

Piedmont Estates

This report combines my notes from multiple tastings in late 2013 and early 2014. I have as well included my reviews of Piedmont wines from the 2014 Tre Bicchieri presented in a separate report of that event on my site. Over recent years, I have become a committed devotee of the sublime wines of Barbaresco and Barolo. These Nebbiolo-based reds remain highly distinctive in a world of imitation and increasingly blurred identities. Bordeaux, quite commonly, and Burgundy, on occasion, are replicated in other places far beyond their homelands, sometimes with astonishing success. The same cannot be said of the finest Piedmont reds. Take away the terroir of the Langhe and a very few other, highly restricted locales (such as Gattinara and Boca), and attempts to mimic a great Italian Nebbiolo fall well short of the originals. Why do these Piedmont reds merit my unabashed enthusiasm? In short, because of their sensational, multidimensional aromatics coupled with incisive, arresting palates and the natural capacity to age for many years. They are both sensual and intellectual in nature, with nearly infinite nuance and variation. Should I also mention that current pricing of standard Barolo and Barbaresco is *ridiculously cheap*? You can find many excellent selections in the U.S. from \$30 to \$50 a bottle, and it's not necessary to keep the wines for decades for them to be approachable as once may have been true. Even the prices of cru and riserva bottlings are as a group *far below their intrinsic value* compared to Bordeaux, Burgundy and many New World icons. Barbera d'Asti and d'Alba, by the way, have quietly become simply delicious drinking over the recent past, and noteworthy values.

BARBERA & NEBBIOLO – a few wines of note

Corino Renato Barbera d'Alba 2011****

Moderately dense very dark red with thin purple rim. Pure, soft nose, wonderfully clean and healthy, offering subtle dark red fruits and an inky accent. Soft, caressing palate from the outset yet also fresh, finishing with a fine point of acidity. Fantastic value around \$15 to \$17 retail.

Revello Barbera d'Alba 2011 ****

Nearly dense very dark red with purple. The inviting, clean aroma is marked by attractive ripe dark fruits and berries. In the mouth, the Revello Barbera delivers a plush feel, an understated expression, and a fine spinal column. Another excellent value for well under \$20.

Marengo Barbera d'Alba « Pugnane » 2010 *(*)**

Moderately dense dark red purple. Fresh and restrained to the nose, hiding very good concentration, dark and black fruit, spice. The palate as well in held back, fresh and evidently youthful. Needs time to show.

Azelia Langhe Nebbiolo 2011 *(*)**

Pale dark red with purple rim. Fresh and clean aroma with muted small red fruits and berries. The wine exhibits an attractively textured entry and is finely tuned, with a fresh, dry ending. This will be better in 6 months (by mid-2014).

Revello Langhe Nebbiolo 2010 *(*)**

Pale dark red with purple rim. Delicate, slightly piquant aroma revealing small red fruits and a note of spice. This Nebbiolo possesses a creamy mouth feel and an uncharacteristic softness. Clean, understated finale.

BARBARESCO

Rocca Barbaresco « duemiladieci » 2010 *(*)**

Pale dark brick. Beautifully expressive, intense aromatics boasting flowery notes and dried leaf. The wine is remarkably fine and delicately inflected. Supremely elegant with a transparent feel.

Rocca Barbaresco « Bric Ronchi » 2010 ** (+)**

Pale dark red with brick edge. In the mouth, this impressive Barbaresco shows a great deal of reserve and concentration. There is nascent complexity: hints of red fruit, spice and vanilla. The taste exhibits stunning harmony and finesse, leaving a sensation of delicacy despite its innate concentration. Very fine.

Moccagatta Barbaresco 2010 *(+)**

Pale very dark red with brick cast. The aroma is characterized by toasted wood and vanilla masking red fruits and a suggestion of raisined fruit. There is very good intensity. The taste is dominated by tertiary, toasted overtones and is attractively supple with a soft ending.

Moccagatta Barbaresco « Bric Balin » 2010 *(*)**

Pale very dark brick red. Youthful, understated nose of ripe red fruit, dried fruits and well-married yet visible oak. Bric Balin impresses with its creamy, almost fleshy feel and is round and soft overall. Very accessible if not forward for a top Barbaresco at this stage.

