

Antonio Galloni's

*Piedmont Report*TM

The Consumer's Guide to the Wines of Piedmont



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Introduction

Welcome to Issue 2 of *Piedmont Report*, which focuses on current and imminent releases from the Barolo production areas. I have provided extensive interviews, producer profiles and tasting notes for sixteen estates. Due to the large number of quality producers and my desire to provide in depth commentary on the wines, I feel it is necessary to divide coverage of the 2001 Barolos into at least two issues. **Please note that I make no distinction in terms of quality and/or preference among producers covered in this issue and those covered in future issues.**

Exploring Brunate is the first in a series of articles in which I examine the nuances of the great Barolo and Barbaresco vineyards in great depth. Notes from three tastings are included: a horizontal tasting of nine Brunate Barolos which were produced in 2000 as well as Marcarini's Barolo Brunate vintages 1996-2001 and Elio Altare's Barolo Brunate vintages 1999-2001. Issue 2 also includes notes from two vertical tastings at Cavallotto, a horizontal tasting of the 1999 Barbaresco Riservas from Produttori del Barbaresco, notes from a recent birthday lunch, and miscellaneous tasting notes from more informal settings.

Readers will notice that I have omitted scores from the tables which accompany each producer profile. With Issue 1 I found that readers often looked at the scores without reading the tasting notes, which is an

injustice to the wines. I spend a significant amount of time writing each tasting note and strongly believe that the written commentary is at least as useful and informative as is the numerical score. In the notes I try to be as objective as possible in describing each wine. You may find qualities you admire in a wine from reading a given tasting note, but may disagree with my numerical score.

On the technical side readers will find many enhancements with regards to navigating the file. The PDFs are now "tagged" which allows the files to display better on hand-held devices. I have also upgraded Issue 1 with the same new features, so you may want to download Issue 1 again.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who read Issue 1. Well over 1,500 people downloaded the first issue, which is astounding to me. I especially would like to thank those of you who wrote in with feedback, criticism, and ideas for future issues.

I very much appreciate your support.

Good reading!

Antonio Galloni



Winter in Barolo

The Scoring System

95-100	A profound and emotionally moving wine that exemplifies the very best qualities of its type
90-94	Outstanding. A wine that is well worth seeking out.
85-89	Very Good. A wine that provides very enjoyable drinking. There are many good values to be found in this space
80-84	Average. A with no flaws, but of no real distinction.
75-79	Below Average. A wine with at least one noticeable flaw.
Below 75	Not worth your time

I assign points to each wine on a 100-point scale. My score is an overall score which reflects a wine's expression of its varietal, vintage, terroir, aging potential, and distinctiveness. I am also looking for structure, length on the palate, persistence of the finish and overall balance. Some of these qualities are difficult to articulate, but I believe the experienced taster can discern the differences between wines that are good, from those that are outstanding from those that are truly memorable. No scoring system is perfect, including mine, but I do feel that an overall score best captures both my tasting approach and my impressions about a given wine. Scores are intended to reflect a wine's potential at maturity. Wines tasted from barrel are scored within a range, reflecting the reality that these wines are not finished products. Scores for wines tasted from barrel are indicated in parentheses.

Assessing young Dolcetto and Barbera is admittedly not terribly difficult in relative terms. Tasting young Barbarescos and Barolos is another thing altogether. The high alcohol levels and tannins these wines often present when young can make the wines very difficult to evaluate. In addition, Barolo and Barbaresco are richly structured wines that are made to accompany similarly rich dishes. Wines can sometimes appear to be very austere and closed in a blind tasting but then are fantastic when paired with the right cuisine. By definition, a focused tasting removes these wines from their natural habitat, so tasting notes and scores should be taken as a general indication and not as gospel. In short, Nebbiolo is very tough to judge when young and what I offer is only one opinion. I tend to be conservative, so my

scores should be interpreted as a lower bound. Ultimately, the tasting notes will tell you much more about what I thought about a wine, especially compared to wines of the same type and/or vintage. I rate every wine I taste, so if a particular wine is not included under a producer, I simply did not get a chance to taste that wine. In conclusion, the best way to learn about the wines is to taste them as often as possible, preferably in a setting organized around a theme, such as vintage, cru, or producer. The most rewarding aspect of a passion for wine is learning to trust your own palate.

Readers should note that I am personally responsible for all of my travel expenses, including lodging, transportation and meals. I do accept sample bottles for the purposes of tasting. I have no interest, either direct or indirect, with any winery in *Piedmont Report*, nor am I personally involved in any aspect of the wine trade.

How I Conduct Tastings

I feel it is important to visit the wineries, and to taste each producer's wines in the traditional order, which is from most accessible to most structured. Visiting the estates is crucial to learning about the winemaker's philosophy and about the specific terroirs a producer works with. I also find it instructive to taste wines from barrel, to walk through the vineyards, and to taste harvested fruit. I want to get inside the wines as much as possible. Recognizing that tasting with the producer can influence a critic's opinion of a wine, I also feel it is critical to conduct tastings in single-blind conditions,

so, where possible, many of the wines in this report were grouped together for peer group blind tastings at my home. Scores, if they were different in the two settings, were averaged and rounded to the higher number. Note: If the scores for the same wine tasted in different contexts are very different I will report both scores, rather than an average.

I do not participate in trade tastings, mostly because I need a calm work environment and I like to control the amount of time I spend with each wine. Barolos and Barbarescos in particular often require a great amount of time and patience from the taster. For Barolos, Barbarescos and other richly structured wines it is my practice to re-taste each wine at least once and often more than once.

A Note on Barrel Tastings

Whenever possible I take the opportunity to taste wines from barrel. Barolo, with its minimum of two years wood aging and one year of bottle aging affords a unique opportunity to see how a wine develops over time. While tasting barrel samples is a valuable component of understanding a given wine, I offer the following caveats to readers in interpreting my notes: The first of these regards temperature. Wines tasted directly from tank or barrel are often colder than normal serving temperature so the full range of aromas and flavors may be muted. Cellars are dark places and color is hard to gauge accurately. For wines aged in barrique, a barrel sample is really only representative of that specific barrel. Given that the final wine will be a blend of many barrels, the bottled wine may differ from that which was tasted from barrel. Wines that have been recently racked may also be showing the temporary negative effects of being moved. Most importantly, fining and filtration during the bottling process may negatively affect a wine.

Nevertheless, I find barrel tasting to be a critical aspect of assessing the quality and evolution of the wines of a given producer and/or vintage. I do not give drinking windows for wines tasted from barrel as the wines are not finished products.

A Note on Drinking Windows

My drinking windows should be interpreted as the window for **peak drinkability** and not how long specific wine might last and be in good shape. My

own preference is to drink wines while they are still on the upward trajectory of their aging curves. In opening a bottle I prefer to err on the side of youth rather than on the side of excess age. There is nothing worse than carefully cellaring a wine for years, only to open a bottle and find it over the hill. Some palates may prefer wines with more age on them than I do. Lastly, good storage conditions are critical in insuring that wines will age properly.

While it is relatively easy to have some idea of when a wine might start to drink well, it is much more difficult to know how long a wine will stay at its peak. It is hard enough for producers themselves to estimate how long their wines will age, let alone for an outsider such as myself. Based on over 15 years of experience in tasting these wines I have provided my best guess as to when the wines will show at their best but readers should keep in mind that any attempt to assign drinking windows is much more an art than it is a science.

In general I prefer to drink Dolcettos within two to three years of the vintage, while the wines still have the freshness that is their chief attribute. For Barbera, I think the wines show best when consumed five to seven years after the vintage. As they age, Barberas start to lose their inner core of fruit, and my experience has been that most of these wines decline rather quickly. There are exceptions of course, but the number of sublime, aged Barberas I have tasted is very, very small.

Evaluating drinking windows for Barolo and Barbaresco is much more challenging for several reasons. The first is that the state of winemaking has improved significantly over the last fifteen years. As one producer told me recently, "1990 was a vintage where the wines made themselves; we had no idea what we were doing. There wasn't the attention to detail and level of care, both in the vineyards, and in the cellar, that we have today." Thus tasting a given producer's wines from an older vintage is not a terribly reliable way of telling how today's releases might age. In addition, the area is full of many small producers who have only been making high quality wines for a few years, and have no long-term track record.

Lastly, there is a misconception that wines aged in barrique are more accessible and immediate than wines aged in cask. This is a myth, or at least a gross oversimplification. The readiness of a wine is in

reality much more producer-specific and vintage-specific. Thus there are some wines aged in barriques which are approachable when young and others that require more patience, just as with wines aged in cask. Regardless, I have endeavored to provide some guidelines that I hope will be helpful.

With Barbaresco, I find most wines are at their best seven to twelve years after the vintage, depending, of course, on the producer and the vintage. One of the things that makes Barbaresco so appealing is its early approachability compared to Barolo. This also means that the wines mature earlier, and after ten to twelve years or so, most wines have peaked, although they may keep for some years after. Barolo, on the other hand has a longer aging curve, as well as the ability to develop much more complexity over time. With Barolo, the drinking windows are inevitably longer, and in some cases much longer. As an example, the 1996 Barbarescos I have tasted recently are already showing secondary flavors and appear noticeably closer to reaching maturity than are the 1996 Barolos, which still seem quite primary.

Traditional versus Modern

Much has been written about “traditional” versus “modern” wines in Piedmont. I am often asked my opinion on the subject and the short answer is I have no bias towards one approach or another. I appreciate the merits of both styles of wines. In reality there are many more subtleties in Piedmont than the overly simplistic “traditional” versus “modern” framework can capture. Over the next few issues of *Piedmont Report* I will explore in detail the many dimensions that define winemaking in both styles, with the goal of shedding some light on the topic and moving the discussion forward, away from rhetoric and hopefully towards a real understanding of the wines.

About the Author

I have been involved with wine in one way or another for about as long as I can remember. I grew up in a family where food and wine were very important; there was often a bottle of wine on the dinner table. My grandfather was passionate about French wines and he introduced me to the wines of Bordeaux,

Burgundy and the Rhone, which he loved so much. I recall writing a paper on French wines for my high school French class.....a sign of things to come.

Later, my parents opened an Italian food and wine shop (which they have since sold) and it was there that I really became interested in Italian wines. I spent many weekends and holidays working at the shop and I had the chance to taste many of that country’s best wines on a regular basis. We also spent many family vacations in Italy, discovering the cultures of various regions. It was a great education. After college I spent some time waiting tables at a few of the better restaurants in the Boston area. During this period I had the opportunity to further my knowledge of wine, especially American wine.

The first time I visited Piedmont I immediately fell in love with the region, its culture and its people. I was especially struck by the passion and dedication of the winemakers I met. A few years later, my career in the financial services industry took me to Milan, where I lived for three years. I spent most of my free time touring the winemaking regions of Italy. Much of that time was spent in Piedmont, visiting with producers, learning about the vineyards and tasting as much as possible.



Photo by Bill Malloy

An Overview of Recent Vintages

Without a doubt most of the current discussion on vintages in Piedmont centers around the 1999, 2000, and 2001 vintages, all of which appear to be of very high quality. At this lofty level, the relative ranking of vintages really comes down to a matter of individual taste. As Elio Altare recently said "Looking at 1999, 2000, and 2001 is like saying, 'Which do you prefer, Mercedes, Audi or BMW?'" All three vintages are excellent, they each have their own merits, and it really comes down to personal preference. Some will prefer 1999, others 2000 and so on."

Below are some thoughts on vintages 1996-2004. Any discussion of vintages is general at best, as there are always many exceptions to any observation. I include specific examples of wines to support my conclusions and give readers a basis with which to judge my assessments. The most common classification of vintages among producers is to group the classic vintages of 1996, 1999, and 2001 together. 1998 and 2000 are viewed as hot and ripe, but balanced, while 1997 is usually described as ultra-ripe and as belonging in a category of its own. I also provide early impressions on 2002, 2003, and 2004.

2004

When I visited the region last fall, producers were ecstatic over the early promise of the vintage. Relatively cool weather throughout the spring and summer meant that the vines had progressed through the vegetative cycle a bit slower than normal. A glorious September brought hot days, cool evenings, and just the right amount of rain, exactly the kind of weather conditions that are ideal for classically styled wines. 2004 was a vintage that tended towards over production and many quality minded producers told me they green harvested as many as three times. The 2004s Nebbiolos feature bright fresh color, thrilling aromatics, and good structure, although it is too soon to tell much more than that. Producers tell me that they usually can get a sense of a vintage the summer after the harvest, but the prospects certainly are good for a very high quality wines. The vintage also looks to be excellent for Dolcetto and Barbera as well. This will be a fascinating vintage to follow over the next few years.

2003

Record-setting temperatures produced wines that are generally high in alcohol, low in acidity and lacking in color, especially true for Nebbiolos. Some producers feel that the weather was just too hot for first-rate Nebbiolo and while others will release their full range of single-vineyard Barolos. The wines I have tasted are variable. Some have settled down and will be potentially excellent, while others remain very hot and alcoholic. Only time will tell how the wines will develop. 2003 is also an irregular vintage for Dolcetto. While some wines are excellent, they are the exception. Many are overly fat, alcoholic and lack the freshness that makes Dolcetto such an enjoyable wine. Judging from barrel samples, there will, however, be some outstanding Barberas. The 2003 Barberas of Bruno Giacosa and Giacomo Conterno are not to be missed.

2002

The vintage featured a wet and cool summer and producers experienced difficulties achieving ripeness in the vineyards. In early September a severe hailstorm ripped through several prestigious areas in La Morra and Barolo leaving swaths of devastation behind. I have never seen so much destruction as I saw touring the region in late Fall of that year. Some producers lost their entire production. Shortly after the hailstorms I visited the Roberto Voerzio winery and saw all the fermentation tanks empty. I must point out that the areas of Serralunga, Castiglione and Monforte were not affected by such dramatic weather, but overall conditions were still not generally favorable. Many estates will make no Barolo, and a very few producers will release small quantities of a blended Barolo from the fruit they were able to save. The Dolcettos and Barberas are available now, and they are a mostly unremarkable group of wines, although top producers tend to achieve a very high level of quality in relative terms even in difficult vintages. The wines themselves are muted and unexpressive on the nose with little complexity of flavor and length on the palate. Readers who have experience with Barolos of lesser vintages will know, however, that the best producers will nevertheless produce good wines, and these wines, which are usually early maturing, can reserve some very special surprises.

