas of truffle, cedar, red cherry and dried orange peel. Generous mid-palate. Elegant entry on the palate- nicely styled wine throughout. Lengthy finish with excellent fruit persistence, lively acidity and polished tannins. Another fine achievement from this outstanding Barolo producer. Best in 15-20 years.

Giovanni Sordo “Ceretta di Perno”

Light garnet with aromas of cedar, dried cherry, truffle and a hint of orange peel. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lengthy finish with excellent fruit persistence. Notable oak, but not overdone. Beautifully styled wine- quite elegant. Best in 20-25 years.

Fratelli Alessandria “Gramolere”

Lovely light garnet color with aromas of red currant, tobacco leaf and allspice. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big finish with very good fruit persistence. Refined tannins and lively acidity. Best in 15-20 years.

Silvano Bolmida “Bussia”

Bright garnet with aromas of vanilla, cedar, dried cherry and truffle. Medium-full with very good concentration. Generous mid-palate. Lengthy finish with very good fruit persistence and lively acidity. A touch too much oak, but otherwise nicely made. Tightly packed fruit- give time – best in 12-15 years.

Silvano Bolmida “Vigne dei Fantini”

Deep, bright garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla, tar and red flowers. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate. Big finish with excellent fruit persistence. Lively acidity, round tannins and ample oak. Two notable bottlings from this producer in 2004- very nice! Best in 12-15 years.

Franco Conterno Cascina Sciulin “Bussia Munie”

Bright garnet with lovely perfumed aromas of red cherry, vanilla, red currant and red roses. Big fruit persistence and a rich finish with young, but balanced tannins and very good acidity. Ample oak. Best in 12-15 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

Monforte d'Alba (continued)

Gianfranco Alessandria “San Giovanni”

Deep, bright garnet with lovely aromas of red cherry, vanilla, herbal tea and orange peel. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate with big, big fruit persistence. Lively acidity and polished tannins. Modern style that is well made. Best in 15-20 years.

Giacomo Fenocchio “Bussia”

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of cedar, dried cherry, sandalwood and dried rose petals. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Nicely styled with polished tannins, lively acidity and a lengthy finish with very good fruit persistence. Elegant wine. Best in 15-20 years.

Costa di Bussia Tenuta Arnulfo “Costa di Bussia”

Beautiful bright garnet with aromas of cedar, cumin, red cherry and currant. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big, forward, ripe fruit, very good fruit persistence, ample oak and nicely integrated tannins. Best in 15-20 years.

Costa di Bussia Tenuta Arnulfo “Campo di Buoi”

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of sandalwood, truffle, dried roses and orange peel. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Very good acidity, ample oak and a bit lean in the finish. Best in 12-15 years.

Gianfranco Alessandria

Deep, bright garnet with aromas of black cherry, black plum, vanilla and tar. Full-bodied with excellent concentration. Very modern style with ample oak and ripe fruit. Very good fruit persistence and a big finish with good acidity. Will it age gracefully? If it does, it will be at its best in 12-15 years.

La Morra

Renato Ratti “Conca”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, cedar and truffle. Medium-full with very good concentration. Balanced tannins, lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. Very supple, elegant wine that will be at its best in 12-15 years.

Renato Ratti “Marcenasco”

Beautiful garnet with aromas of dried cherry, cedar, truffle and allspice. Medium-full with very good concentration. Polished tannins and lively acidity with subtle oak. Very elegantly styled with a nice expression of La Morra terroir. Best in 12-15 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

La Morra (continued)

Cordero di Montezemolo “Bricco Gattera”

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla and red roses. Medium-full, this has plenty of ripe, forward fruit and a rich finish with excellent persistence with big sweet fruit. Very good acidity. Give this time- best in 15-20 years.

Rocche Costamagna “Rocche dell’Annunziata”

Beautiful garnet with aromas of red cherry, chrysanthemum and cedar and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Tightly packed fruit and lively acidity with a big finish with excellent persistence. Just a touch astringent now- give time. Best in 12-15 years.

Marcarini “La Serra”

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, red currant and leather. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Nicely balanced wine from start to finish. Excellent fruit persistence. Lively acidity and very subtle oak. Typical classy, elegant, polished wine from this famous producer. Best in 15-20 years.

Marcarini “Brunate”

Garnet with aromas of truffle, dried cherry and coffee. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Earthy finish with notes of cedar along with excellent fruit persistence. Lively acidity and refined tannins. Not quite as rich as the “La Serra” bottling this year, but quite impressive. Best in 12-15 years.