Fiorenzo Nada Barbaresco « Rombone » 2009 (Piedmont) **(+)**

Pale dark brick. Arresting aromatics, highly focused, high-toned and inflected. There are toasty notes, roses and a creamy overlay. In the mouth, this Barbaresco shows beautiful nuance and dimension, gaining in intensity and finishing with notable nerve and tension. A fine example. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Ca' del Baio Barbaresco « Asili » 2010 (Piedmont) **(*)**

Very pale dark brick. Inviting fragrance of dried red cherry and red plum with a creamy overtone. The wine delivers terrific focus on the palate and is long and linear. There are exciting aromatic highlights as well as delicacy. Dry ending with defining tension. Archetypal Barbaresco. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Cantina del Pino

Barbaresco 2010 *(*+)**

Very pale red brick. Youthful restraint along with warm intensity in the aroma along with varied small red fruits. Exceptional precision and wonderful tension on the palate. Not at all viscous or fleshy yet delivers amazing intensity. Very young, excellent aging potential.

Barbaresco « Albesani » 2008 **(*)**

Pale red brick. High class nose combining red fruits and berries, very finely nuanced, together with a creamy overtone. Superbly composed, with fantastic tension, sinew and intensity, finishing with a multifaceted aromatic flourish that promises even more with time. This really sings!

Barbaresco « Ovello » 2008 **(*)**

Pale dark brick red. The nose commands attention: penetrating and focused, projecting dark red fruit and balsamic notes. In the mouth, the 2008 Ovello is immediately warm and enveloping without ever becoming heavy or dense. There is an impression of ripe, sweet red fruit with myriad accents of smoke, herbs, dried berries and fruits in the finale. Simply magnificent.

Sottimano

Sottimano Barbaresco « Cotta » 2010 *(*)**

Pale dark red with brick edge. The nose is quite full for Barbaresco, displaying a warm lift and dominant tertiary and balsamic notes. The taste is youthfully restrained with very subtle expression. There is a polished feel and sense of ripeness. Particularly well-balanced and round, with an undeveloped finish.

Sottimano Barbaresco « Fausoni » 2010 **(+)**

Pale dark red with youthful purple rim. The aroma of Fausoni is beautiful, pure and classy, with enticing accents of ripe red fruits. Similarly, the palate reveals maturity and is rather full and round. A highly seductive expression with impressive early harmony. Still in an early stage of life, this excellent wine offers plenty of potential.

Sottimano Barbaresco « Pajore » 2010 **(*)**

Pale dark red brick. Superb nose: profound, notably pure, with wonderfully mature red fruit and a creamy richness. In the mouth, Pajore displays harmony and ideal integration. Ripe, fleshy. Long aftertaste, though still young, showing red fruit inflections and a supple framework of embedded acidity and very fine tannins. The finale boasts an exciting display of aromatic highlights and signals the outstanding quality of this Barbaresco.

BAROLO

Corino Giovanni Barolo 2009 *(*)**

Moderately dense very dark red with brick rim. Inviting aroma mingling red fruits and licorice. Considerable reserve and concentration at its core. The palate seems more backward, with noteworthy intensity and an controlled red fruit. Textured ending with promising early length.

Silvio Grasso Barolo 2009 *(*)**

Pale very dark red. Lifted aromatics, mature red fruit and dried flowers. Lovely attack, texture and persistence. Undercurrent of ripe fruit and licorice. Displays surprising strength at the very end. At between \$30 and \$40 retail, Barolo lovers should be rushing to snap up this delicious wine which can be enjoyed early and will develop over the mid-term.

Luigi Pira Barolo « Serralunga » 2009 *(*)**

Pale very dark red brick. The nose is largely muted, with nuances of red fruit and spice. In the mouth, this Barolo is attractively creamy yet non-expressive at this point. There is a supple impression and a long line carried by elevated acidity. Very young and in need of keeping. Retailing at \$30 to \$40 a bottle, this age-worthy Barolo overdelivers.

Azelia Barolo 2009 *(+)**

Pale dark red with brick cast. The nose shows subtlety and is delicately inflected, suggesting dried red fruits and wood accents. The palate is marked by understated flavors and is poised and elegant. The finish is harmonious albeit undeveloped.