2001

The 2001 vintage caps off a remarkable string of excellent vintages for the region, starting with 1996. It is a year that had ideal weather conditions for Nebbiolo, of alternating warm days and cool nights. The vintage is described by many as a classic vintage, with noticeable structure and aging potential. Many producers describe 2001 as being a cross between 1999 and 2000. The best 2001s are gorgeous wines with excellent color, exciting aromatic profiles, ripe fruit, and very elegant, fine tannins. In short, the 2001s seem to have everything.

2000

The 2000s are marvelous wines that have always been amazingly ready, even in their youths. The wines are atypically rich and lush at this stage and the vintage features many wines which will provide immense drinking pleasure. Because of the lessons learned in 1997, as a group the 2000s are much better balanced overall. My tastings of the 2000s have almost always been in the context of comparing 2000 to either 1999, 2001, or both. As luxurious and captivating as the best 2000s are, for me they don't capture the full potential of Nebbiolo in the way that the best 1999s and 2001s do. That being said, the 2000s offer fantastic drinking right now.

1999

A classic vintage featuring dense, structured Barolos. Early on in their lives, the wines appeared to be very compressed and were hard to judge. Producers describe the vintage as potent and possessing rougher tannins than 2001. Today, after two years of additional bottle age, the wines are starting to flesh out and show their full potential. The wines have great color, freshness and multi-layered flavor profiles that are only revealing themselves now. By the time these wines appeared on the market, demand was slowing, and whatever demand there was began to chase the 2000s. As a result, many producers told me that their importers drastically cut back or cancelled their orders of the 1999s. There is a lot of unsold wine in the pipeline and hopefully at some point the wines will become available at favorable prices. Based on my tastings, I am convinced that 1999 is shaping up as a **Forgotten Vintage** in Barolo. Issue 2 contains notes on more than a dozen 1999 Barolos and I highly encourage readers to explore this vintage.

1998

The vintage is often described as similar to 2000 in style, although not quite as opulent. Like the 2000s, many of the 1998s, with their ripe fruit were delicious and accessible upon release. In my opinion 1998 is the best-drinking vintage right now, as the wines are just starting to show some secondary flavors. Some excellent 1998s I have had recently include E. Pira (Chiara Boschis) Cannubi, Vietti Brunate, Conterno Fantino Vigna del Gris, Roberto Voerzio Sarmassa, Giacosa Le Rocche dell Falletto and others found in Issue 2.

1997

This vintage was initially greeted with much fanfare although I think quality is irregular. The wines appear to fall into three major groups. The first of these are super-ripe, jammy wines that offer good near-term drinking and that will appeal to fans of soft, supple Barolos. Wines such as Clerico Ciabot Mentin Ginestra, and Sandrone Le Vigne fall into this category. A second set of wines appear to be more than just eight years old and show more evolved characteristics, with less color, and more secondary flavors. This not necessarily a bad thing for readers looking for wines that are drinking well now. Wines that share these characteristics include Massolino Vigna Rionda Riserva and Giacosa Le Rocche del Falletto. The third group, and to me the most successful group, are those wines that capture the ripeness and approachability of the vintage while keeping a sense of freshness, balance and overall proportion. Wines like Giacomo Conterno Cascina Francia and Monfortino and the Cavallotto Riserva Barolos have a combination of ripeness and structure that I find especially attractive.

1996

This vintage remains the most classic vintage of the last ten years. At nine years of age, the wines are still extremely young as a group. These are largely wines to cellar and hold for at least a few more years and the best bottles will age gracefully for decades. The 1996 Barolos I have had recently are mostly still quite primary, including E. Pira (Chiara Boschis) Cannubi and Elio Altare Barolo Arborina. A few supple, modern-styled wines are showing very well right now, including Sandrone Cannubi Boschis and Clerico Ciabot Mentin Ginestra.

Barolo: New Releases, part 1

Elio Altare (La Morra)

2001 Elio Altare Barolo
2001 Elio Altare Barolo Arborina
2001 Elio Altare Barolo Brunate

Elio Altare remains one of the leading figures in the Barolo landscape. Not only has Altare been hugely successful in his own right, he has also served as an inspiration and mentor to a new generation of winemakers who have been emboldened to pursue the path of quality production.

Altare makes three Barolos, a base bottling made from various vineyards in La Morra as well as two single-vineyard wines from the Arborina and Brunate crus. The wines are made in a similar fashion. Fermentations are done using indigenous yeasts and typically last around four days, (although the Brunate may see an additional day). The wines are aged in barriques, of which about 20% are new for both the normale and the Arborina, while the Brunate sees about 40%-50% new oak, depending on the vintage. Altare's newest project is a vineyard within the Ceretta cru in Serralunga, which he hopes to bottle as a single-vineyard wine.

Altare is often described as the quintessential modernist, but tasting his wines blind they really come across as much more classic than some would like to think. Sure, Altare prefers short fermentations and barrique aging for his wines, but these are merely techniques. The proof of a winemaker's mastery of these tools is ultimately in the glass, and this is a fantastic set of 2001s, from top to bottom. "I make wines, first and foremost, that I like, and I hope others will like as well. I love elegance, balance, and fruit because I like Pinot Noir. Why do I need to wait 10 years to know if a wine is good? If a wine is good

when it is young, it will be even better when it is older. I try to make wines of finesse that people enjoy drinking. This is my philosophy," says Altare. Even if Altare's wines are delicious when young, in structured vintages such as 1999 and 2001 these are wines that will surely improve with age.

See *Exploring Brunate* on pages 31 - 33 for more on the wines of Elio Altare.

2001 Altare Barolo—Medium ruby. Very beautiful and delicately spiced nose, with flavors of small red fruits and licorice. The excellent follow-through and length on the palate make this is a wine of much harmony and overall balance. Comes across as very classic. *91 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2001 Altare Barolo Arborina—Dark ruby. Sweet nose of spices and minerals, showing deeper and darker flavors than the base, with plenty of ripe fruit and sensations of dark raspberry and plums. Full-bodied, and structured, with a very long finish, this will benefit from some bottle age. *93 points/drink after 201, 12/04*

2001 Altare Barolo Brunate—Dark ruby. The Brunate adds one more layer of complexity, with notes of licorice, eucalyptus, menthol on the nose, flavors of dark cherries and plums, and softer tannins than the Arborina. There is lots of evolution in the glass and this exquisite wine offers a never-ending finish. Superb. *95 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

Borgogno (Barolo)

2003	Borgogno	Dolcetto d'Alba	
2001	Borgogno	Barbera d'Alba	
1999	Borgogno	Barolo Classico	
1998	Borgogno	Barolo Classico	Riserva
1997	Borgogno	Barolo Classico	Riserva
1996	Borgogno	Barolo Classico	Riserva
1996	Borgogno	Barolo	Liste
1961	Borgogno	Barolo Classico	Riserva

A visit to this historic estate is like stepping back in time as the winery is a monument of sorts to traditional winemaking. The winery preserves many antique tools related to viticulture and winemaking as well as an extensive library of older bottles. The wines tend to be mid-weight, and share a classic, somewhat austere style. While the Dolcetto and Barbera are good, the real attractions here are the various Barolo bottlings which at their best are very complete and age-worthy wines. The recently tasted 1952 and 1961 Borgogno Barolos are a testament to the longevity of this house's wines.

2003 Borgogno Dolcetto d'Alba—A classically styled, cask-aged Dolcetto showing plenty of ripe red and blue fruits, finishing with a slightly bitter note. *86 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2001 Borgogno Barbera d'Alba—A medium bodied and somewhat lean wine displaying flavors of red fruits and tar. Aged in casks. *85 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

The estate produces three Barolos. The first of these is a normale which is made from fruit purchased from various sources, although the Boschis brothers want to focus on making wines from their own holdings and will no longer produce this wine. The Barolo Classico is made from a blend of five estate-owned vineyards in Barolo. The Classico comes in two versions: newly released bottles simply indicate the vintage, while later-released bottles indicate are labeled "Riserva." Lastly in some vintages Borgogno also issues a single-vineyard wine is made from the Liste cru in Barolo. Because of practical considerations arising from the small quantities made of this wine, a portion of the Liste is aged in tonneaux, while the normale and the Classico are aged exclusively in very large casks. Despite their mid-weight size, these are deceptively muscular and austere wines that will require significant cellaring to be at their best and that will last for decades. In a way, these Barolos may never be "ready." I am reminded of the adage used to describe vintage port that says that you drink from your parents' cellar and buy for your children....



Vintage delivery truck from the mid-1960s still in use today

1999 Borgogno Barolo Classico—Light to medium translucent ruby. Very fragrant nose of roses, anise, eucalyptus, and tar, this mid-weight wine shows flavors of ripe red fruits and licorice on the palate and a delicate lingering finish. Classic and austere, this is an infant today. *92 points/drink after 2014, 12/04*

1998 Borgogno Barolo Classico Riserva—Dark translucent ruby. Evolved nose of stewed fruits, spices, and balsam. The 1998 is softer and rounder than the 1999, while maintaining great structure and length on the palate, finishing with robust tannins. Today it comes across as a more complete wine. *92 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

1997 Borgogno Barolo Classico Riserva—Dark translucent color. This full-bodied wine boasts a rich luxurious nose of very ripe sweet fruits, licorice, anise and mint and a dense, brooding palate of evolved dark fruits, finishing with good length and plenty of tannins. *90 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1996 Borgogno Barolo Classico Riserva—Deep, dark burnished ruby. The nose is somewhat evolved and balsamic, showing lots of spices, anise, and stewed fruits. There is wonderful follow through onto the palate, which has plenty of dark fruit, stewed

prune and tar flavors. *91 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

1996 Borgogno Barolo Classico Riserva Liste—Dark, almost impenetrable dark ruby, with a huge, massive nose of wet earth. The dense palate is packed with dark backward fruit and cherries in liqueur. Richer, rounder and softer than the 1996 Classico. The use of tonneaux gives this wine a more modern feel, although that is in relative terms. *91 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

From time to time, the estate re-releases wines from its library. These bottles are reconditioned; the wines are decanted, sediment is removed, and the bottles are re-corked with new corks. These bottles appear much more youthful, cleaner and purer than bottles that have been cellared since release.

1961 Borgogno Barolo Classico Riserva—Medium ruby, with some bricking on the rim, but otherwise showing very little signs of its age. The aromatic nose displays menthol, anise, and delicate, sweet flavors of dried cherries, finishing with tremendous freshness and a seamless, long and fresh finish. Tasted blind, I would have never guessed this was a 40+ year old wine. *93 points/drink now-?, 12/04*

Cavallotto (Castiglione Falletto)

2003 Cavallotto Dolcetto d'Alba	Vigna Scot
2002 Cavallotto Langhe Nebbiolo	
2000 Cavallotto Barolo	Bricco Boschis
1999 Cavallotto Barolo	Bricco Boschis

The wines of this producer seem to get less attention than they deserve. Fortunately for consumers, this makes the wines (especially the Barolos) among the top relative values of the region. The house style here is traditional, with a few concessions to modern-day technology. Although rotary fermenters are used for convenience, maceration time is still on the long side, and aging is done exclusively in cask. The estate uses only indigenous yeasts. “Our philosophy is to make wines that express the specific qualities of each terroir we work with” says Alfio Cavallotto.

The estate produces a wide array of wines from its holdings in and around the Bricco Boschis vineyard in Castiglione Falletto. The entry-level Barolo, labeled simply Bricco Boschis, is made from various

parcels within this vineyard, including the Punta Marcello and Colle Sud-Ovest plots, which in the past had been bottled separately. The Bricco Boschis wine also includes about 30% of the fruit harvested at the Vigna San Giuseppe plot, from which Cavallotto produces an excellent Riserva labeled Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe. The third Cavallotto Barolo is a Riserva from the Vignolo vineyard in Castiglione Falletto. To read about two special vertical tastings of the Cavallotto Riservas [click here](#).

2003 Cavallotto Dolcetto d'Alba Vigna Scot—Rich dark ruby. A dense and ripe Dolcetto with plenty of ripe blue and black flavors. Shows the characteristic concentration and weight of the vintage. Aged in stainless steel. *85 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2002 Cavallotto Langhe Nebbiolo—Medium ruby. The nose is fairly unexpressive, although the palate shows attractive sweet red fruit and good freshness on the finish. Straightforward and simple, but tasty. Made from declassified Nebbiolo which is typically used for the Barolos. *86 points/drink now-2007, 12/04*

2000 Cavallotto Barolo Bricco Boschis—Medium rub. Classic floral nose of mint, anise, and eucalyptus with flavors of ripe red fruits. This medium-bodied Barolo is intensely tannic at this

stage will and require quite a bit of patience. *88 points/drink after 2010, 12/04*

1999 Cavallotto Barolo Bricco Boschis—Very dark, dense ruby. This is a brooding, strapping old-style wine, featuring a nose of leather, wet earth, menthol, and licorice. The palate is packed with dense dark fruits and a huge, long finish. Comes across as a bit rustic, but the more this sits in the glass the more this idiosyncratic Barolo improves. *88 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

Ceretto (Alba)

2001 Ceretto Bricco Asili	Barbaresco	Bernardot
2001 Ceretto Bricco Asili	Barbaresco	Bricco Asili
2000 Ceretto	Barolo	Zonchera
2001 Ceretto Bricco Rocche	Barolo	Brunate
2001 Ceretto Bricco Rocche	Barolo	Prapò
2001 Ceretto Bricco Rocche	Barolo	Bricco Rocche

On my most recent visit to this estate I had the opportunity to taste the 2001 Barolos and Barbarescos (with the exception of the Barolo Zonchera which had not been bottled) with Francesco Baravalle, the enologist who oversees the Bricco Asili and Bricco Rocche estates. The Ceretto style aims to incorporate aspects of both traditional and modern winemaking. Fermentations last 12-14 days and aging is done in 300 liter French oak barrels. The color of these 2001s is very classic Nebbiolo-

medium ruby with orange highlights. While the use of oak remains noticeable, these are wines of great overall balance and harmony.