Mauro Veglio “Rocche dell’Annunziata”

Bright garnet with lovely aromas of red cherry, peppermint and rose petals. Full-bodied with excellent concentration. Big fruit persistence, ample oak and lively acidity. Give time- best in 15-20 years.

Gianni Gagliardo “Serre”

Garnet with aromas of red cherry, orange peel, rose petals and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate and excellent fruit persistence. Lively acidity and a nice balance of all components. Lightly spicy finish. Best in 12-15 years.

Cascina Ballarin “Bricco Rocca”

Deep garnet with aromas of orange peel, red cherry, strawberry and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Generous mid-palate. Lengthy finish with excellent persistence of fruit, lively acidity and elegant tannins. Classic La Morra style. Best in 15-20 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

La Morra (continued)

Aurelio Settimo

Light garnet with aromas of dried cherry, orange peel and herbal tea. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lovely wine with supple tannins and upturned acidity. Very good fruit persistence. Best in 15-20 years.

Tenuta L'Illuminata "Tebavio"

Garnet with lovely aromas of cherry, wild strawberry, rose petal and orange peel. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lovely complexity, rich fruit persistence and stylish tannins. Nicely made wine that will be at its best in 15-20 years.

Revello "Vigna Conca"

Bright garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla and tar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big wine with tons of fruit, good acidity, ample oak and young tannins. Give plenty of time – best in 15-20 years.

Mario Marengo

Deep garnet with aromas of rose petals, red cherry and dried plum. Big fruit persistence, lively acidity and a long, long finish. Tightly packed fruit- give this some time – best in 15-20 years.

Oddero "Brunate"

Garnet with aromas of dried cherry, red roses and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Young tannins and a bit too much oak, but very good fruit persistence. Best in 12-15 years.

Revello "Vigna Giachini"

Bright garnet- lovely color! Aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla, red roses and wild strawberry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big wine with excellent fruit persistence. Young tannins, good acidity and ample oak. This needs time – best in 15-20 years.

Fratelli Monchiero "Roere"

Garnet with classic aromas of rose petals, orange peel, red cherry and a hint of tobacco. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, subtle oak and light notes of spice in the finish. Very good fruit persistence. 12-15 years.

Mario Gagliasso "Rocche dell'Annunziata"

Deep garnet with aromas of balsamic, dried orange peel and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Traditional style with lively acidity and young tannins. Give a bit of time – best in 12-15 years.

**** **EXCELLENT**

La Morra (continued)

Michele Chiarlo “Cerequio”

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, truffle and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Earthy style with very good fruit persistence and nicely integrated oak. Nicely balanced throughout. Best in 15-20 years.

Mario Gagliasso “Torriglione”

Garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, red licorice, carnation and roses. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Ripe and forward with ample oak, very good acidity and young tannins. Overall, nicely balanced, if a bit too strong on the oak. Best in 12-15 years.

Barolo

Sergio Barale “Cannubi”

Bright garnet with cherry, coriander and vanilla aromas. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich, spicy finish with very good fruit persistence, lively acidity and nicely integrated tannins. Stylish winemaking as always from this producer. I believe this is the first bottling of Cannubi he has produced. This will be at its best in 12-15 years.

Damilano “Cannubi”

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, dried cherry and tobacco leaf. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate. Graceful wine with beautiful structure and excellent complexity. Lively acidity, refined tannins, and nice use of oak. Very good expression of terroir. Light spiciness in the finish. Best in 10-12 years.

Brezza “Sarmassa”

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, orange peel and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate with tightly packed fruit. Nicely structured finish and very fine expression of terroir. Best in 12-15 years.

Brezza “Cannubi”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, coriander and a hint of tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, youthful tannins and bright fruit give this wine freshness and elegance. Earthy, spicy finish- a nice expression of terroir. A traditional producer that should be better known for their expertly made wines. Best in 12-15 years.

**** **EXCELLENT**

Barolo (continued)

Michele Chiarlo “Cannubi”

Garnet with aromas of truffle, dried cherry, cedar and cumin. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice texture and structure. Bright fruit, lively acidity and excellent complexity. Nice expression of terroir; Chiarlo has some of the best vines on the Cannubi hillside. Very stylish wine – best in 12-15 years.