Revello Barolo 2009 *(*)**

Pale red brick. Restrained aroma, delicately inflected, hinting at small red fruits and a spice highlight. The Revello Barolo is very stylish and poised on the palate, with lovely early complexity: spice, toasted notes, dried flowers. Beautifully calibrated. A stellar Barolo normale and stupendous value currently retailing for \$40 or less.

Seghesio Barolo 2009 **(+)**

Pale dark brick red. Soft nose, gently creamy with a touch of vanilla and hints of spice. In the mouth, the wine possesses an enticing sensual feel with subtle expression and a sweet undertone. Supple and polished though the aftertaste. A flattering young Barolo offering considerable early charm showing off the ripe 2009 vintage. An amazing value selling for \$35 or even less.

Marengo Barolo 2008 **(+)**

Pale brick with red highlights. Gently warm, inviting aroma with accents of vanilla, small red fruits, toast and dried spice. The taste exhibits subtlety and refinement along with delicate notes of small red fruits and

spice. Shows signs of resolving, but there is no hurry to drink this excellent 2008 Barolo. A solid buy at under \$50 retail.

Fratelli Alessandria

Barolo 2009 *(*)**

Very pale dark red with brick edge. High-toned aromatics offering mature dark fruits and tertiary accents. The taste is understated and undeveloped, with hidden warmth and layering. There is a fine acid spine and ripe tannins.

Barolo « San Lorenzo » 2009 *(*)**

Very pale dark red with brick. Forthcoming nose, complex mix of dark fruit, smoke. Lovely sensuality offset by noteworthy tension. Youthful and quite reserved through the finish.

Barolo « Gramolere » 2009 **(+)**

Very pale dark brick. Exciting and inviting aroma : warm, sweet red fruits and flowers. Highly expressive aromatics on the palate as well as a weightless impression. Beautiful now, yet conveys a sense of tremendous potential as well. Superb Barolo.

Barolo « Monvigliero » 2009 **(*)**

Very pale brick. Gorgeous nose dominated by youthful flowery highlights and small red fruits. In the mouth, this Barolo is multidimensional and sensationally perfumed. There is delicious early appeal reflecting the warm 2009 vintage. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Luigi Baudana di GD Vajra

Barolo « Serralunga d'Alba » 2009 **(+)**

Pale dark red with clear purple rim. Wonderfully expressive aroma of dark fruit and licorice with excellent concentration. Very much in reserve on the palate with great potential, showing depth, focus, concentration and sheer class. Firm, tense frame. Exciting example.

Barolo « Cerretta » 2009 **(+)**

Pale dark red with purple rim. Impressively pure nose of ideally mature dark fruit with a creamy background. Highly polished feel in the mouth. Has weight, flesh and maturity and finishes with a ripe, integrated structure. A particularly sensual Barolo providing immediate pleasure.

Barolo « Baudana » 2009 **(*)**

Pale dark red with purple rim. The magnificent aroma boasts ideally ripe, scented small red fruits enhanced by balsamic notes. The taste is exemplary, both fresh and sensual. While the wine is still young, the finish is exceptionally long and complex. A beautiful, complete Barolo. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Barolo « Baudana » 2005 **(*)**

Pale red brick. Seductive nose, just beginning to develop, displaying gorgeous mature dark fruit, licorice and a creamy quality. This 2005 is so very subtle as well as polished on the palate, and the wine has developed a long line. Beautiful dark fruit lingers in the aftertaste. Immensely pleasurable.

Silvano Bolmida

Barolo « Vigne dei Fantini » 2009 **(+)**

Pale dark brick. Highly expressive aroma, a melange of dark red fruits and berries with warm lift. The palate is refined, perfumed and supple and possesses exquisite balance. Exceptionally long, multifaceted finish expressing ripe fruit aromatics. A beautiful Barolo which can be drunk young.

Barolo « Bussia » 2009 **(*)**

Pale dark red with brick rim. Superb, multidimensional aroma combining sweet red fruit and mentholated highlights. In the mouth, this Bussia is at first restrained and shows youthful reserve, yet is also sensual and mouth-coating. Long, intricate, already complex finish marked by red fruits and roasted accents.