This producer's multiple labels and brand names have caused confusion with consumers for years. In a good vintage, the estate makes four Barbarescos and four Barolos. The base Barbaresco, Asij, and the base Barolo, Zonchera, are vinified and aged at the family's La Bernardina estate outside of Alba and marketed under the Ceretto brand. Fruit for the Asij comes from a plot the Cerettos lease in the Asili vineyard, while fruit for the Zonchera is sourced from a leased vineyard in Barolo.

Ceretto's three single vineyard Barbarescos (Faset, Bernardot, and Asili) are produced at the Bricco Asili winery from estate grown fruit, and marketed under the Bricco Asili brand. Similarly, Ceretto's three single vineyard Barolos (Prapò, Brunate, and Bricco Rocche) are made at the Bricco Rocche facility in Castiglione Falletto also from estate-grown fruit. These wines are marketed under the Bricco Rocche brand.

Turning to the wines, Baravalle says "2001 is a superb year, perhaps harder to understand now, but I think these are wines that will age well." The 2001



The Ceretto estate La Bernardina outside Alba

single vineyard wines are indeed very structured and will reward cellaring.

2001 Ceretto Barbaresco Asij—This wine sees fermentation of 12-14 days, malolactic fermentation is done in steel and the wine is aged 14 months in used barrels. Very elegant, and delicious...perfumed nose of flowers, crushed raspberries, mint, and tar with flavors of soft red fruits. This will be a wine to enjoy relatively young. Says Baravalle "With Asij, we want to make a wine that is fresh and easily approachable." *90 points/drink now-2013, 12/04*

In 2001 the Faset vineyard was hit by hail, and the estate did not feel that the quality of the fruit justified a single vineyard wine, so the best of the fruit went into the Asij.

2001 Ceretto Bricco Asili Barbaresco Bernardot—Lots of spices and minerals on the nose, with flavors of rich ripe red fruits, anise, and a mentholated note on the finish. A very elegant and classy wine. This wine is aged for 16 months in barriques which are 30% new, 30% one year old, and 40% two year old. The vineyard is divided into two sections, in one part the vines are 60-65 years old and in the other part the vines are 15 years old. *91 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

2001 Ceretto Bricco Asili Barbaresco Bricco Asili—Dark burnished ruby in color. Darker, richer, and more extracted than the preceding wines, with notes of licorice, tobacco, and spices dominating the nose. On the palate the wine is masculine, austere, and balsamic, with flavors of dark fruits and plums, finishing with chewy tannins. Made from vines that are over 25 years old and aged 100% in new oak. *92 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

For more on Ceretto, see *Exploring Brunate* on page 31.

2000 Ceretto Barolo Zonchera—Shows a very evolved nose of spices, toasted coffee beans, tobacco, licorice and chocolate. The palate is soft and plush with flavors of too-sweet, over-ripe fruit. This wine does malolactic fermentation in steel and is aged in 60% cask and 40% used barrels. *87 points/drink now-2010, 12/04*

2001 Ceretto Bricco Rocche Barolo Brunate—A gorgeous wine that shows a rich nose of spices, minerals, licorice and tar followed by flavors of cherries in liqueur. Dense and structured on the palate, with a refreshing finish, the Brunate is the roundest of three single-vineyard Barolos. Aged in barriques-30% new, 30% one year old, and 40% two year old. *91 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

2001 Ceretto Bricco Rocche Barolo Prapò—Darker in color than the Brunate, the Prapò is massive and backward, with flavors of dark ripe fruit with terrific sustain on the palate on a strapping, austere frame, finishing with a distinct note of menthol. Aged in barriques-30% new, 30% one year old, and 40% two years old. *92 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

2001 Ceretto Bricco Rocche Barolo Bricco Rocche—The 100% new-oak aged Bricco Rocche was made from old vines yielding just 40 hectolitres per hectare. The nose is redolent of spices and menthol with notes of minerals and anise. On the palate the wine is very dense and long, although the wine remains dominated by the new oak and is tough to fully evaluate today. *90+? points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

Giacomo Conterno (Monforte)

2003	Giacomo Conterno	Barbera 'Alba	
2001	Giacomo Conterno	Barolo	Cascina Francia
2000	Giacomo Conterno	Barolo Riserva	Monfortino
1999	Giacomo Conterno	Barolo Riserva	Monfortino
1998	Giacomo Conterno	Barolo Riserva	Monfortino
2000	Giacomo Conterno	Barolo	Cascina Francia
1997	Giacomo Conterno	Barolo Riserva	Monfortino

Readers who enjoy this estate's wines will have some very difficult albeit enjoyable choices to make in the next few years. The 2000 Cascina Francia and 1997 Monfortino are available now, and this year's upcoming releases are potentially even better. Future releases such as the 1999 and 2000 Monfortinos will make it challenging for consumers to choose between wines that are all truly special. I tasted nine wines during my recent visit to this estate, and they were all outstanding. This is a sensational group of wines. Wines are listed in the order tasted.

For 2003, Conterno says "Speaking only of our wines, 2003 is not a great vintage for Nebbiolo, it was just too hot, although I think the vintage is great for Barbera." The decision whether or not to make the estate's Monfortino Riserva has not yet been made. Conterno explains "we harvested and vinified the grapes apart, and the wine is still in a separate cask [which I did not taste from-AG] and right now I'm 99% sure I won't be bottling a Monfortino."

Conterno remains elusive on his 2002 Barolos. He explains, "There is an ever growing drive in our society to have things quickly, and journalists always want to be the first to report news. Throughout the summer of 2002 I was constantly being called by writers [me excluded!-AG] asking me for my opinion of the vintage. Then, even before the harvest was concluded, many journalists declared the vintage a disaster. Sure, we had some very bad weather in some areas, but to declare the vintage lost for the entire Barolo zone so soon was premature and unfair. My father and I decided we would let no one taste our 2002s until they are released. We will surprise everyone with our 2002s," Conterno says with a gleam in his eye. Will there be a Monfortino? Conterno won't reveal the answer, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if the estate releases a Riserva for the 2002 vintage, and given this estate's track record for producing great wines in 'lesser' vintages, I can only say that I look forward to tasting these wines at some point in the future. In terms of recent vintages of Barolo, Conterno says "among my wines, my preference of vintages is 1999, 2001, and 2000 in that order."

Conterno produces three wines, all from the Cascina Francia vineyard in Serralunga. The estate's Barbera is usually one of the top Barberas in the region. It sees 21 months of aging in medium size casks before being released. Conterno is most known for his two

Barolos, Cascina Francia and the Monfortino Riserva, which is only produced in top vintages. When the vintage warrants, Conterno makes a selection of the very best grapes just before harvest, and this fruit is destined for the Monfortino. Conterno says that depending on the weather, various parcels within the Cascina Francia vineyard mature differently, so the exact source of the fruit for the Monfortino can vary from year to year. Both of Conterno's Barolos are legendary for their extraordinary complexity and aging potential. Monfortino in particular is a reference point wine in the region, a standard among which all other wines are measured, both modern and traditional.

Cascina Francia is fermented in stainless steel, with temperature control, for 3-4 weeks. Aging takes place in large Slavonian oak casks for 4 years. For the Monfortino, the grapes are fermented in a combination of open-top wood vats and stainless steel tanks without temperature control for 4-5 weeks, believed to be the longest fermentation/maceration period used in the region today. The wine is then aged in a single large Slavonian oak cask for 7 years. Conterno employs a very minimalist approach in the cellar when it comes to making his wines. He believes the work is done in the vineyards, where his yields are typically below 4,000 kilos per hectare. Conterno employs only natural yeasts and the wines are not fined or filtered prior to bottling.

2003 Giacomo Conterno Barbera d'Alba Cascina Francia (from barrel)—The fruit was harvested on September 18, and the wine saw 16 days of maceration. Presents a very saturated, dense, almost black color. A huge, ripe Barbera, packed with intense flavors of black fruits, tar, licorice, and bacon fat, with an exquisitely long palate and good acidity, all wrapped around a classical frame. If the final wine is like what I tasted, this superb Barbera could well turn out to be one of the best wines of the vintage. It was tough to move away from this spot in the cellar, but there were other wines to taste... (91-93) *points, 12/04*

2003 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Cascina Francia (barrel #1)—Rich ruby in color, this is a very aromatic wine, with a fresh nose, and flavors of concentrated red fruits on a very long palate. This first barrel was surprisingly fresh for the vintage.

2003 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Cascina Francia (barrel #2)—More typical of the vintage, showing darker color, richer, darker fruit and more overall structure as well as higher alcohol.

I don't include ratings for the 2003 Cascina Francia because the final blend has not yet been made, but a hypothetical blend would likely merit a 90+ rating, especially if fruit from the Monfortino cask is ultimately blended into the Cascina Francia wine. 12/04

2001 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Cascina Francia (from barrel)—Shows a very delicate and aromatic nose of sweet ripe fruit. Today this comes across as very soft and nuanced on the palate, with layers and layers of flavors that unfold as the wine sits in the glass. A wine that makes you want to spend the entire afternoon immersed in its detail. This is just beautiful. Likely to be one of the vintage's top wines. (93-95) points, 12/04

2000 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Riserva Monfortino (from barrel)—Very fresh on the nose, and boasting a concentrated palate of over the top rich and ripe fruit. Delicious but less interesting than the other Monfortinos I tasted on this day, although past experience has taught me not to underestimate this wine in its youth. This will likely merit a higher score in a year or two. (91-93) points, 12/04

1999 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Riserva Monfortino (from barrel)—“This is the most beautiful wine I have in the cellar right now,” says Roberto Conterno. This wine appears to have been very shut down when I first tasted it last year and I underestimated it. Today the wine is significantly more expressive and the layers of flavors have started to become filled out. The nose is ethereal, with sensations of freshly cut flowers, menthol, tar and licorice leading to flavors of sweet red fruits. Still a baby, this wine clearly has the potential to be a great Monfortino. It will be a fascinating effort to follow over the next few years. (95-97) points, 12/04

1998 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Riserva Monfortino (from barrel)—Outrageous nose of roses and tar give way to a decadent palate of rich sweet fruit, and an exquisitely long finish. The most complete of the Monfortinos I tasted on this day, this is an unforgettable wine. (94-96) points, 12/04

We then returned upstairs to taste the current releases....

2000 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Cascina Francia—Lively medium ruby. Heady aromas of cherries, roses, cocoa, mint and minerals jump out of the glass. After a few minutes the characteristic herbal note that is often present in this wine appears. The wine exhibits a caressing and long palate, with flavors of rich sweet fruits and good acidity on the finish. This is very accessible now. 92 points/drink after 2007, 12/04

1997 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Riserva Monfortino—Rich ruby in color, the 1997 Monfortino is an explosive wine, packed with very ripe fruit with tremendous follow-through and sustain on the palate. It is perhaps less aromatically thrilling than the 1998 or 1999. Still, this is a wine of great elegance...a majestic and tremendously enjoyable wine of the very highest level. 94 points/drink after 2007, 12/04



The Giacomo Conterno cellar in Monforte

I kept glasses of the 1998 and 1999 Monfortino to taste alongside the 1997. Sitting in front of the three wines, it was impossible to pick a favorite. They are all outstanding wines that merit considerable attention. The 1997 is a wine that can be enjoyed now, heretical as that might sound to Monfortino lovers. Today the 1998 comes across as the most multidimensional and complex of the wines, although given the way the 1999 is evolving, my guess is that over time, the 1999 will surpass both the 1997 and 1998.

For notes on Conterno's 1994 Barolo Cascina Francia click here.

Bruno Giacosa (Neive)

2000 Bruno Giacosa	Barbaresco Riserva	Asili
2000 Bruno Giacosa	Barolo	Falsetto
2000 Bruno Giacosa	Barolo Riserva	Le Rocche dell Falsetto
2001 Bruno Giacosa	Barolo Riserva	Le Rocche dell Falsetto

Bruno Giacosa is often described as a traditionalist producer whose wines take many years to reach maturity. Certainly that has been true in the past, but today the wines are increasingly approachable when young. In fact, all four wines tasted below were drinking amazingly well. While Giacosa's 2000s are certain to improve with age, I can't think of any reason why readers who own multiple bottles wouldn't want to experience these wines in their glorious youths. Despite their sheer appeal today, these are wines that appear to have the stuffing to age gracefully for decades.

Although fermentations and wood aging remain on the long side, much of the winemaking is somewhere in between traditional and modern. The wines are fermented using selected yeasts and the wines are aged in large French oak barrels ranging from 55 to 110 hectolitres (as opposed to the more traditional Slavonian oak casks) which are changed every ten years or so. I had hoped to also taste the 2001 Barbarescos on this visit, but the wines had not yet been bottled, so notes on those wines will have to wait until Issue 3. In the meantime, enologist Dante Scaglione prepared an outrageous tasting which began with the superb 2000 Barbaresco Riserva Asili....

In 1996, Giacosa re-planted a plot in Asili. The 2000 Barbaresco Asili Riserva is the first wine to come from that plot, with about 80% of the wine coming from the newly planted vineyard and 20% coming from older vines in Asili.