Famiglia Anselma

This Barolo is made from a blend of grapes from several communes: Barolo, Monforte d’Alba and Serralunga d’Alba. Garnet color with aromas of truffle, cumin, cigar and cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely balanced with throughout. Graceful tannins, lively acidity and very good fruit persistence. Lovely now, this will be at its best in 10-12 years.

Luciano Sandrone “Le Vigne”

This is a blend of grapes from Barolo, Monforte d’Alba and Novello. Garnet with aromas of truffle, red cherry and rose petals. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Ripe and forward with excellent fruit persistence and polished tannins. Just a baby- give time. Best in 15-20 years.

Giorgio Scarzello e Figli

Garnet with lovely aromas of orange peel, dried cherry and rose petals. Medium-full with very good concentration. Graceful, lengthy finish with elegant tannins and lively acidity. Very good fruit persistence and notes of balsamic in the finish. Lovely wine- best in 12-15 years.

Francesco Rinaldi e Figli “Cannubio”

Garnet with lovely aromas of truffle, coffee, tobacco, and dried orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate with a big finish. Young tannins, but nicely balanced. Solid, well-made wine that will be at its best in 10-12 years.

Giorgio Scarzello e Figli “Vigna Merenda”

Light garnet with aromas of dried red cherry, orange peel, cedar and tree bark (china). Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice complexity. Lively acidity, polished tannins and a nice expression of terroir. Earthy finish with very good fruit persistence. Best in 10-12 years.

Mauro Sebaste “Brunate”

Bright garnet with aromas of vanilla, bing cherry, coriander and red spice. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Ripe and forward with ample oak, young tannins and good acidity. Big fruit persistence. Give time to settle down. Best in 10-12 years.

****** EXCELLENT**

Barolo (continued)

Burlotto “Cannubi”

Garnet with aromas of cedar, dried cherry and a hint of truffle. Medium-full with very good concentration. Generous mid-palate. Lovely balance throughout. Lengthy finish with very good fruit persistence, lively acidity and graceful tannins. Nice expression of terroir. Best in 12-15 years.

Marchesi di Barolo “Sarmassa”

Deep garnet with rich aromas of red cherry, red licorice, cardamom and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe, modern style with refined tannins and very good acidity. Big fruit persistence. Best in 10-12 years.

Boroli “Cerequio”

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, orange peel and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate and a nicely structured finish with very good acidity and lovely tannins. Best in 12-15 years.

Angelo Germano “Vigna Rué”

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, orange peel and red cherry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate. Big finish with very good fruit persistence, but slightly gritty tannins and a bit too much oak. Give this a bit of time- best in 12-15 years.

Bric Cenciurio “Costa di Rose”

Bright garnet with aromas of red cherry, cumin, tamarind and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe, but not overly so. Elegant tannins, lively acidity and nice use of oak. Nice balance throughout. Give this some time- best in 10-12 years.

Castiglione Falletto

Cavallotto “Bricco Boschis”

Bright garnet with aromas of red cherry, dried plum and vanilla. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Rich fruit concentration that continues through to the finish. Subtle oak, lively acidity and polished tannins. Typical classy bottling from Cavallotto. Best in 12-15 years.

Fratelli Giacosa “Vigna Mandorlo”

Garnet with aromas of dried cherry, currant and herbal tea. Medium-full with very good concentration. Refined tannins, lively acidity and very good fruit persistence. Nicely balanced wine- quite elegant. Best in 12-15 years.

**** **EXCELLENT**

Castiglione Falletto (continued)

Tenuta Montanello “Montanello”

Garnet with aromas of red cherry, talc and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very good fruit persistence, cleansing acidity, polished tannins and subtle oak. Overall, this is quite elegant. Best in 12-15 years.

Fontana Livia “Villero”

Garnet with aromas of cedar, dried cherry and cinnamon. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, polished tannins, subtle oak and very good balance throughout. Very good fruit persistence in the finish along with notable spice. Best in 12-15 years.

Fontana Livia

Bright garnet with aromas of truffle, dried cherry and tobacco leaf. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate. Young tannins, but balanced and lively acidity. Big spicy finish. Best in 12-15 years.

Oddero “Rocche di Castiglione”

Garnet with aromas of dried cherry, vanilla, red plum and carnation. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lively acidity and ample oak. Big fruit persistence. Best in 12-15 years.

Other communes

Burlotto “Acclivi” (Verduno)

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, caraway, orange peel and dried cherry- very nice! Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Very subtle oak, pinpoint acidity and a lengthy finish. Elegant wine with lots of finesse. Best in 12-15 years.

