

Tre Bicchieri 2014

The annual Tre Bicchieri tasting is a highlight for anyone who appreciates Italian wine. As I suggested a year ago, the natural question is whether all these wines are indeed the very best examples of their denominations. First, it is unrealistic to expect unanimity when it comes to the sensorial exercise of tasting and evaluating wine. I tasted many outstanding examples at the 2014 event as well as a few which, while excellent, may not in my opinion have deserved the award as the “best.” Also, Italian critics may give Three Glasses to some types of wines because they are indeed exceptional representatives of their regions, and Italy as a whole, but may fall short in a global context. Cultural preferences also come into play with such assessments. I would place many Italian sparkling wines, and some dry whites, in this group. I just can’t be as enthusiastic about most of the Franciacorta so admired inside Italy when you look at the lofty price tags! I focused on the marvelous 2009 Barolo, so rich and seductive.

Otella Lugana Superiore « Molceo » 2011 (Veneto) *****

Pale straw gold. Exquisite, ultrapure nose offering delicate white fruit accents and beguiling restraint. The taste as well shows supreme delicacy and fine inflections and is so perfectly clean. The wine finishes with very fine, elegant acidity. Top notch example.

Torre dei Beati Montepulciano d’Abruzzo « Cocciapazza » 2010 (Abruzzo) **(*)**

Moderately dense plus very dark purple red. Aromatically, the wine is wonderfully clean and largely held back, yet reveals ample ripe dark fruit concentration. The palate is very fresh, youthfully vigorous, with noteworthy concentration. Well-structured, finishing with marked structure from both tannin and acidity.

Villa Medoro Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Colline Teramane Adrano 2010 (Abruzzo) *(*)**

Dense color, black red with thin purple rim. The aroma delivers ripe, dense dark fruit and a balsamic aspect. The taste is strikingly fresh, medium full and possesses flesh and overall presence. There are some dry tannins framing the fruit. Very young, will develop.

La Valentina Montepulciano d'Abruzzo « Spelt » 2009 (Abruzzo) *(*)**

Moderately dense very dark red. The nose shows restraint and a sense of warm lift along with gently fragrant red fruit. Largely closed on the palate, the taste suggests a sweet undertone and ripe dark fruit. There is substance and a measure of roughness, indicating this Montepulciano is still young and undeveloped.

F. Barba Montepulciano d'Abruzzo « I Vasari » 2010 (Abruzzo) *(*)**

Nearly dense to the eye, dark red purple. Very warm, powerful aromatic expression dominated by ample dark fruit. Similarly, the taste is ripe, fleshy and expansive, gaining in power across the palate. There is a clean, dry finale which adds welcome freshness.

Fattoria Colleallodole Montefalco Sagrantino « Colleallodole » 2010 (Umbria) *(*)**

Almost dense very dark red with clear purple rim. The wine's nose is broad, full and delivers creamy, particularly ripe red fruit. On the palate, this Sagrantino confirms its ripeness and is chewy, generous and full-bodied. The mass of fruit is backed by pronounced tannins. Imposing now, this wine demands considerable cellaring.

**Giampaolo Tabarrini Montefalco Sagrantino «Colle alle Macchie»
2009 (Umbria) ***(*+)**

Moderately dense very dark red. Very full nose offering warm, ripe red fruit. There is depth, generosity and also a sense of considerable power in reserve. The taste is dominated by mature red fruit and is particularly full and fleshy at the center. Closes up rather abruptly, ending with a firm, dry tannic backbone. Very young, large scaled and backward.

**Bis Giuseppe Sedilesu Cannonau di Sardegna « Mamuthone » 2011
(Sardinia) ****(*)**

Pale dark red purple. Exceptionally clean initial expression to the nose, then youthful, ripe red fruit. The taste conveys a clean, fresh impression with sweet underlying red fruit. There is wonderful dry grip and tension in the conclusion. Very elegant and long albeit young and still to develop. An exciting, distinctive example of Cannonau.

**Mamete Prevostini Valtellina Superiore Sassella « San Lorenzo » 2010
(Lombardy) ****(*)**

Pale dark brick with brown cast. Aromatically, this beautiful Sassella possesses an enticing fragrance of sweet dried small red fruits with a hint of licorice. In the mouth, the wine is highly focused, pure, and linear. The finish is long and etched, defined by notable tension and intensity, with a sensation of grip at the very end. An ethereal wine with a particular taste profile I find exciting.