2000 Bruno Giacosa Barbaresco Riserva Asili—This is much more open than when I last tasted it six months ago. The wine shows a fresh, lively red color. The nose is huge, with sensations of roses, freshly cut flowers, minerals... later notes of tar and licorice appear in the glass. The palate is sweet and lush, bursting with flavors of wild strawberries and raspberries with incredible freshness on the finish. I

have now tasted this wine three times, and believe me it is a vivid wine of incredible detail...an ethereal beauty that no one who appreciates Piedmont wines will want to be without. *96+ points/drink now-, 12/04*

2000 Bruno Giacosa Barolo Falsetto—Color is a dark burnished ruby. Notes of mint, eucalyptus, flowers and tar appear on the nose. This is a wine of wonderful length and persistence that boasts a rich, soft palate of ripe to over-ripe fruit and a very satisfying finish. A very accessible Barolo. *93 points/drink now-, 12/04*

Giacosa's Barolo Riserva Le Rocche del Falsetto is made from four parcels in the Falsetto vineyard where the age of the vines ranges from 30 to 45 years. This was a great opportunity to taste the 2000 and 2001 side by side. In particular, the 2001 is without a doubt one of the best wines I have tasted from this extraordinary vintage so far....

2000 Bruno Giacosa Barolo Riserva Le Rocche del Falsetto—Color is a rich dark ruby. This enveloping and dense Barolo features a nose of spices, menthol and minerals followed by flavors of rich dark fruits, and stewed prunes. A wine of tremendous length, although it is very backward at the moment. *94 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

2001 Bruno Giacosa Barolo Riserva Le Rocche del Falsetto—Stunning. Dark burnished, but translucent ruby. The massive nose reveals notes of spices, minerals, licorice, and tar. The palate is potent, broad and long with opulent flavors of dark ripe fruit, prunes, and plums, finishing with great length and freshness. A truly special wine. *96+ points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

For notes on Giacosa's 1997 and 1998 Barolo Le Rocche del Falsetto [click here](#).



The Giacosa cellar, Neive

Marcarini (La Morra)

2003 Marcarini	Dolcetto d'Alba	Boschi di Berri
2003 Marcarini	Barbera d'Alba	Ciabot Camerano
2001 Marcarini	Langhe Rosso	Donald
2001 Marcarini	Barolo	Brunate
2001 Marcarini	Barolo	La Serra

Manuel and Luisa Marchetti run this estate which for years has produced benchmark wines for the area. Manuel Marchetti is soft-spoken, yet highly passionate about his wines and the land from which they come. The wines are produced along mostly traditional lines, although the Barbera and the Langhe Rosso see a bit of barrique. The two Barolos, Brunate and La Serra, will require patience, especially in classic vintages such as 2001. See *Exploring Brunate* on pages 31-33 for more on this producer's wines.

2003 Marcarini Dolcetto d'Alba Boschi di Berri—Dark ruby in color, the wine presents a very perfumed nose and a palate of rich dark fruit, cassis and minerals with a very long finish. This is an outstanding, elegant and complex Dolcetto. Made from 100+ year old pre-phylloxera vines. *89 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2003 Marcarini Barbera d'Alba Ciabot Camerano—A rich dark ruby in color, the wine shows a nose of spices, toasted oak, and evolved fruit and a palate of supple dark fruits, cherries, licorice, with soft and caressing finish. Shows the richness of the vintage. 30% of this wine is aged in
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used barriques, while the remainder is aged in cask. *88 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2001 Marcarini Langhe Rosso Donald—This is a new wine for the estate, made from a blend of 60% Barbera, 30% Nebbiolo, and 10% Syrah. Dark, dense ruby color. Very spiced and perfumed with mint and eucalyptus notes on the nose. The wine has the round fruit of Barbera the tannins and structure of Nebbiolo and a dark earthy note from the Syrah. Today this wine is a bit disjointed, a sum of parts, rather than a well amalgamated whole. If this comes together, the wine may merit a higher score. 30% of this wine is aged in used barriques, while the remainder is aged in cask. *84 points/drink 2005-2008, 12/04*

Marchetti makes two single-vineyard Barolos from the famous La Morra crus Brunate and La Serra. The wines are traditionally made and fairly austere in style when young. Fermentation and maceration lasts about 4 weeks and is done in a combination of glass-lined cement vats and stainless steel, while aging is done exclusively in casks. Bottling is done without filtration or clarification. The wines will require quite a bit of bottle age to demonstrate their full potential and should last 20 or more years. Readers

would do well to buy these wines and forget about them for at least a decade or so.

2001 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—Dense dark burnished ruby color with violet highlights. Aromatic nose of minerals, eucalyptus and sage followed by a generous palate of ripe dark fruits. A wine of substantial length and elegance, more complete and age-worthy than the La Serra. *91 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

2001 Marcarini Barolo La Serra—Rich ruby and darker in color than the Brunate. Intriguing nose of flowers, sweet fruit, menthol and roasted coffee

beans. There is good follow through onto the palate which is endowed with plenty of ripe sweet fruit and tar flavors, with more aggressive tannins than the Brunate which make it clear this wine is not yet revealing its full potential. *89+ points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

I also tasted Marcarini's **2004 Moscato d'Asti**. For his Moscato, Marchetti freezes the freshly pressed grape juice. He then ferments the juice as needed, usually four times a year, to insure that his wine is fresh when it arrives on the market. The 2004, tasted from tank, is delicious and shows lovely flavors of green apple and a lively finish.

E. Pira-Chiara Boschis (Barolo)

1999 E. Pira (Chiara Boschis) Barolo Via Nuova
2000 E. Pira (Chiara Boschis) Barolo Cannubi

With her fast pace and lively sense of humor, keeping up with the energetic and enthusiastic Chiara Boschis is a challenge. "I am convinced in the importance of respecting nature. I pay a lot of attention to my vineyards, using only all-natural methods to produce the best quality fruit I can. From there, I interfere as little as possible," explains Boschis. Fermentation is done in stainless steel and lasts about a week. Wines undergo malolactic fermentation in 100% new barriques, where they also complete their aging. "For me the barrique is just an instrument, I use barriques to give my wines natural oxygenation and color, but I don't want to taste oak in my wines." Of the two wines I tasted, I preferred the Via Nuova, mostly because of the qualities of the 1999 vintage. Because of their young age, the wines are still showing a lot of oak influence. Based on how the wines have developed in past vintages I would expect the wines to become better integrated with a few years of bottle age.

1999 E. Pira Barolo (Chiara Boschis) Barolo Via Nuova—Dense dark ruby. The penetrating nose is redolent of spices, vanilla and toasted oak, cherries in liqueur and wet earth. This backward Barolo shows dark fruit and tar and flavors, with plenty of structure and freshness on the exquisite, nuanced finish. Comes across as austere today, but this should

improve with some bottle age. *91 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2000 E. Pira (Chiara Boschis) Barolo Cannubi—Dark, intense ruby. Intense nose of vanilla, spices, and toasted oak. This dense Barolo offers a round palate of rich fruit, licorice, and a distinctly mineral quality. Today the oak obscures much of the detail in this wine, and in time this may well merit a higher score. *90+points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

The Pira cellar, Barolo

Prunotto (Alba)

2003 Prunotto	Barbera d'Asti	Fiulot
2003 Prunotto	Dolcetto d'Alba	
2003 Prunotto	Dolcetto d'Alba	Mosesco
2003 Prunotto	Barbera d'Alba	
2001 Prunotto	Barbera d'Alba	Pian Romualdo
1999 Prunotto	Barbaresco	Bric Turot
1999 Prunotto	Barolo	Bussia

This was my first visit to this historic house located on the outskirts of Alba. The estate produces a broad range of wines from every-day good values to the single vineyard Barbaresco Bric Turot and Barolo Bussia. Generally, the simpler wines are made from purchased fruit while the more prestigious Barberas and Nebbiolo-based wine are made from estate-owned fruit.

2003 Prunotto Barbera d'Asti Fiulot—A fairly structured Barbera that shows a beautiful, perfumed nose and rich ripe fruit but finishes a bit hot. The fruit for this wine comes from the Costamiòle vineyard. *85 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2003 Prunotto Dolcetto D'Alba—Medium ruby, with notes of red fruits, raspberries, and minerals. Made in stainless steel. *84 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2003 Prunotto Dolcetto d'Alba Mosesco—A very pretty, cask aged Dolcetto made from vines in Rodello, featuring dark ruby color and palate of round, supple dark cherry fruit and minerals. *86 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2003 Prunotto Barbera d'Alba—Medium ruby. Delicate aromatic nose and flavors of fresh red fruits. *85 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2001 Prunotto Barbera d'Alba Pian Romualdo—Dark ruby. This barrique-aged Barbera displays a rich nose of spices, minerals and stewed fruits, and is soft and supple on the palate, finishing with refreshing acidity. *89 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

1999 Prunotto Barbaresco Bric Turot—Fermented in open top wood vats, this wine does malolactic fermentation in a combination of stainless steel and cask, and then spends 12-18 months aging in cask. Dark ruby color. The wine exhibits a rich yet delicate nose of spices, flowers and toasted oak. This is a dense and chewy Barbaresco that is very youthful and that will require patience. *90 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

1999 Prunotto Barolo Bussia—Dense dark ruby. A very masculine, brooding wine of great complexity, with notes of wet earth, minerals, tar and licorice on the nose. The palate is endowed with generous amounts of backward dark fruits and lots of tannins. A very nice blend of modern flavors and classic structure. This wine is fermented in wood vats, undergoes malolactic fermentation in French oak barrels and is aged mostly in large barrels, with a small portion seeing used barriques. *91 points/drink after-2009, 12/04*

Revello (La Morra)

2001 Revello	Barolo	
2001 Revello	Barolo	Conca
2001 Revello	Barolo	Gattera
2001 Revello	Barolo	Giachini
2000 Revello	Barolo	Gattera
2000 Revello	Barolo	Conca

Brothers Enzo and Carlo Revello are part of a new generation of producers in La Morra who are inextricably linked with Elio Altare, the area's father figure. The estate released its first wine in 1992 and only began bottling the entire production in 1997. The 2001s are simply beautiful wines and represent another significant step up in quality. "Like so many small producers in La Morra, we got a lot of guidance from Elio Altare, who really helped us make large strides in very little time," says Enzo Revello.

Yields are kept very low, at around 5,000 kilos per hectare and the vinification style is decidedly modern. Fermentations last just a few days and aging is done in barrique. The use of oak is still prevalent but it is increasingly more measured and the wines appear to have better balance overall. Revello produces five Barolos, a normale bottling plus single-vineyard wines from the Conca, Giachini, Gattera and Rocche dell'Annunziata crus. The base Barolo sees about 20% new oak, while the Rocche, Giachini, and Conca Barolos see about 50% new oak. Beginning in 2001, the Gattera is aged in a 15 hectolitre barrel. I was able to taste all of the estate's 2001s except for the Rocche dell'Annunziata, (of which only 1,000 bottles are produced each year), as well as two wines from the 2000 vintage. Readers will surely find much to admire in these wines.

2001 Revello Barolo—Dark ruby. A very rich, modern-styled wine offering ripe dark cherry fruit, spices, minerals, and lots of toasted oak. Good length and overall balance. *89 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

2001 Revello Barolo Conca—Dense dark ruby. Huge fragrant nose of toasted oak and spices. Tremendous follow through on the palate, with deep

flavors of sweet fruit, cherries in liqueur, licorice, and minerals with a very long and sustained finish. A very complete wine, and the most successful of these 2001s. *91 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2001 Revello Barolo Gattera—Rich saturated ruby. Not very expressive on the nose at this stage, this dark backward wine shows generous amounts of massive fruit, and tons of oak. While this may eventually merit a higher score, today it is tough to fully evaluate this wine. *89+? points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2001 Revello Barolo Giachini—Medium saturated ruby. Very aromatic and spiced from the oak, with plenty of cherries in liqueur, plum and licorice flavors. Good length and sustain on the finish. A few years of bottle age should help smooth a few rough edges. *89+? points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2000 Revello Barolo Gattera—Medium ruby. A gorgeous wine that shows layers and layers of rich crushed raspberry fruit and mineral flavors. Finishes with excellent sense of freshness. A beautifully structured and complete wine that is absolutely wonderful right now. *92 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

2000 Revello Barolo Conca—Saturated ruby. The nose is dominated by aromas of very ripe to over-ripe fruit and toasted oak. This medium-bodied wine is packed with dark red fruits, good length and overall balance, although it is not as complex as the other wines I tasted. Just short of outstanding. Could drink this today. *89 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

Giuseppe Rinaldi (Barolo)

2001 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Brunate/LeCoste
2001 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Cannubi (San Lorenzo)/Ravera
2002 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Brunate/LeCoste
2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Brunate/LeCoste
2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Cannubi (San Lorenzo)/Ravera
2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Dolcetto d'Alba	
2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barbera d'Alba	
2000 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Brunate/LeCoste
2000 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Cannubi (San Lorenzo)/Ravera
1999 Giuseppe Rinaldi	Barolo	Brunate/LeCoste

A visit to this estate is always one of my most eagerly anticipated appointments in the region. Walking into Beppe Rinaldi's cellar is like stepping into a Fellini film. An old stereo is playing Italian folk songs and Rinaldi is holding court with a group of old friends, regaling them with his vast knowledge of the area's history. Time appears to have stood still... Rinaldi offers me a glass of the fantastic 2000 Barolo Brunate/Le Coste from magnum and then we are off to taste the recent wines from barrel...



The Rinaldi cellar, Barolo

Rinaldi is the quintessential traditionalist. "Nebbiolo is one of the few varietals in the world that can produce noble wines with great aging potential, wines that can develop complex aromas and ethereal, tertiary nuances. That is what I am after. I don't feel any need to follow modern trends, to make wines that are easy to understand. I want to make wines that are difficult, and that invite discussion and debate. I prefer to have wine that is fragile, even

with small defects, over a wine that is manufactured in a cellar."

Rinaldi makes two Barolos, both of which are made from blends of grapes from two vineyards. "I don't believe in the idea of labeling vineyards as first-class, second-class, third-class and so forth," Rinaldi explains. "In the past, we always made Barolo by blending grapes from different vineyards with different characteristics and positions. For example, we would use grapes from La Morra and Barolo to give elegance, and grapes from Serralunga or Castiglione Falletto to give structure. The resulting wine had a balance of acidity, body and tannins with a lot of overall harmony. That is the real tradition. It is no coincidence that in very hot years like 2000 and 2003, the best wines come from so-called 'second-class' vineyards."