Barolo « Bussia » 2008 **(*)**

Pale dark red with brick cast. Stunning, high class nose: dark fruits, ink and roses. The taste as well is particularly lovely and reveals signs of wood maturation and tension. There is notable complexity and length even though this 2008 is still young, with considerable development potential.

Domenico Clerico

Dolcetto Langhe « Visadi » 2012 ****

Pale dark red with purple tint. Youthfully fresh and dominated by crushed dark fruit and a suggestion of pepper. The palate boasts uncommon poise for Dolcetto as well as intricacy and length, ending with an inflected finish and pronounced acid spine.

Barolo « Pajana » 2009 **(+)**

Pale dark red brick, hint of browning. Gorgeous, highly expressive aromatics with melange of red fruit, wood, and vanilla, complicated by menthol and a roasted aspect. The palate initially displays balsamic overtones, then reveals surprising precision with a delineated, chiseled ending. Persistent mentholated notes. A very high-quality example with real personality.

Barolo « Pajana » 2008 *(*)**

Pale dark brick red. The nose displays a creamy, vanilla-toned overlay along with roasted and woody notes. There is terrific focus and precision along with impressive intensity. Finely tuned with excellent definition and pointed acidity in the conclusion.

Barolo « Ciabot Mentin Ginestra » 2009 **(+)**

Pale plus dark brick red. In the nose, a sense of power and youthful vigor as well as a multifaceted display of spice, wood, menthol and licorice. In the mouth, tertiary overtones dominate the expression. Dry and assertive finish. Still very young and wrapped up by a powerful structure. An outstanding Barolo for the cellar.

Barolo « Ciabot Mentin Ginestra » 2008 *(*+)**

Pale plus dark brick. Initially, richness and generosity to the nose, then roasted, spicy notes and mature small red fruits. The taste boasts depth and intensity, a polished center, and an assertive, incisive backbone and relatively fine tannins. Undeveloped finish, leaving a degree of austerity to be resolved.

Barolo « Aeroplan Servai » 2008 **(*)**

Pale plus dark brick. The first impression is of high class, fully ripe red fruits and berries followed by pepper and other spices and a warm intensity. There is hidden strength and reserve. The taste is warm and fleshy at the center, exhibiting multidimensional inflections of spice,

roasted notes, wood and mature small red fruits. All is in place for future development even though this 2008 retains a dry, angular finish for now. A Barolo for the cellar, not to open before 2020-2025.

Barolo « Per Cristina » 2005 **(*)**

Pale plus dark brick with brown rim. Exciting developing bouquet with noteworthy complexity, markedly spicy with toasted highlights and a hint of saddle leather. Arresting palate commands attention and is highly nuanced, gaining in intensity while remaining transparent. The ending is still dry and etched with gripping tannin. Far from ready, but promises exciting drinking in 2025-2030 and beyond.

Paolo Conterno

Barolo « Riva del Bric » 2009 **(+)**

Pale red brick. Youthful aroma with early complexity, rather delicate and finely nuanced, offering red fruit and dried flowers. Beautifully calibrated with superb finesse and intricacy, building in intensity across the palate and ending with tension from a precise structure.

Barolo « Ginestra » 2007 **(*)**

Pale dark brick red. Lovely, pure expression of red fruits to the nose along with a hint of menthol. Gorgeous presence in the mouth: multifaceted dark fruits, dried flowers and menthol. Exceptional aromatic persistence and a finely calibrated structure. Brilliant.

Barolo « Ginestra » 2006 **(*)**

Pale very dark red brick. Fabulous bouquet displaying remarkable complexity dominated by red fruits, flowers and subtle spice. The wine's composition is sublime, and there is both complexity now and a sense of more to come. Astounding persistence and multidimensional aftertaste. Supreme elegance. Slightly more evolved than the 2007 and possibly even better – but it's an impossible choice.

Barolo « Ginestra » Riserva 2006 **(*) !**

Pale very dark red brick. The nose of this riserva shows restraint and focus with fine inflections of red fruits and dried flowers. Very pure and classy. Superb in its overall composition and harmony. Incredibly long finish which goes on forever while remaining so delicate, leaving a very fine point of acidity at the very end. Different from the regular 2006 Ginestra, with ever slightly more elegance and precision – if that's possible !