Armando Piazza (Novello)

Garnet with a spicy aroma of clove, cherry and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long finish with excellent persistence, lively acidity and elegant tannins. Wonderful complexity throughout. One of my favorites in 2004; this from a producer whose wines I have not been familiar with. Best in 12-15 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

Serralunga d'Alba

Cantina Gigi Rosso “Arione”

Lovely garnet color with aromas of cedar, sandalwood, cumin and red cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Elegant tannins, subtle oak and very good acidity. The fruit is the focus here. Round, elegant wine that will be at its best in 12-15 years.

Ca' Romé “Vigna Cerretta”

Deep garnet with aromas of sandalwood, cumin, red pepper and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe fruit, very good acidity and balanced tannins. Light spicy notes on the finish. Best in 12-15 years.

Pio Cesare

This is the *normale* Barolo made from grapes from several communes: Serralunga d'Alba, Grinzane Cavour, La Morra, Novello and Castiglione Falletto. Lovely garnet color with aromas of truffle, cedar and dried orange peel. Nice complexity, subtle oak and lively acidity, Nice restraint throughout. Best in 12-15 years.



Nebbiolo Vineyards below the towers of Serralunga d'Alba
Photo ©Tom Hyland

***** VERY GOOD**

Serralunga d'Alba (continued)

Pio Cesare “Ornato”

Lovely garnet color with aromas of red cherry, sandalwood, cedar and dried orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lovely spicy finish with lively acidity, but not great fruit persistence and certainly less than most of the great Serralunga Barolos from this year. I have enjoyed this particular cru for many years and I am hoping this particular bottle is a bit shy. However, this is a bit disappointing, though it is a nicely styled wine. Perhaps this will show much greater complexities in 15-20 years.

Palladino “Vigna Broglio”

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry, truffle, cedar and cinnamon. Medium-full with very good concentration. A bit shy on fruit, but nicely styled in a traditional style with an earthy finish and good acidity. The tannins are slightly gritty, but not overpowering. Best in 12-15 years.

Palladino “Serralunga”

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, dried cherry and sandalwood. Medium-full with very good concentration. Earthy finish with good concentration and slightly gritty tannins as with this producer's other wine. Best in 10-12 years.

Paolo Manzone “Meriame”

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of currant, tobacco seed, cedar and a hint of pepper. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely styled wine with very good acidity, subtle oak and elegant tannins. Best in 10-12 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

Monforte d'Alba

Josetta Saffirio “Persiera”

Deep garnet with aromas of ripe red currant, red cherry and truffle. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Modern style with ripe, forward fruit, but nicely balanced. Big, ripe fruit- very fresh. Lively acidity and refined tannins. Best in 12-15 years- perhaps longer.

Josetta Saffirio

Bright garnet with aromas of cedar, truffle, red cherry and a hint of coffee. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate with tightly packed fruit. Lively acidity, but a bitter finish that is slightly clumsy. Give time- best in 12-15 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

Monforte d'Alba (continued)

Prunotto "Bussia"

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, truffle and cedar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Nice spicy finish. Ripe and a bit oaky with refined tannins and very good acidity. Best in 15-20 years.

Poderi Colla "Dardi Le Rose" – Bussia

Lovely garnet color with aromas of truffle, cedar, tobacco leaf and dried cherry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Slightly bitter finish that should soften with time. Good fruit persistence and a touch too much oak. Just a bit clumsy now. Best in 12-15 years.

Podere Rocche dei Manzoni "Vigna Cappella di S. Stefano"

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle, chocolate and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Modern style with big oak, ripe fruit and firm tannins. Will it age gracefully? Perhaps in 15-20 years.

Cascina Ballarin "Bussia"

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, vanilla, herbal tea and a hint of tobacco leaf. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Very ripe and oaky with youthful tannins that are a bit strong now. Best in 12-15 years, if it ages well.

Oreste Stroppiana "Gabbuti Bussia"

Deep garnet with earthy aromas of truffle, cumin, sandalwood, dried cherry and orange pekoe tea. Medium-full with very good concentration. Big oak and slightly aggressive tannins. Good acidity. Give time – best in 10-12 years.

Marziano Abbona "Pressenda"

Deep garnet with aromas of black cherry, red plum and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Forward, oaky, modern style. Big fruit persistence and big oak. This may or may not age gracefully. Best in 12-15 years.