Rinaldi's two Barolos are Brunate/LeCoste and Cannubi(San Lorenzo)/Ravera. The better known of the wines is the Brunate/Le Coste, which is available in larger quantities. The wine is made from a blend of about 60% Brunate fruit and 40% Le Coste fruit. The less well known, though no less important, wine is the Cannubi(San Lorenzo)/Ravera, which is produced in much smaller quantities and is therefore harder to find. The vines at Cannubi are in the San Lorenzo section, where soils are sandy and the wines generally lighter in color, and more delicate and aromatic in flavor.

The Barolos are made in a rigorously traditional fashion. Fermentation and maceration take place in a 100-year-old open top wood vat for 20-30 days, without temperature control or the use of selected yeasts. The wines are aged for three and a half years exclusively in cask. In most vintages the Brunate/Le

Coste is the bigger, rounder, more masculine wine while the Cannubi(San Lorenzo)/Ravera is typically the more aromatic, feminine and accessible of the two Barolos.

In terms of drinking windows Rinaldi says “I wish my wines were never ‘ready’. I generally don’t touch a bottle until the wine is at least ten years old. I like wines that are tannic, austere, and have no fruit.” Readers who are interested in learning about this producer’s wines but who don’t want to wait ten years or more should check out the 2000s, they are beautiful wines that can uncharacteristically be enjoyed now.



Rinaldi’s 100+ year-old fermentation vat

Rinaldi also makes terrific bottlings of Dolcetto, Barbera, Langhe Nebbiolo, and Ruché. Unfortunately these wines are made in extremely small quantities and are hard to find even in Italy. I include notes on the 2003 Dolcetto and Barbera I recently tasted in the hope that readers who visit Piedmont may have a chance to try them in local restaurants or wine shops. These wines are textbook examples that display incredible expression of varietal and are just plain delicious to drink. Wines are listed in the order they were tasted, starting with wines tasted from barrel to those tasted from the bottle.

The 2001 Rinaldi Barolos were pretty shut down when I tasted them in March 2004, fortunately I had better luck on this visit. Speaking of his 2001s Rinaldi says “Usually the Cannubi is the more accessible of the two wines, but in 2001 it’s the Brunate which is more approachable.”

2001 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Brunate Le Coste (from barrel)—Lots of spice and licorice on the nose. The palate full and layered with very ripe fruit, minerals, conveying a relatively round and supple profile for the vintage and the producer. (91-93) *points, 12/04*

2001 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Cannubi(San Lorenzo)/ Ravera (from barrel) —More spiced and floral on the nose than the Brunate/Le Coste, showing red fruits on the palate, and an austere, tannic personality with plenty chewy tannins. (90-92) *points, 12/04*

In the challenging 2002 vintage Rinaldi salvaged just a small amount of fruit, and there is only one cask of 2002 Barolo in his cellar...

2002 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Brunate/Le Coste (from barrel)—Very clean and fragrant nose with hints of Pinot Noir-like fresh red strawberry fruit on the palate. The wine remains short on the palate and lacks overall complexity. Tasting the wine Rinaldi says “Clearly this is a wine that has suffered a shock, still it’s not bad,” in his characteristic understated fashion. Regardless, this remains a very solid effort for the vintage. (85-87) *points, 12/04*

2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Brunate/Le Coste (from barrel)—A powerhouse. Massive, rich, and packed with over the top super-ripe jammy fruit, while maintaining a classic, austere profile. Very endowed on the palate, today this is a bit much, but we’ll have to see how it evolves. I have been positively surprised by the development of other 2003s, so this may settle down over the next few years... For now, this is not for the faint of heart! (86-88) *points, 12/04*

2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Cannubi(San Lorenzo)/ Ravera (from barrel)—Showing greater overall balance than the Brunate/LeCoste, this wine displays an aromatic nose, and a somewhat austere palate. This is a very delicious and potentially excellent wine. (88-90) *points, 12/04*

2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi Dolcetto d'Alba—Classic balance of rich dark fruit, freshness and structure, with a slightly bitter finish. This cask-aged, mid-weight Dolcetto represents a traditional style that is difficult to find today. Better balanced than most Dolcettos of this vintage and highly enjoyable. *89 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2003 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barbera d'Alba—Rich dark ruby. Shows lots of jammy black and blue fruit with excellent length and structure. Fairly straightforward but an absolute joy to drink. *88 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

Speaking of his 2000s Rinaldi says, “Nebbiolo has a very long vegetative cycle, it is the earliest to flower and the latest to ripen. When you have a hot summer, as we did in 2000, the wines are softer and less austere, but I much prefer the Nebbiolo tannins I get in years with more balanced weather.” Nevertheless, these beautiful 2000s give readers who are unfamiliar with this producer’s style a great opportunity to taste the wines without waiting for years. I left my bottles of the 2000s open for several days, during which the wines were in a continual crescendo of expressiveness. The 2000s can be enjoyed now with some air, but will develop into more complete wines over time.

2000 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Brunate/Le Coste—Rich dark ruby. Elegant, noble nose of spices, menthol, and tar. This huge, structured wine is

packed with flavors of cherries in liqueur, licorice, minerals, and a balsamic note, all wrapped around a classic frame of great structure, length and freshness. Darker, richer and rounder than the Cannubi(San Lorenzo)/Ravera, this is dense, powerful and intensely satisfying Barolo. *92 points/drink after 2010, 12/04*

2000 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Cannubi(San Lorenzo)/Ravera—Medium translucent ruby. Fantastic aromatic nose of flowers, crushed raspberries and anise. More accessible than the Brunate/Le Coste, this medium-bodied Barolo shows lots of sweet red fruit, notable structure, and a delicate, lingering finish. Maybe a tad less complex than the Brunate/Le Coste, but not one bit less enjoyable. *91 points/drink after 2010, 12/04*

1999 Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Brunate/Le Coste—The essence of pure Nebbiolo, this wine shows plenty of clean, focused cherry fruit flavors, tremendous follow-through on the palate, and a long, fresh finish. Showing just a glimpse of its true potential, this exquisite wine is sure to improve with age. *93 points/drink after 2014, 12/04*

I highly encourage readers wanting to learn more about traditional Barolo to explore the wines of this estate. Among the very traditionalist-minded producers, the wines of Beppe Rinaldi possess a high level of uniqueness that makes them well worth the effort of finding and cellaring.

Luciano Sandrone (Barolo)

2003 Sandrone Barolo	Cannubi Boschis
2001 Sandrone Barolo	Le Vigne
2001 Sandrone Barolo	Cannubi Boschis
2000 Sandrone Barolo	Le Vigne
2000 Sandrone Barolo	Cannubi Boschis
2003 Sandrone Dolcetto d'Alba	
2002 Sandrone Nebbiolo d'Alba	Valmaggione

Few winemakers offer the kind of thorough insight into the wines as Luciano Sandrone does. Time spent in Sandrone’s cellar is always a fascinating and educational experience. Over the years, Sandrone has led the way in making modern, accessible wines through a strong commitment to low yields, which are typically half or slightly less than half of the *Piedmont Report*

legally allowed limits. “I am really excited about 2004. We green harvested three times and still had excellent quality and quantity. I think 2004 may turn out to be the best vintage in the last ten years,” says Sandrone. With that we were of to taste the wines of the recently concluded harvest. The notes below

cover wines from the 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001 and 2000 vintages.

We started by tasting the 2004 Dolcetto, Barbera and Nebbiolo Valmaggiore. One of the hallmarks of this estate is the quality of the more moderately priced wines. Sandrone treats those wines with the same painstaking care he bestows on his Barolos, which is a real tribute to this producer's consistency over the entire range.

The Dolcetto bottling is typically one of the best interpretations of the area. The wine is made from a blend of eleven parcels which are harvested and vinified separately. In the spring following the harvest, Sandrone selects the best lots, which are then blended into the final wine. Lots that do not meet Sandrone's approval are sold off in bulk. The Barbera is made in a similar fashion as the Dolcetto. Seven vineyards in the areas of Novello and Monforte are harvested and vinified separately, with the best lots being blended into the final wine. The vineyard for the Valmaggiore is one plot, divided into 5 sub-plots, which are vinified and aged separately as with the other wines.

The 2004s are all very aromatic and show intense color. "The amount of rain we receive from mid-July to mid-August is critical for achieving good color. In years where we have less rain in that period, such as 1996 and 1997, we have less color," explains

Sandrone. I don't provide specific tasting notes as some of these wines were still undergoing malolactic fermentation and because the wines I tasted don't represent the final blend for a given wine.

Sandrone makes two Barolos, the single-vineyard Cannubi Boschis and Le Vigne, which is made from a blend of vineyards. Both wines are made in a similar fashion. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel, without the aid of selected yeasts, and lasts between 7-9 days for the Cannubi Boschis and slightly longer for Le Vigne. Both wines complete malolactic fermentation and aging in 500 liter tonneaux, of which 20%-25% are new each year.

Next we tasted wines from the four vineyards from which the **2004 Barolo Le Vigne** is produced: Merli in Novello, Ceretta on the Serralunga/Monforte border, Conterni in Monforte, and Vignane in Barolo, all of which are vinified and aged separately for the first two years. In some vintages, the final blend may not include wines from all four crus. Tasting the wines individually is a great lesson in the terroirs of Barolo. Unfortunately most of the wines were completing malolactic fermentation and were pretty unexpressive although the Vignane took my breath away, showing a complex nose of spices and licorice with plenty dark cherries flavors on the palate. It appears to be a very complete wine even at this stage in its life. The Le Vigne will be fascinating to follow over the next few years.



A tasting of vineyards and sub-plots at Sandrone

We then moved on to the **2004 Barolo Cannubi Boschis**. The vineyard is divided into three sub-plots which are also harvested, vinified and aged separately for the first year. We tasted two of the three sub-plots. The first wine was lighter in color, with a floral and perfumed nose and delicate fruit, the second wine was completely different; darker in color and noticeably richer and rounder on the palate. Explains Sandrone: "Facing the vineyard, to the right the soils are sandy and we have a greater percentage of the Rosè clone, so the wines are more aromatic, with sweeter fruit and leaner structure, whereas on the left we have older vines, which give us richer, rounder and more extracted wines." Each wine presents a unique identity, it is incredible to think that they both come from the same vineyard.

Lastly, we tasted a 2004 Nebbiolo from an experimental vineyard in Barolo. The wine was very structured and tannic at this stage of its life. "For the last seven years we have been making wine from a particular clone that is infected. The berries are very small, and the yields are low, a sort of natural green harvest," Sandrone jokes. Wine from this parcel has never been bottled, but if results keep improving, this wine may become part of the Le Vigne Barolo. It will be interesting to see how this wine develops over the next few years.

Last year I tasted the 2003 Barolos from barrel. At that time, the wines seemed jammy, over-extracted, and out of balance. What a difference a year in the cellar can make.... In 2003 Sandrone waited until early October to harvest his Nebbiolos, and the fruit benefited from the rain that fell in early September, which helped give his wines a sense of balance.

2003 Sandrone Barolo Cannubi Boschis (from barrel, final blend)—Dark and brooding, this gorgeous wine shows, rich concentrated dark cherry and prune fruit, cinnamon, cloves and minerals a very long finish, tannic. This is a very complete wine. Superb. *91-93 points, 12/04*

For the **2003 Barolo Le Vigne**, the final blend has not yet been made, but I did taste the four wines separately. Each vineyard shows its typical character: the higher altitude Merli is aromatic and fresh, Ceretta is more structured and mineral, Conterni features dark, evolved fruit, and Vignane the most tannic.

2002 was a challenging vintage for this estate. There will be no Barolo Cannubi Boschis. Sandrone will release about 4,500 bottles of the **2002 Barolo Le Vigne**, which in this vintage only contains fruit from the Ceretta and Conterni crus. Tasted from barrel, the wine has an attractive, floral nose, and shows evolved red fruits and minerals on the palate, although the wine had just been racked a few days prior and appeared to be a bit out of balance, so I prefer to wait until next year before assigning a final score. This Barolo looks to be a potentially excellent wine for the vintage.

Sandrone's 2000 and 2001 Barolos are huge successes. My preference is for the 2001s which offer greater aromatic complexity, structure, and length. In short, the 2001s appear to be more complete wines. The 2000s are just a notch below the 2001s, offering a more accessible style today but less overall elegance, detail and nuance.

2001 Sandrone Barolo Le Vigne—Dark ruby. Fantastic nose of flowers, minerals and crushed raspberries. The palate displays generous amounts of very ripe red fruits, mint, and eucalyptus. Noticeably more structured than the 2000, with more balance, freshness and a longer finish. Traditional in design, but modern in execution, the 2001 Barolo Le Vigne presents tremendous harmony and elegance. *93 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2001 Sandrone Barolo Cannubi Boschis—Deep translucent ruby. The nose offers multi-dimensional sensations of dark fruit, plums, spices, minerals, menthol, and eucalyptus. On the palate the wine is packed with rich, round flavors of dark cherries, plums, and a balsamic note, with plenty of chewy tannins. The finish is long and caressing. A beautiful modern-styled wine. Superb. *95 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

2000 Sandrone Barolo Le Vigne—Rich deep ruby. Intense nose of very ripe to over-ripe sweet fruit and flavors of red fruits, minerals, tar and spices with excellent persistence on the palate. A delicious Barolo to enjoy now. *91 points/drink now-, 12/04*

2000 Sandrone Barolo Cannubi Boschis—Rich ruby. The dense 2000 Cannubi Boschis offers aromas of toasted oak, minerals and stewed fruits with a very rich palate of dark fruit a very long finish. With some air, this is hard to resist now. *92 points/drink now-, 12/04*

2003 Sandrone Dolcetto d'Alba—Deep, dark ruby with violet highlights. Very clean and pure on the nose with flavors of dark jammy fruit a note of licorice on the long finish. Always a classy and elegant Dolcetto. *88 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2002 Sandrone Nebbiolo d'Alba Valmaggiore—Deep dark ruby. Very vinous on the nose. Good flavors of ripe sweet fruit although the mid palate is a bit hollow. Finishes with good freshness. An excellent effort for the vintage. *87 points/drink now-2008, 12/04*



The bottling line at Sandrone

Paolo Scavino (Castiglione Falletto)

2001 Scavino Barbera d'Alba	
2001 Scavino Barolo	
2001 Scavino Barolo	Cannubi
2001 Scavino Barolo	Carobric
2001 Scavino Barolo	Bric del Fiasc
2002 Scavino Barolo	Bricco Ambrogio
2000 Scavino Barolo Riserva	Rocche dell'Annunziata
1999 Scavino Barolo Riserva	Rocche dell'Annunziata

Enrico Scavino was finishing work on his estate when I visited last December. The new extension will provide space for large group tastings as well as a dedicated area for Scavino's enviable collection of larger-format bottles. This estate produces a wide range of Barolos, beginning with a base bottling that is usually one of the best relative values in the region. There are three single-vineyard wines: Cannubi, Bric del Fiasc and Rocche dell'Annunziata, all of which are very representative of their respective soil types.