Mauro Molino

Barolo 2009 *(+)**

Pale dark brick. The attractive aroma is forthcoming and fragrant with notes of dried red fruits and a mentholated top note. The palate appears flattering and fleshy at first, with moderate concentration, then displays more tension in a persistent, accented finish. A Barolo for the near term showing off the perfumed personality of La Morra. Another stellar value currently retailing around \$30 to \$35 (compare that to a village Chambolle-Musigny!).

Barolo « Gallinotto » 2009 **(*)**

Nearly moderately dense dark red brick. Beautiful nose, highly scented, delivering nuanced red fruits and roasted notes. Gallinotto is soft and fleshy in the mouth, with fine acidity and tannin. Long, sensual aftertaste. This 2009 cru is accessible and irresistible already, particularly at \$40 to \$50 a bottle.

Barolo « Gancia » 2009 **(*)**

Nearly moderately dense brick. The aroma is rich and broad with signs of wood maturation, spice inflections and roasted notes. Gancia has a fleshy, supple and warm mouth feel and seems relatively open and generous. Flavorful, lasting finish.

Barolo « Conca » 2009 *(*+)**

Pale plus dark red brick. Conca possesses a rich, deep, rather restrained aroma, with more in reserve than the other Molino 2009s. The wine is generous and mouth coating, with plenty of substance. Retains a suppleness overall, ending with a well-integrated framework of fine-grained tannins.

BAROLO – TRE BICCHIERI 2014 (see also Baudana & Alessandria)

Vietti Barolo « Villero » Riserva 2006 (Piedmont) **(*)**

Pale dark brick. The intense, clean nose shows remarkable concentration and focus as well as reserve. There are notes of red fruits and vanilla. The palate is just beginning to open and possesses a fleshy quality. This 2006 leaves a lasting textural impression and is dry but not severe. There are complementary tertiary notes which linger. Still young with great potential. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Marchesi di Barolo Barolo « Sarmassa » 2009 (Piedmont) **(*)**

Pale dark ruby. The aroma is lovely, classy and pure, exhibiting small red fruits and a creamy quality. The nose manages to combine an elegant lift and controlled intensity. In the mouth, this outstanding Barolo has exceptional precision and breed. There is a complex medley of sweet red fruits and wood-aging notes. Highly sensual overall with a very fine structure. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Michele Chiarlo Barolo « Cerequio » 2009 (Piedmont) **(+)**

Pale dark brick with brownish cast. Multidimensional aromatics: summer flowers, potpourri, wood and spice. The lovely palate is delicate and highly scented. This Barolo has impressive length with subtle sweet, flowery highlights and a touch of firmness. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Pio Cesare Barolo « Ornato » 2009 (Piedmont) **(*)**

Very pale dark brick. Beautiful, sweet fragrance characterized by small ripe red fruits, licorice and toasted notes. The wine is very flattering on the palate, possessing multidimensional aromatics. Exceptionally long, accented and elegant. A real beauty and easy to appreciate even at this early stage. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Poderi Colla Barolo Bussia « Dardi Le Rose » 2009 (Piedmont) **(*)**

Very pale brick color. The nose is dominated by enticing creamy and balsamic notes and is warm and lifted. In the mouth, this Barolo displays mature fruit and is warm and multifaceted. The finish is impressively long. The emphasis in this Colla wine is on classic styling. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Ca' Viola Barolo « Sottocastello di Novello » 2008 (Piedmont) **(*)**

Pale dark red brick. The Ca' Viola Barolo's aroma is beautiful, subtle and complex, joining small red fruits, a creamy quality and a mentholated highlight. The palate follows in the same line and is very fine, nuanced and expansive. The wine possesses a remarkably long, complex finish. Superb example. Tre Bicchieri 2014.

Diego Conterno Barolo « Le Coste » 2009 (Piedmont) **(+)**

Pale brick with brown cast. High-toned nose projecting balsamic and mentholated overtones together with dried spice. The taste is focused and well-defined with considerable complexity. Long, dry, etched finale showing ample reserve. Tre Bicchieri 2014.