Armando Parusso

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, vanilla and tar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big, ripe modern style with big oak. Big fruit persistence and good acidity. Best in 12-15 years.

Fratelli Seghesio "Vigneto La Villa"

Bright garnet with aromas of vanilla, tobacco seed, brown spice and hints of black pepper. Ultra ripe, modern style with good acidity and youthful tannins. Big fruit persistence- this needs time to settle down. Best in 15-20 years.

Ca Brusa "Vigna d' Vai"

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of vanilla, red cherry and red spice. Full-bodied with excellent concentration. Modern style with big oak, spicy tannins and good acidity. Will it age gracefully? We'll find out in 15-20 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

La Morra

Gianfranco Bovio “Vigna Gattera”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry (cherry pie), vanilla and a hint of tobacco leaf. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate, lively acidity and refined tannins. An elegant wine with very good fruit persistence. Best in 12-15 years.

Gianfranco Bovio “Vigna Arborina”

Deep garnet with aromas of coffee, truffle and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich finish, this is a well-structured wine with lively acidity and youthful tannins. Give this a bit of time- best in 12-15 years.

Aurelio Settimo “Rocche”

Garnet with aromas of fresh red cherry, vanilla and purple orchids. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good fruit persistence, notable oak, but not overpowering. Best in 10-12 years.

Cantina Franco Molino “Rocche dell’Annunziata”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, strawberry and sage. Medium-full with good concentration. Good ripeness and lively acidity, though a bit short on the finish. Best in 10-12 years.

Oreste Stroppiana “Vigna San Giacomo”

Garnet with aromas of cherry, sage and caraway. Medium-full this has youthful tannins, lively acidity and young, firm tannins. Earthy style that will be at its best in 10-12 years.

Rivetto dal 1902 “Leon”

Garnet with aromas of dried cherry, cedar, truffle and caraway. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely integrated oak and tannins. Earthy, traditional style that will be at its best in 10-12 years.

Barolo

Cascina Adelaide “Cannubi”

Deep garnet with big fruit aromas of ripe red cherries along with notes of coffee and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lively acidity, ample oak and refined tannins. Ripe and forward. Best in 10-12 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

Barolo

Sergio Barale “Castellero”

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla and turmeric. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Ripe and forward with big fruit persistence and very good acidity. Best in 12-15 years.

Enrico Bergadano “Sarmassa”

Garnet with aromas of coffee, red cherry and menthol. Medium-full with very good concentration. Earthy flavors in the finish. Good persistence, but slightly gritty tannins. Best in 10-12 years.

Marchesi di Barolo “Cannubi”

Deep garnet/light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla and tobacco leaf. Medium-full with very good concentration. Balanced tannins and nice acidity with notable oak. The finish is a bit short now, but time should help. This is a nice effort, but slightly disappointing from this historic producer, especially in a great year such as 2004. Best in 10-12 years.

Luciano Sandrone “Cerequio”

Garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla and orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and a bit oaky, this has sharp tannins. Good fruit persistence. Give time – best in 10-12 years.

Castiglione Falletto

Cordero di Montezemolo “Enrico VI”

Bright ruby red with aromas of red cherry, red plum and carnation. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and forward with ample oak and good acidity. Excellent fruit persistence. Best in 12-15 years.

Francesco Sobrero “Ciabot Tanasio”

Garnet with aromas of dried cherry, cedar and tobacco leaf. Medium-full with very good concentration. Shy fruit, refined tannins and lively acidity. Earthy finish. Consume within 10-12 years.

Fratelli Monchiero “Rocche”

Bright garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, cigar and cinnamon. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe, oaky, modern style. A bit astringent now, so give time. Best in 10-12 years.

***** VERY GOOD**

Castiglione Falletto (continued)

Giacomo Fennochio “Villero”

Bright garnet with aromas of red cherry, strawberry and rose petals. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Tightly packed fruit on the mid-palate, lively acidity and notable oak. This could age nicely. Best in 12-15 years.

Franco Molino “Villero”

Deep garnet with aromas of coffee, cacao and red cherry. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Modern, ripe style - a bit aggressive in its ripeness and tannins. Big fruit and oak along with good acidity. 12-15 years.

Brovia “Rocche”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, vanilla and cigar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Very ripe and forward, Ample oak and good acidity. Best in 12-15 years.

Franco Conterno Cascina Sciulun “Vigna Pugnane”

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry, cedar and truffle. Medium-full with excellent concentration. A bit aggressive now – ample oak, youthful tannins and good acidity. Give time – best in 12-15 years.