In the mid-1990's Scavino bought a plot in Rocche di Castiglione. Fearing too much confusion with the already well-known Rocche dell'Annunziata, Scavino decided to create a blend by adding wine

from Cannubi and Bric del Fiasc, creating Carobric. The 2002 vintage marks the first release of a new Barolo from the Bricco Ambrogio cru in Roddi. Enrica Scavino is very high on the 2001s, describing them as "very elegant and classic." She says "We want to make wines people drink rather than look at like some kind of trophy." These 2001s are built to age and my advice is to drink this producer's excellent 2000s (reviewed in Issue 1) in the near term and cellar the 2001s for longer-term consumption.

As fantastic as the Scavino Barolos are, readers should not overlook the excellent 2001 Barbera d'Alba....

2001 Scavino Barbera d'Alba—Rich ruby with violet highlights. This mid-weight Barbera displays a nose cinnamon, cloves, and minerals and a palate of rich jammy red and blue fruit with superb integration of oak and good acidity to balance the wine. In an age of super-sized Barberas, this is a wine that impresses for its elegance and understatement rather than for its sheer muscle. This wine sees a total of 16 months of oak aging, the first 8 are in barrique and the second 8 are in cask. *91 points/drink now-2008, 12/04*

2001 Scavino Barolo—Rich dark ruby color. This is very youthful and tannic. With some time in the glass, notes of spices and mint emerge, followed by a massive and dark palate of stewed fruits. Doesn't quite have the length of the single-vineyard wines, but still has excellent potential although the wine will need time to come together. Made from a blend of the Vignane and Via Nuova crus in Barolo and the Meriondino and Vignolo crus in Castiglione. Enrica Scavino says "this is a Barolo that doesn't need a special occasion." Usually one of the best relative values in Barolo. *89 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

2001 Scavino Barolo Cannubi—Rich, fresh, red rub. A mid-weight Barolo, very floral and delicate on the nose, with flavors of red cherries and crushed raspberries, finishing with notes of tar and minerals. The Cannubi is the softest, most feminine and accessible of the Scavino Barolos. *92 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

In 2001 the Bric del Fiasc and Carobric are massive, shut down, and very difficult to fully assess. Tasting the wines blind, I thought the Carobric was the Bric del Fiasc, and Enrica Scavino says even she has a hard time telling the wines apart at this stage. My notes and ratings represent my best idea of the wines at this stage, although both wines will probably require multiple tastings before a clearer idea of their true potential emerges.

2001 Scavino Barolo Carobric—Rich ruby. Dense, strapping and muscular, this Barolo shows a nose of rich ripe fruit, and minerals and boasts a massive, expansive palate of opulent fruit, with lots of complexity and great length. Still very backward and primary, today the Carobric appears to be the most complete of the 2001 Barolos. *93+ points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

2001 Scavino Barolo Bric del Fiasc—Rich ruby. Dark dense and backward, this masculine wine is packed with rich dark fruit on a very long palate. With time, notes of tar and menthol appear although this remains very tight, but so promising. *93+ points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

Scavino has chosen to release only one Barolo in 2002, and it will be the first wine from the new vineyard at Roddi, Bricco Ambrogio.

2002 Scavino Barolo Bricco Ambrogio (from barrel)—Comes across as very much classically styled. This medium-bodied wine shows plenty of red fruits on the palate with notes of minerals and mint on the long finish. A very strong effort for the vintage, this should provide good early drinking. *(88-90) points, 12/04*

Scavino's Riserva, Rocche dell'Annunziata is in many ways the archetype of modern Barolo. Made from a densely planted vineyard with very low yields per plant, this is a wine that achieves very sweet, Pinot Noir-like fruit. Tasting the 1999 and 2000 versions side by side illustrates the qualities of the two vintages. The 1999, with its greater freshness and multi-layered flavors strikes me as a more complete wine, but that is simply a matter of personal taste.

2000 Scavino Barolo Riserva Rocche dell'Annunziata—Saturated ruby. Intense nose of ripe to over-ripe fruit. Beautiful round and soft palate of jammy red fruit, minerals, cocoa and licorice. Very refined and elegant, this is already drinking well. A shade less complex than the superb 1999. *92 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1999 Scavino Barolo Riserva Rocche dell'Annunziata—Saturated ruby. Very aromatic and floral nose. The palate shows generous flavors of sweet rich red fruits and soft, lush mouthfeel. A note of mint on the finish gives this wine a sense of freshness and overall proportion. A wine of excellent length that expresses the structure of the vintage in an understated way. This is a delicate wine of great class that relies more on elegance than on power. *94 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

To read notes on Scavino's 2000 Barolo Cannubi click [here](#).

G.D. Vajra (Barolo)

2003 G.D. Vajra	Langhe Bianco	Riesling
2002 G.D. Vajra	Langhe Bianco	Riesling
2003 G.D. Vajra	Dolcetto d'Alba	Coste/Fossati
2002 G.D. Vajra	Barbera d'Alba	Superiore
2003 G.D. Vajra	Langhe Nebbiolo	
2000 G.D. Vajra	Barolo	Albe
1999 G.D. Vajra	Barolo	Bricco delle Viole

Aldo Vajra is a quiet man of few words but he and his wife Milena share an outsize enthusiasm for everything they do. Speaking of his philosophy Aldo says "I try to make wines that give people joy. In the past wine was a food, it was necessary for sustenance. Today that is not the case, we choose to drink for pleasure. I want to make wines that bring people happiness."

The winery itself is beautiful, in a sparse and contemplative way. The large spacious facility is decorated with a series of stained glass windows that create a very serene atmosphere as the late afternoon winter light shines through the panels. Vajra aims to make wines that express the terroirs of his vineyards, which are located in the Vergne zone of Barolo. The wines reflect their maker's highly individual and personal style, they exhibit great nuance, elegance, and understatement, like the man himself. Vajra makes several wines which are unique for the zone, among which is an exquisite Riesling. This wine is made from the Fossati vineyard, a high-altitude plot which has mostly sandy soils. The south south-east exposure of the vineyard allows the grapes to mature slowly.

2003 G.D Vajra Langhe Bianco Riesling—Shows a complex rich palate of white peaches, apricots, and minerals. The lushness of the wine suggests there may be just a hint of residual sugar. A wine that expresses varietal, terroir and the ripeness of the vintage. *89 points/drink now-2008, 12/04*

In 2002 the region was hit by severe hailstorms. Vajra jokes, "we harvested individual grapes rather than bunches!"....

2002 G.D Vajra Langhe Bianco Riesling—Packed with lots of varietal character, stone fruits, minerals and finishing totally dry with excellent persistence. A leaner style that emphasizes detail and delicateness

over richness and opulence. Absolutely beautiful. *91 points/drink now-2007, 12/04*

2003 G.D Vajra Dolcetto Coste/Fossati—Very rich dark ruby in color, this Dolcetto displays a concentrated palate of mature, dark, backward fruit. *86 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2002 G.D Vajra Barbera d'Alba Superiore—A mid-weight wine showing crushed raspberries, smoke, and rich red fruits. Finishes a bit short, which is typical for the vintage, but a solid effort. *87 points/drink now-2005, 12/04*

2003 G.D Vajra Langhe Nebbiolo—Made from young vines, the fruit is given a fairly short maceration of about a week to bring out the fresher flavors of Nebbiolo. Presents a pretty nose of flowers and spices, with rich flavors of jammy strawberries on the palate. Like so many 2003s, this finishes a bit hot. *87 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

Vajra makes two Barolos, Albe, which is made from multiple vineyards, and a single-vineyard wine, Bricco delle Viole. The Barolos are both aged predominantly in large casks, although the Albe sees more new wood, and therefore shows more overt oak notes, while Bricco delle Viole comes across as much more classic. Both wines are mid-weight wines that rely more on elegance and subtlety rather than on power. Vajra releases his wines a year later than most producers, so the wines below are the current vintages on the market.

Speaking of the Albe, Aldo Vajra describes a state of affairs which affects the entire Barolo-producing zone: "We have a problem with consumption of Barolo here in Piedmont; nobody drinks the wines!" Vajra says emphatically. "Cellars are full of older vintages...great wines no one will ever drink because the wines are considered too 'important.' We

want to make an accessible wine (the Albe) for a younger consumer, a wine that doesn't require a special event or meal, but rather an affordable wine that can be opened with friends anytime and without pretense. Here in this part of the Barolo zone our wines typically don't have the ability to age that long, they are usually at their best 10-12 years after the vintage. It is important that consumers actually drink the wines."



Stained glass window at the Vajra winery

2000 G. D. Vajra Barolo Albe—Medium ruby in color, the wine displays a perfumed nose of toasted oak, minerals and eucalyptus, and a rich, structured complex palate of very ripe fruit. A beautiful wine that can be enjoyed now. *90 points/drink now-2010, 12/04*

1999 G.D. Vajra Barolo Bricco delle Viole—A medium-bodied Barolo of great elegance and class. Refined nose of cherries in alcohol, spices, mint, and licorice with much delineation of rich fruit on the palate. Finishes with great length and persistence. This is a highly expressive, detailed and individual wine. *93 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

I also tasted two vintages of Vajra's Kyè, (2000 and 2001) which is made from the Freisa varietal. Freisa is a grape normally used to make vermouth and is normally not considered an important varietal in modern Piedmontese oenology. Vajra is convinced otherwise, and believes the varietal deserves its rightful place on the tables of his customers. I confess to having limited experience with Freisa, but Vajra's wines are certainly among the best I've tasted.

Mauro Veglio (La Morra)

2002 Mauro Veglio	Langhe Nebbiolo	
2001 Mauro Veglio	Barolo	Rocche
2001 Mauro Veglio	Barolo	Gattera
2001 Mauro Veglio	Barolo	Arborina
2001 Mauro Veglio	Barolo	Castelletto

Mauro and Daniela Veglio produce modern styled wines from their holdings in La Morra and Monforte. Veglio's approach begins in the vineyards, with a strong belief in low yields. Fermentations last a few days and are done in rotary fermenters. The wines then undergo malolactic fermentation in stainless steel and complete their aging in barriques. The estate bottles four single-vineyard Barolos from the Gattera, Arborina, and Rocche crus in LaMorra and the Castelletto cru in Monforte. Gattera yields wines of great roundness and concentration, owing to the vineyard's south-southwest position and vines that are over 50 years old. Arborina, on the other hand, typically gives wine with more freshness as the vines are only exposed to sun in the morning hours.

Piedmont Report

Cropped at just 4,000 kilos of fruit per hectare, Rocche is the lowest yielding vineyard, and also the wine that sees the most amount of new oak, while Castelletto gives the most structured and austere wine. Rocche sees about 75%-80% new oak depending on the vintage, while the Castelletto, Arborina and Gattera all receive about 50% new oak. Veglio is one of a very few producers in the region who does not make a base Barolo, choosing instead to make a Langhe Nebbiolo

2002 Mauro Veglio Langhe Nebbiolo—Rich dark ruby color. The nose is fairly unexpressive although the palate reveals sweet red fruit and lots of toasted

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oak. A good result for the vintage, this is a wine for early consumption. *85 points/drink now-2006, 12/04*

2001 Mauro Veglio Barolo Rocche—Dark ruby. A delicious, accessible Barolo featuring a very floral nose with notes of licorice and coffee beans. This medium-bodied wine shows ripe red cherry fruit and a soft mouthfeel. *89 points/drink after-2007, 12/04*

2001 Mauro Veglio Barolo Gattera—Rich dark ruby. Aromas of toasted oak, spices and stewed fruits on the nose. There is tremendous follow through on the palate, with dense rich fruit, excellent length and a very nice sense of freshness on the finish. Superb. *92 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

2001 Mauro Veglio Barolo Arborina—Rich dark ruby. This very ripe Barolo offers sensations of prunes, plums, spices and minerals with good length, although it doesn't quite have the freshness of the Gattera. *90 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2001 Mauro Veglio Barolo Castelletto—Rich dark ruby. An intense and powerful wine, with aromas of spices and flavors of very rich decadent fruit and minerals. Very compact for now, this may ultimately merit a higher score if the structure fills out. Potentially outstanding. *89+ points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

Vietti (Castiglione Falletto)

2001 Vietti Barolo	Castiglione
2001 Vietti Barolo	Rocche
2001 Vietti Barolo	Brunate
2001 Vietti Barolo	Lazzarito
2001 Vietti Barolo Riserva	Villero

Vietti is without a doubt one of the most important estates in the region from a historical perspective. Alfredo Currado was one of the first winemakers to pioneer the bottling of single-vineyard wines, experiment with barriques, and sell wines into the US market.

Today the winery is managed by brothers in law Luca Currado and Mario Cordero, both of whom share a passion for all things Barolo. Currado oversees the winemaking while Cordero runs the business side of the operation. Together they are continuing the legacy of producing top-notch wines from the family's superb collection of vineyards. Both Currado and Cordero were in high spirits when I saw them in December, having just completed the 2004 vintage, from which I was able to taste a very promising Nebbiolo destined to become Barolo Castiglione.

The Vietti wines are made in an updated style that is somewhere in between modern and traditional. Yields are kept low, averaging 30-35 hectolitres per hectare for the single-vineyard Barolos. The wines are all fermented in stainless steel do their malolactic fermentations in barrique, after which they complete their aging in a combination of larger casks and barriques. In general the Castiglione, Rocche and Piedmont Report

Villero are aged predominantly in large barrels, while the Brunate, Ravera, and Lazzarito show more influence of barrique-aging. Currado's philosophy is simple: "We try to allow each vineyard to express its fullest potential."

Cordero is excited about the 2001s, saying "2001 is a superb vintage we producers are very happy with. The wines have excellent depth, acidity, and aging potential, as in 1996." Unfortunately there is no Ravera in 2001, as the vineyard was damaged by hail and the estate decided not to bottle any of the wine from this vineyard. All of the 2001 Barolos I tasted were terrific, but the Riserva Villero is out of this world.

See *Exploring Brunate* on page 31 for more on the wines of Vietti.

2001 Vietti Barolo Castiglione—Dark translucent ruby. Very pretty and delicate, with aromas of flowers, crushed raspberries and anise followed by a mid-weight palate of red fruit that finishes with a nice sense of freshness. A bit austere today, this classic young Barolo will reward several years of bottle age and is usually the first of the Vietti wines to reach maturity. Made from a blend of various vineyards. *89 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

2001 Vietti Barolo Rocche—Dark saturated ruby. More intense and richer, the Rocche offers classic notes of menthol, minerals and licorice on the vinous nose. There is nice depth on the palate, which shows ripe dark red fruits and more extract, finishing with excellent length and freshness. A real joy to drink. Aged mostly in casks . *92 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

2001 Vietti Barolo Brunate—Rich saturated ruby. The nose shows toasted oak, spices, and minerals. Very soft and round, with flavors of rich dark stewed fruit, licorice, and a very long, exquisite finish. I find the oak a bit overwhelming, and the wine needs some time to come together, but it is delicious nonetheless. *90+ points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

2001 Vietti Barolo Lazzarito—Rich dark ruby. Penetrating nose of toasted oak, cherries in liqueur, menthol, minerals and tar. A beautifully conceived wine that combines dark backward Serralunga fruit and a very modern approach into a convincing whole,

with excellent length and persistence on the palate. There is noticeably more extract in the fruit here to support the oak. *92 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

In great vintages, Vietti produces a riserva from its holdings in Villero, one of the great vineyards in the area. Villero lies just 150 meters from Rocche and has south-west exposure. The soils feature more clay than at Rocche and the wines are more structured, higher in alcohol, and require more time to reach maturity. Cordero says “our Villero doesn’t express its full potential when young.” If that is true, my score will likely prove to be conservative....

2001 Vietti Barolo Riserva Villero—Rich saturated ruby. An exceptional wine that offers a huge nose of spices, menthol, eucalyptus, coffee beans, wet earth, and ripe fruit. The wine remains backward, but still shows plenty of dark fruit, incredible sustain on the seamless palate, and a gorgeous finish. Very compelling and satisfying. To be released in 2008. *95 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*



Vietti's 2001 Barolos

Exploring Brunate

Exploring Brunate is the first in a series of articles in which I will take an in-depth look at the historically famous vineyards in the Barolo and Barbaresco production zones. I chose Brunate because it is a vineyard that is owned by many producers, so it is possible to taste several interpretations of this site. I was curious to learn if the wines would share any common traits or if the producers’ styles and/or vintage might overwhelm the specific qualities of the vineyard. There are three tastings in this section: a

horizontal tasting of the 2000 vintage Brunate Barolos, Elio Altare’s Barolo Brunate vintages 1999-2001 and Marcarini’s Barolo Brunate vintages 1996-2001. Note that some wines appear in more than one tasting in this section and in Issue 2 overall. I have included notes of each wine as I wrote them for each specific tasting. Some of the notes and scores for the same wine will vary because the context of the tastings was different.

By all accounts, Brunate is one of the most storied vineyards in Piedmont. As far back as 500 years ago, Brunate had been identified as producing wines of special character. An old map from the 1477 La Morra land register shows the town's vineyards as they were known at the time, including Brinata (Brunate), Rocha (Rocche dell'Annunziata), Gateria (Gattera), and well as other well-known crus. By comparison, we have to wait until 1505 to see La Serra and 1524 to see Cerequio officially recognized. Brunate is located on the border between the towns of Barolo and La Morra, although most of the vineyard is considered to belong to La Morra. Brunate features a mostly southern exposure although some portions face southeast. The vineyard measures

about 25 hectares and altitude ranges from 353 meters to 239 meters.

Manuel Marchetti of Marcarini says the wines of Brunate are usually "austere, yet ethereal, notes of spices, mint, licorice, and balsamic are all very typical." In fact, many of the wines do show those flavors. Davide Asselle of Roberto Voerzio says "Brunate is a bit like people from here. We can be tough and cold at first, but then we warm up over time." Within the context of La Morra Barolos, the Brunate wines may seem tough initially, but they possess sweet tannins that make the wines relatively accessible with age.

The 2000 Brunate Barolos

As I have noted previously, the 2000 vintage offers wines that are amazingly open at this stage in their youths and most of these Brunate Barolos can be enjoyed today, although some wines may require more oxygenation. The wines were tasted blind and are listed in the order tasted.

2000 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—Medium ruby. Notes of menthol, minerals, chocolate, and wet earth on the nose. This traditionally styled wine features flavors of very ripe red fruits, and plenty of chewy tannins. Comes across as a bit compressed today, but should become more expansive with bottle age. *90 points/drink after 2010, 12/04*

2000 Saglietti Barolo Brunate—Rich dark ruby. Deep, penetrating nose of spices, cherries in liqueur and toasted oak. Not terribly expressive on the palate at this stage, showing some red fruits and finishing with a note of menthol that gives this wine good balance, although the oak is a bit much right now. The first wine I've tasted from this producer. *88 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

2000 Roberto Voerzio Barolo Brunate—Deep dark ruby. Displays an intriguing nose redolent of toasted oak, roasted coffee beans, licorice, and tar which are complemented by flavors of very ripe yet backward fruit and minerals with a very soft and plush mouthfeel. Very good overall balance. *90 points drink after 2007, 12/04*

2000 Enzo Boglietti Barolo Brunate—Very dark ruby. Huge nose of spices, minerals, menthol, and

much toasted oak. The palate is dense and rich with plenty of sweet ripe, cherry and plum flavors finishing with notable power and sustain, although the oak is a bit much. *89 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

2000 Vietti Barolo Brunate—Burnished ruby. The nose is very fresh and redolent of flowers, toasted oak, crushed raspberries, and eucalyptus. There is good persistence and length here with plenty of sweet ripe fruit and a supple, caressing structure. This took some time to open up. *91 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

2000 Ceretto Barolo Brunate—Beautiful nose of crushed raspberries, menthol, cocoa, anise, tar and toasted oak aromas. This well-balanced medium-bodied Barolo shows plenty of very ripe red fruit with good concentration and length. A very elegant and stylish modern Barolo. *90 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

2000 Elio Altare Barolo Brunate—Absolutely gorgeous. Complex nose of spices and menthol. There is notable concentration on the palate, which shows generous amounts of dark red fruit. This is very round and long, and comes across as very classic. *94 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

2000 Marengo Barolo Brunate—Brooding at first, then turning soft and delicate, with excellent concentration and structure, with sensations of spices, minerals, eucalyptus and rich red fruit. A wine of

much harmony, this is a delicate and understated Barolo. *92 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

2000 Michele Chiarlo Barolo Brunate—No Rating. Unfortunately my bottle was corked.

To return the Current Releases, click on the appropriate producer: Altare, Ceretto, Marcarini, Vietti.



The 2000 Brunate Barolos

Elio Altare: *Barolo Brunate 1999-2001*

Elio Altare realized a long-standing dream when he began to produce a Barolo from this storied vineyard. This mini-vertical of Altare's Barolo Brunate was very insightful in gaining a better sense of the characteristics of the 1999-2001 vintages. While all the wines are outstanding, the 1999 is truly special. Of his 1999, Altare says it is "probably the best I have made so far."

2001 Elio Altare Barolo Brunate—Saturated dark ruby. Complex and multi-dimensional nose of licorice, tar, eucalyptus, cocoa, and wet earth. Very soft and supple, with lots of ripe dark red and black fruit, this seamless and well-integrated Barolo is extremely long. This shut down quickly in the glass and my score may prove to be conservative. An absolute beauty. *94 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

2000 Elio Altare Barolo Brunate—Translucent dark ruby. Sweet, aromatic nose of spices, anise, and

eucalyptus. The palate shows generous amounts of ripe, somewhat evolved red fruits and a soft mouthfeel. This is a beautiful wine of great harmony and balance. *93 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1999 Elio Altare Barolo Brunate—Lively dark ruby. Huge, masculine nose of flowers, menthol, eucalyptus, spices, licorice and minerals. Not as ripe as the 2000 but showing superb length on the palate and more clearly defined and delineated flavors of dark rich red fruits, with a balsamic note on the finish. An ethereal, austere and classic Barolo with lots of nuance. Easily the most complex and interesting of the three wines. Highly recommended. *96 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

To return the Altare profile in Current Releases, click here.

Marcarini: *Barolo Brunate 1996-2001*

Marcarini's Barolo Brunate is one the most representative wines in the region year in year out. I recently had a chance to taste the six most recent vintages, which was a great learning experience. The wines are all very young and will require patience. It would be great to do this tasting again in ten years, and see how the wines have developed. While all the wines are excellent, the 1999 and the 2001 are truly special and the 1998 is not too far behind...

In terms of his wines Marchetti says "I tend to look at 1996, 1999, and 2001 as being similar in style. The 1996 has the hardest tannins and is still very young. The 1999 is more complex and potent, and the 2001, while also potent, is easily the most elegant of the three. I expect the 1996, 1999, and 2001 to be the most long-lived of the wines. The 1998 and 2000 are similar, they are both fatter, more feminine and easier to drink right now, they will easily last 15 or more years. The 1997 I place in a category by itself because of the very ripe, high-alcohol style wine we made in that vintage. 1997 is also drinking well right now, but probably won't last as long as my other wines."

2001 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—A classic. Very subdued on the nose although a distinct note of cocoa slowly emerges. Excellent, dense palate of rich dark red fruits, with notes of menthol and minerals closing with a gorgeous fresh finish and lots of youthful tannins. Satisfying and delicious, this is what traditional Barolo is all about. *93 points/drink after 2001, 12/04*

2000 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—Very intense aromas of minerals, tar, licorice and rich mature fruit. Excellent length and structure. Shows a lot of tannins for a 2000 and will need several years of

bottle age to show well. *90 points/drink after 2010, 12/04*

1999 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—The very expressive, classic nose offers notes of flowers, spices, and minerals. This is a wine of notable intensity and structure with great length and freshness on the finish. Everything is in proportion here. This 1999 is terrific, gradually opening to show layers and layers of flavor as only the best wines can. *93 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

1998 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—Huge evolved nose of wet earth and tar, opening to show notes of leather, and eucalyptus. This is powerful, dense wine with flavors of dark fruit and licorice and tremendous length, finishing with chewy tannins. A very beautiful and complete wine. *92 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

1997 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—A very pretty wine, with delicate aromas of spices, flowers and very ripe fruit. Comes across as simple compared to the other wines. Remains very backward and austere for the vintage. *89 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1996 Marcarini Barolo Brunate—The nose recalls Pinot Noir, with sensations of sweet ripe fruit and wet earth on the complex nose. A bit simpler than the 2001, with a soft and round palate and flavors of rich, ripe red fruit. Good length and follow through, although with a shorter finish and less persistence than some of the other wines in this tasting. Still appears to be very young. *89 points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

To return the Marcarini profile in Current Releases, [click here](#).

Cavallotto: *The Riserva Barolos*

During a recent visit to the estate, brothers Alfio and Giuseppe Cavallotto surprised me with not one, but two vertical tastings of their Barolo Riservas, Vignolo and Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe. This was a great opportunity to taste both wines side by side and compare vineyard and vintage characteristics. The Vignolo is typically the more feminine of the two wines. Explains Alfio Cavallotto “The soils at Vignolo are deep, and they retain water very well. This means that in hot vintages such as 1997 and 2000, the vines don’t go into stress and the wines remain quite fresh” I find the Vignolo often has a very aromatic profile and flavors of small red fruits such as raspberries, although that varies from vintage to vintage.” San Giuseppe is decidedly the more masculine and muscular wine. “At San Giuseppe we have soils that begin to resemble those of Serralunga. The wines are usually more complex, structured and higher in alcohol, with flavors of spices and dark fruit,” says Cavallotto.

Both wines are made in an identical fashion. Fermentation takes place in rotary fermenters and maceration lasts about 25 days. The wines are aged in large Slavonian oak barrels of various sizes for four to five years and in the bottle for an additional year. The Cavallotto Barolos tend to be rather dense and chewy, as would be expected from traditionally made wines, and will benefit from a few hours in a decanter prior to serving. All wines were tasted blind.