Viberti Rocche “Vigneti Rocche”

Garnet with aromas of truffle, cedar and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Tightly packed fruit and an earthy finish with very good fruit persistence and good acidity. Best in 12-15 years.

Boroli “Villero”

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, orange peel and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Good acidity and fruit presence, but quite heavy on oak and a bit sharp on the tannins. Will it age gracefully? 12-15 years.

Verduno

Castello di Verduno “Massara”

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of cedar, dried cherry and a hint of truffle. Medium-full with very good concentration. Earthy style with lively acidity and youthful tannins. Give this time. Best in 12-15 years.

Barolo Communes

Barolo can be produced from grapes grown in eleven communes south of Alba. They are: Barolo, La Morra, Monforte d’Alba, Serralunga d’Alba, Castiglione Falletto, Grinzane Cavour, Roddi, Diano d’Alba, Novello, Cherasco and Verduno.

CAVALLOTTO BAROLO VERTICAL BRICCO BOSCHIS – VIGNA SAN GIUSEPPE

One of the great Barolo producers – and clearly one of my favorites – is Cavallotto in Castiglione Falletto. The philosophy here is simple – make Barolo in a traditional style, aging the wines in botte and never in barrique. The wines are great of course, not merely because of the aging process, but because of the quality of the fruit. The Cavallotto family sources their fruit from their beautifully sited Bricco Boschis vineyard at the winery. Along with a *normale* Barolo from Bricco Boschis, they also produce Riserva bottlings labeled as Vignolo and San Giuseppe. These are produced from smaller sites within the Bricco Boschis vineyard and are beautifully structured wines with superb aromatics, especially the latter.

During the week, I tried the 2004 Barolos from the various producers, I was fortunate enough to sit in on a vertical tasting of Cavallotto Barolo San Giuseppe presented by the family (Giuseppe, Alfio and Laura) at their winery. This was a not-to-be-missed event that offered further proof that the San Giuseppe Barolo from Cavallotto is one of the most complete and ageworthy offerings of Barolo from any producer.

1971

Light brown-brick edge with aromas of toffee and fusel oil. Medium-full with good concentration. Still with good fruit and notes of caramel and orange. This has aged gracefully and is nearing its peak. ***

1978

Deep garnet – lovely color – with aromas of caramel and orange peel with hints of dried cherry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long finish with polished tannins. Elegant and quite rich, this is aging beautifully and should drink well for another 7-10 years. *****

1985

Lovely deep garnet color with aromas of truffle, a hint of leather and still fresh red cherry! Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long, long finish. Lively acidity and graceful tannins. Great complexity and of course, typical harmony of all components. This has at least another 12-15 years of drinking pleasure ahead of it. *****

1989

Deep garnet with aromas of truffle and caramel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich finish with good amount of tannins, good fruit persistence and lively acidity. Best in 7-10 years. *****

More reviews of Cavallotto Barolo Vigna San Giuseppe on the next page

CAVALLOTTO BAROLO VIGNA SAN GIUSEPPE (continued)

1990

Medium garnet with aromas of currant, dried cherry, cedar and dried orange peel. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate, long finish with excellent fruit persistence and polished tannins. This will drink well for another 12-15 years. ****

1999

Medium garnet with gorgeous aromas of dried cherry, a hint of leather and a touch of orange marmalade. Rich tannins – the finish is a bit sharp – lively acidity and very good fruit persistence. Enjoy this wine over the next 10-12 years. ****

2001

Bright garnet with lovely aromas of red cherry, red roses and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long, long finish with excellent fruit persistence. Lively acidity and polished tannins along with great complexity. Gorgeous wine- enjoy over the next 15-20 years. *****



Painting at Cavallotto Winery
Photo© Tom Hyland

FONTANAFREDDA BAROLO VERTICAL LAZZARITO LA DELIZIA

I attended a special vertical tasting of a cru Barolo from Fontanafredda, one of the most historic producers in the Barolo zone. The wines were from the Lazzarito vineyard in Serralunga d'Alba, the commune where the winery is located. Fontanafredda is the largest owner of vineyards planted to Barolo for the production of Nebbiolo and has become one of the major players in the highest levels of Barolo over the last decade, thanks in part to the great work by their enologist, Danilo Drocco.