1999 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Vignolo—Rich dark ruby. A classic Barolo, with aromas of wet earth, spices and oak which are followed by flavors of dense dark rich fruit. Finishes very long. Still quite youthful and exuberant, this wine will almost surely improve with age. *90 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

1998 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Vignolo—Medium ruby color. The nose is very floral, with notes of spices, minerals, cocoa, and anise. Relatively soft and generous with plenty of supple red fruit and crushed raspberry flavors with a long and delicate finish. A gorgeous combination of beautiful round fruit and structure. *92 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

1997 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Vignolo—Saturated ruby. Delicate and perfumed nose of spices, cocoa, cherries in liqueur and menthol, with flavors of sweet, concentrated yet well-focused fruit, finishing with good acidity. A nicely balanced wine to enjoy now and a superb effort for the vintage. *91 points/drink now-, 12/04*

1996 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Vignolo—Rich dark ruby. The nose is slightly evolved in character and shows notes of spices, anise and wet earth. The palate is well endowed with plenty of sweet dark fruit flavors and generous thrust. This is a wine of beautiful structure. *90 points/drink after 2006, 12/04*

1999 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe—Medium ruby. Highly aromatic nose, showing spices, minerals and very ripe fruit, with flavors of dark stewed fruits, this is a wine of excellent length with plenty of sustain on the palate. Still very much in its youth. *91+ points/drink after 2011, 12/04*

1998 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe—Rich dark ruby. Huge, penetrating, and complex nose redolent of wet earth, spices, menthol and tar. The palate is massive and packed with rich dark stewed fruit and mineral flavors, finishing with superb length. This is a Barolo of great proportion that is delicate and masculine at the same time. With some air, this is drinking well right now, although additional bottle age will only add complexity. *92 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

1997 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe—Rich ruby. Shows notes of anise, menthol, and tar on the nose which leads to a lush yet balanced palate of dense ripe dark fruit and spices. Absolutely gorgeous—combines the richness of the vintage with classic structure, and good freshness on the finish. Very complete for the vintage and hard to resist now. *92 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1996 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe—Rich saturated ruby. Huge brooding nose of tar, smoke, leather, licorice and wet earth. Dense and austere, this wine is packed with backward sensations of dark fruits on a very sustained palate, finishing with superb freshness. A

real beauty. Note: A second bottle seemed to be at an awkward “in between” stage as the wine is settling into maturity, so I would wait a few years before opening. *91 points/drink after 2008, 12/04*

These 1989 and 1990 Barolos are a reminder of why we go to the trouble of finding and aging the area’s best wines....

1990 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe—Burnished dark ruby. This is classic Barolo at its best, showing telltale notes of roses, mint, tar and licorice on the nose. Comes across as incredibly youthful and finishes with

tremendous freshness for the vintage, I thought this was the 1989. *93 points/drink now-, 12/04*

1989 Cavallotto Barolo Riserva Bricco Boschis Vigna San Giuseppe—More evolved on the nose than the 1990, yet still fresh, with notes of flowers, violets, licorice, tar and cocoa. Richer and fatter on the palate than the 1990, with massive structure and length on the palate. Intensely enjoyable. *93 points/drink now-, 12/04*

To return the Cavallotto profile in Current Releases, [click here](#).

Produttori del Barbaresco: *The 1999 Riservas*

A recent tasting provided a great opportunity to taste the nine single vineyard Riservas of this historic estate side-by-side. As I reported in Issue 1, the Produttori del Barbaresco cooperative has been focused on making single vineyard Barbarescos from top sites for several decades. Winemaking remains very much traditional and my sense is that the wines are increasingly becoming more consistent with each vintage.

Managing Director Aldo Vacca is very high on the wines, saying “I think 1999 is an extraordinary vintage very much in the classic style. I would have to go back to 1971 to find a vintage that combines such ripe fruit, structure, and aging potential.” Speaking of more recent vintages Vacca says “1999 combines the structure of 1989 with the ripeness of 1990.” The vintage featured cool weather, which allowed the grapes to mature gradually. Explains Vacca, “When the grapes ripen in the fall the differences between the various vineyards are very evident, whereas in warmer vintages such as 2000, the differences are somewhat less obvious.”

Speaking of drinking windows Vacca says “of the 1999s our most accessible wines today are Pora and Rio Sordo due to the more fertile soils in those vineyards. Montestefano is also drinking very well, as the wine is somewhat uncharacteristic in that it has so much fruit that the tannins are covered.” I also found the Moccagatta to be fairly open, and Vacca believes that wine also has enough structure to age well. Vacca describes Rabajà and Ovello as the “freshest, and most in need of time” and Montefico

as the most structured. The most forward of these wines can be enjoyed now with some decanting, but most of these wines will start to become expressive at about age ten and with good storage can last 20 years or more.

Picking favorites out of this group is virtually impossible as the wines are all excellent. My ratings reflect a personal preference for wines of structure and aging potential, but readers should not hesitate in trying any of these very fine examples of classic Barbaresco. Wines are listed in the order tasted, which was random, and the wines were tasted blind.

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Montestefano—Deep dark ruby. Displays penetrating aromas of tar, beef broth on the somewhat evolved, balsamic nose, this masculine Barbaresco shows a soft round palate of dense, backward dark fruit flavors, although the finish is a bit short. Montestefano is often referred to as the most “Barolo-like” of the Barbarescos, but in 1999 this is a very accessible wine. Although this is pretty, my overall impression is of a relatively simple wine. *89 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Montefico—Dense dark ruby. A noticeable step up from the Montestefano, the Montefico delivers a multi-dimensional nose of spices, tar, eucalyptus, and cocoa and a palate packed with dense fruit. A superbly structured wine that finishes with great length and freshness. The most complete of the nine wines. *92 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Rabajà—Dark ruby. Fairly unexpressive in the aromatics at first, then opening to reveal menthol, minerals and a balsamic note. Very austere right now, with flavors of ripe red fruits and plenty of mouth-puckering tannins, this wine will deliver tremendous drinking pleasure to those who are patient enough to wait for it to come around. *90+ points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Asili—Deep dark ruby. Expressive nose of spices, crushed raspberries, cocoa, and tar with massive flavors of rich dense fruit and a gorgeous, long finish. A very complete and delicious wine. *91 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Moccagatta—Deep dark burnished ruby. Showing an evolved nose of wet earth, tar, prunes, and spices with very sweet, almost over-ripe fruit on the palate. The finish is a bit short, and the wine seems to lack the kind of overall balance the best of these Riservas have. *88 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Ovello—Dark ruby. Huge nose of spices, tar and sweet fruit. This is a very structured wine with very backward flavors of dark fruits and

gorgeous length. Lots of complexity and elegance here. *91 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Pora—Deep, rich ruby color. Powerful, massive and backward with aromas of menthol and anise followed by flavors of ripe, sweet somewhat evolved fruit. Comes across as simple and straightforward. *89 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Pajè—Dark ruby. Expressive nose of wet earth, spices, and prunes. Plenty of dark dense fruit flavors and balsamic note on the excellent long finish. Shows terrific balance. Austere but beautiful. *90 points/drink after 2009, 12/04*

1999 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco Riserva Rio Sordo—This pretty wine presents aromas of spices, flowers, minerals and menthol. Soft and delicate, with flavors of sweet red fruits, good structure, and a nuanced, lingering finish. A classic Rio Sordo wine. *90 points/drink after 2007, 12/04*



The 1999 Riservas from Produttori del Barbaresco

Notes from a Birthday Lunch

The shocking realization that another year has come and gone is tempered by the company a few close friends. As usual, we were in the hills of Emilia Romagna enjoying a feast of local grilled meats, along with the following terrific wines....

1997 Produttori del Barbaresco Riserva Ovello (from magnum)—Color is medium ruby with some bricking. The nose is aromatic, with scents of dried flowers and spices. The wine is medium-bodied, and the fruit supple and round although showing sign of over-ripeness. Advanced color and flavors of tobacco, cedar, and balsam suggest the wine has entered its maturity. Despite its shortcomings, this wine performed admirably well, given the level of the wines that followed. I would choose to drink my remaining bottles in the next few years. *89 points, 09/04*

1990 Aldo Conterno Barolo Riserva Granbussia (from magnum)—This superbly well balanced Barolo is like velvet on the palate. The fruit is still showing some freshness is complemented by flavors of balsam, spice, licorice, and cocoa. The wine's sweet tannins and very long finish render it ready to drink now. *92 points/drink now-, 09/04*

1990 Bruno Giacosa Barolo Riserva Falletto—This Giacosa takes things to another level. The color is a

From the Dinner Table....

The wines featured in this segment were tasted in casual occasions with friends. These wines were not tasted blind, nor were they tasted in peer-group settings, so my comments should not be interpreted as formal tasting notes, rather as general impressions.

1998 Alessandria Barolo San Giovanni—Intense dark ruby. A modern-styled wine showing lots of toasted oak aromas, with notes of cherries in liqueur and menthol. Finishes a bit short and without much overall complexity. The tannins are pretty much resolved, this is a wine to drink now. *88 points/drink now-, 02/05*

1994 Giacomo Conterno Barolo Cascina Francia—Medium burnished ruby. Nose shows aromas of spices, eucalyptus, balsamic and cocoa. A

dark toned ruby, burnished, yet translucent, the nose redolent of spices and tar. The wine explodes onto the palate with a mass of rich, decadent, concentrated backward fruit, licorice, balsam, and a finish that seems to never end. This is unforgettable Barolo displaying an uncommon balance of elegance and power. Still youthful, the 1990 Giacosa Barolo Riserva Falletto has plenty of life ahead, although it is hard to resist now. A real privilege to drink, this profound Barolo is as good as it gets. *97 points/drink now-, 09/04*

1998 Roberto Voerzio Barolo Sarmassa (from magnum)—I was a bit surprised our host opened this bottle, as Voerzio's Barolos usually take time to show their best. I feared the wine would be totally shut down, but fortunately I was wrong. Color here is a lively ruby red. The wine shows aromas of toasted oak, vanilla, and flowers, which are followed on the palate by generous amounts of concentrated fruit and flavors of cherries in liqueur. There is a lot of harmony here, as well as an exquisite balance of freshness and rich fruit. Although the wine is clearly young and at the beginning of its evolution, it is immensely enjoyable today. *93 points/drink after 2008, 09/04*

delicate medium-bodied wine with notes of mature fruit but enough freshness and tannins to suggest it will keep for a few more years. Very pretty and a good choice for near-term drinking. *90 points/drink now-2008, 02/05*

To return the Conterno profile in New Releases click [here](#).

2000 Clerico Barolo Ciabot Mentin Ginestra—Dark saturated ruby. Huge nose of toasted oak, licorice and tar, this masculine, over-the-top Barolo is packed with lots of dense ripe fruit and a lot of oak. Good long finish, but this can't compare to the superb 1999. *90 points/drink now-, 02/05*

1999 Clerico Barolo Ciabot Mentin Ginestra—Dark saturated ruby. Like walking into a flower shop. A beautiful wine showing much freshness on the nose, and notes of minerals and menthol, with superb structure and length, with layers of dark fruit flavors that open up as the wine sits in the glass. A terrific effort. *94 points/drink after 2007, 02/05*

1999 Conterno-Fantino Barolo Sori Ginestra—Medium ruby. A very elegant, mid-weight Barolo that displays aromas of toasted oak and minerals, with flavors of cherries in liqueur, menthol, and finishing with good overall length. *92 points/drink after 2007, 02/05*

1998 Gaja Langhe Sperss—Dark ruby. Fantastic, promising nose of tar, licorice, minerals, and toasted oak. This mid-weight wine is fairly soft, but is also totally shut down and inexpressive on the palate today and seems to be at an awkward stage in its development. *90+? points/drink after 2008, 03/05*

1998 Giacosa Barolo Le Rocche del Falletto—Lively ruby. A stunning wine, with gorgeous sensations of freshly cut roses, licorice and tar that soar out of the glass. The palate shows great concentration, with much sweet rich fruit, tremendous length, and a fresh finish that makes this wine very complete and intensely satisfying. This should provide exceptional drinking for 20+ years. Highly recommended. *95 points/drink after 2008, 03/05*

1997 Giacosa Barolo Le Rocche del Falletto—Burnished ruby that shows the signs of the hot vintage. Pretty aromas of dried flowers, and spices

with soft evolved flavors that recall dried fruits. This has good overall length and expressiveness. Although the 1997 can't match the stylishness, elegance and class of the 1998, it does offer very fine drinking right now. The best of the three bottles I've had so far. *92 points/drink now-, 03/05*

To return the Giacosa profile in New Releases, click [here](#).

Readers may recall that I was unable to include notes on these 2000 Rizzi Barbarescos in Issue 1...

2000 Rizzi Barbaresco—Light-medium ruby. Floral and aromatic on the nose, this medium bodied Barbaresco shows notes of raspberry and strawberry flavors, with a note of anise on the finish. Fairly simple and intended for short-term consumption. *86 points/drink now-2008, 12/04*

2000 Rizzi Barbaresco Boito—Medium ruby. A very classically styled wine, displaying notes of very ripe dark red fruits, minerals, with good length and sustain on the palate. *88 points/drink after 2006, 12/04*

2000 Scavino Barolo Cannubi—Burnished ruby. Displays the tell-tale perfumed nose of Cannubi, with flavors of very ripe fruit and gorgeous sustain on the palate. This took about eight hours to really strut its stuff although it seems to show the signs of the hot vintage more than the other 2000 Scavinis. *92 points/drink now-, 03/05*

To return the Scavino profile in New Releases, click [here](#)

Bartolo Mascarello 1926-2005

With the passing of Bartolo Mascarello on March 12, 2005, the wine world lost one of its most outspoken and eloquent interpreters.

Mascarello was an ardent believer in traditionally made Barolo and one of its staunchest advocates. He eschewed everything modern, from selected yeasts to barriques to single-vineyard wines. Mascarello was also the first producer I met in Piedmont. I arrived on a Saturday afternoon with no appointment. I was expecting to find a winery, instead I was welcomed into the Mascarello home, where Bartolo received me in his office. We spent several leisurely hours talking about subjects ranging from wine to politics.

Even though health problems prevented him from working in his beloved vineyards, Bartolo had found

a new passion: designing the artistic labels used for a small portion of the Barolo production, such as the famous “No Barriques, No Berlusconi” label of a few years back. By the end of the afternoon I was hooked and my journey to discover Barolo was under way.

Every time I saw him after that first meeting, he was always in high spirits. With his huge smile, Bartolo could light up a room, and I usually found him charming the many guests who came from all over the world to meet him. When Bartolo and his daughter Maria Theresa sold bottles of their wines they did so wistfully, as they weren’t just selling wine, but rather a small piece of their cherished history.

Bartolo Mascarello will be deeply missed.

Coming Soon in Issue 3...

Barolo 2001, New Releases, part 2
Discovering the Terroirs of Barolo
and much more....