Drocco led this vertical tasting at the winery, explaining that the Lazzarito cru is a more tannic wine that is not as approachable as their other cru from Serralunga, La Rosa, which is the stunningly beautiful amphitheater vineyard at the estate where the winery is located. Danilo works with a small parcel of the Lazzarito cru known as La Delizia; some of the past vintages were labeled in this manner, but due to new regulations, this will not be the case in the future.

The wines have great weight, firm tannins and plenty of spice; tobacco is often a key flavor in this wine. Above all, the Lazzarito Barolo from Fontanafredda displays the terroir of Serralunga, which means there is a distinct earthiness along with rich tannins and a big finish. These are wines meant for cellaring; their depth of fruit and complexity ensure graceful aging.

1974

Garnet with a slight brick edge with aromas of balsamic and cinnamon; this is showing a bit of age in the nose. Medium-full with very good concentration. Still a bit tannic with balanced acidity, the fruit is fading and the finish is a bit short. But overall, this is showing well for a wine almost 35 years old. Drink this over the next 2-3 years. ***

1978

Garnet with aromas of dried cherry, truffle and woody aromas. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely balanced wine with lively acidity, light tannins and good depth of fruit in the finish. This should drink well for another 5-7 years. ****

1982

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry, coffee grounds and a hint of myrtle. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Graceful entry on the palate. Lively acidity and a lengthy finish with beautifully integrated tannins and very good fruit persistence. Wonderful complexity – a classic approach to Barolo. Enjoy this over the next 10-12 years. *****

More reviews of Fontanafredda Lazzarito Barolo on the next page

FONTANAFREDDA BAROLO LAZZARITO VERTICAL (continued)

1990 (served from magnum)

Deep garnet with lovely aromas of balsamic and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich fruit, still rich tannins and good acidity. Elegant wine – enjoy over the next 5-7 years. ****

1996

Deep garnet with balsamic, leather, dried cherry and currant. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lovely entry on the palate. Lively acidity, excellent fruit persistence and graceful tannins. Beautifully made wine from a classic vintage. Enjoy over the next 10-12 years. *****

1998

Beautiful garnet color with aromas of fresh red cherry, red currant, leather and orange peel. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long, long finish with moderate tannins, lively acidity and very good fruit persistence. Nicely structured, the fruit is the focus here and the wine is attractively styled for drinking now and over the next 7-10 years. ****

1999

Lovely bright garnet color with notes of balsamic, red cherry, caraway and red plum. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate and a lengthy finish with lively acidity and refined tannins. Excellent complexity-glorious wine! Enjoy over the next 10-12 years. *****

2000

Deep garnet with earthy aromas of balsamic and dried brown herbs. Medium-full with very good concentration. Moderate tannins and fruit persistence. The finish is a bit short and the fruit is not as rich as with the other vintages. Drink over the next 3-5 years. ***

2001

Deep garnet with aromas of balsamic, red plum and cinnamon. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Big finish with excellent fruit persistence, lively acidity and polished tannins. Nicely balanced throughout. Enjoy over the next 10-12 years. **** (in a few years, perhaps *****)

Note that we did not taste the 1997 vintage, which has been celebrated in some quarters as spectacular. Drocco does not agree, saying, “1997 was not a great vintage, in my opinion.” He believes this is true, as the wines from that vintage are not balanced. “You need two things for a wine to age successfully- fruit and tannins.” Drocco much prefers the 1998 vintage that had the unfortunate timing to come right after the flashy 1997 vintage. Now however, Drocco – and I – believe that 1998 is a superior vintage. As for great vintages, 1996, 1999 and possibly 2001 certainly fit that description. All in all, this was quite an educational experience – and quite a treat!

1998 BAROLO RETROSPECTIVE

A final treat during the week I spent in Alba was a retrospective tasting of several dozen bottlings of 1998 Barolo. 1998 is a bit of a forgotten vintage, as it followed 1996 (a great vintage) and 1997 (a hyped vintage that was good, but not great) and preceded 1999, a classic vintage. This is unfortunate, as 1998 is an excellent vintage with the wines offering excellent depth of fruit and beautiful acidity (this is unlike the 1997s which had the fruit, but not the proper acidity). Tannins are nicely balanced for the most part and the aromatics are nicely defined. While the truly great Barolo vintages are structured for 20-25 years of drinking, the 1998s are meant for 15-20 years.

***** OUTSTANDING

Cavallotto “Vigna San Giuseppe”

Beautiful bright garnet color with aromas of red cherry, strawberry and a hint of tobacco. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Sublime wine! Long, long finish with polished tannins, subtle oak, excellent fruit persistence and great complexity. A work of art! Wonderful now, this should have another 10-12 years of life ahead of it.

Cordero di Montezemolo “Vigna Bricco Gattera”

Beautiful bright garnet color. Lovely aromas of red currant, wild strawberry and cherry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Nice mid-palate and a long finish with graceful tannins and lively acidity. Drinking beautifully and still with another 7-10 years life ahead of it.

Renato Ratti “Conca Marcenasco”

Lovely pale garnet with aromas of red cherry and nutmeg. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big mid-palate and big fruit persistence. Lively acidity and a good amount of tannins, which should ensure another 10-12 years of drinkability.

Revello “Rocche dell’Annunziata”

Lovely pale garnet color with aromas of ripe red cherry and strawberry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Graceful entry on the palate, balanced tannins and oak. Excellent fruit persistence and nice complexity. Enjoy over the next 10-12 years.

**** EXCELLENT

Cavallotto “Riserva Villero”

Beautiful pale garnet color with aromas of red cherry, red plum and a hint of tobacco seed. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long finish with good fruit depth and beautiful acidity. Enjoy over the next 10-12 years.

More reviews of 1998 Barolos on the next page

1998 Barolo Retrospective (continued)

**** EXCELLENT

Renato Ratti “Marcenasco”

Lovely pale garnet with aromas of orange peel, dried cherry and a hint of caraway. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Classically styled Barolo with a long finish, lively acidity and big fruit persistence. Enjoy over the next 10-12 years.

Prunotto “Bussia”

Deep garnet- excellent color! Aromas of red chery, truffle and red currant. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate, very good fruit persistence and lively acidity. Good amount of tannins- still a youthful wine. Enjoy over the next 10-12 years.

Oddero “Vigna Rionda”

Beautiful pale garnet color with aromas of dried orange peel, cedar and balsamic. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice mid-palate and a finish with very good length. Upturned acidity and polished tannins- very elegant wine! Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

Marchesi di Barolo “Sarmassa”

Bright garnet with spicy aromas of dried red cherry and cumin. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich fruit, lively acidity and still plenty of tannins. Nice complexity. Enjoy for another 5-7 years.

Mauro Molino “Vigna Conca”

Lovely garnet color with orange peel, caraway and cumin aromas. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long, long finish with graceful tannins and very good depth of fruit. Soft, round tannins. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

Fontanafredda “Lazzarito”

(See page 32)

Claudio Alario “Riva”

Lovely pale garnet with aromas of orange peel, caraway and dried cherry. Medium-full with excellent fruit persistence in the finish, balanced acidity and lively acidity. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

Famiglia Anselma “Adasi”

Lovely garnet color with rich fruit, orange peel, orange pekoe tea and balsamic. Medium-full with very good fruit persistence, lively acidity and balanced tannins. Notes of balsamic in the finish. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

More reviews of 1998 Barolos on the next page

1998 Barolo Retrospective (continued)

*** VERY GOOD

Sergio Barale “Castellero”

Lovely delicate garnet color with aromas of caraway and dried orange peel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good length in finish with moderate tannins that are nicely balanced. Nearing peak- best in 3-5 years.

Rivetti “Leon”

Bright garnet with aromas of caraway, dried orange peel and dried cherry. Medium-bodied with soft tannins, lively acidity and good fruit persistence. Elegantly styled – enjoy over the next 3-5 years.

Famiglia Anselma

This is the Barolo *normale* bottling from Anselma from 1998. Pale garnet with aromas of caraway, dried orange peel and dried rose petals. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Tart, upturned acidity and polished tannins. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years.

** GOOD

Giacomo Ascheri “Sorano”

Beautiful garnet with aromas of dried cherry and tobacco. Medium-bodied, this has lively acidity and moderate tannins, but lacks fruit depth. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years.

Luciano Sandrone “Le Vigne”

Beautiful garnet with aromas of balsamic and light dried cherry. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Earthy finish with a sour note. Pleasant, but overall, a bit simple. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years.

Francesco Sobrero “Pernanno”

Beautiful light garnet with aromas of currant, dried cherry and earthy notes. Medium-bodied with a slightly short finish. Clean and a bit simple with modest pleasures. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years.

Fratelli Alessandria “San Lorenzo”

Lovely pale garnet color with delicate aromas of dried cherry and earthy notes. Medium-bodied, this is a bit simple and lacks fruit persistence. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years.

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