Castello d'Albola Chianti Classico Riserva 2009 (Tuscany) *(*)**

Just moderately dense dark red. Readily accessible nose displaying ripe, youthful red fruits. The wine is warm and well-integrated on the palate. Medium plus in weight. Well-balanced with a ripe, harmonious structure. Ready now.

Lamole di Lamole Chianti Classico «Vignetto di Campolungo» Riserva 2009 (Tuscany) **(*)**

Moderately dense plus very dark red purple. The aroma is inviting and warm, offering a mélange of ripe dark fruits and berries together with balsamic highlights. The taste is striking for its immediate polish and sensuality. Medium plus in weight. Very long and expressive finale marked by enhancing spice and vanilla accents. A Chianti with a superb and also singular personality – modern in the best sense.

Fattoria Le Corti Chianti Classico « Le Corti » 2010 (Tuscany) *(*)**

Moderately dense plus very dark red. Warm, generous aroma offering an expressive medley of mature red fruits. Similarly, the taste is ripe and relatively open and forward. Finishes warm with an embedded ripe structure. Has charm and expression. Easy to like.

San Felice Chianti Classico « Il Grigio » Riserva 2009 (Tuscany) **(*)**

Nearly dense very dark red. Lovely, warm, mature dark fruit of high quality and a suggestion of wild flora in the aroma. The palate exhibits wonderful polish and equilibrium. There is a delicate expression of dark fruits, and the wine is medium full. Very persistent with just a touch of definition and a faint tarry note which adds interest in the aftertaste. A delicious Riserva.

Poderi Boscarelli Nobile di Montepulciano « Nocio dei Boscarelli » 2009 (Tuscany) *(*+)**

Pale dark red with brick. Warm impression at first, then subtle evidence of evolution in a dry leafy note, and red fruit. In the mouth, the wine surprises with a focused, very dry mouthfeel. Not at all viscous but very long with noteworthy tension and grip. Combines youthful and more mature traits. Only cellaring will tell how it will develop.

Salcheto Nobile di Montepulciano 2010 (Tuscany) **(+)**

Moderately dense dark red. Clean, scented nose of attractive red fruits with a distinct personality. The palate follows, displaying similar appealing fruit qualities. There is a delicacy at first and a surprisingly long, expressive finish with a red fruit fragrance. This organic wine from a sulfite-free vinification finishes dry and is remarkably persistent. 100% Prugnolo Gentile.

Fattoria del Cerro Nobile di Montepulciano 2010 (Tuscany) *(*)**

Moderately dense dark red. Clean aroma showing nuanced red fruit of good intensity. Clean, fresh, modern styling. Well-knit and dry, lasting ending.

Rocca di Frassinello 2011, IGT Maremma (Tuscany) *(*)**

Moderately dense plus very dark red. Generous nose offering youthful dark fruit and berries. Clean, ample palate. Ripe, warm and fleshy, offset by a dry frame. At the end, there is a warm, lingering, ripe finish. A joint venture of Castellare in Chianti and Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite). 60% Sangiovese, 20% each Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Tenuta Argentiera Bolgheri Superiore « Argentiera » 2010 (Tuscany) **(*)**

Nearly dense very dark red. The nose indicates concentration and also youthful reserve. There are muted dark fruits and a faintly dusty signature of Cabernet along with skillfully married French oak. The palate has excellent concentration and dimension despite being young and undeveloped. There is tension, grip and persistence. Very promising Bordeaux blend, will keep well. 45% each Cab Sauv and Merlot, 10% Cab Franc.

Podere Orma « Orma » 2010 (Tuscany) **(+)**

Dense very dark red purple. Deep, generous, ripe dark fruit to the nose with evident French oak. The wine is imposing on the palate, delivering ample, rich, layered dark fruit. The ending is dry and assertive with an overtone of espresso. A powerful blend warranting considerable refining in bottle. A single estate wine from vineyards in Bolgheri bordering Ornellaia. 50% Merlot, 30% Cab Sauv, 20% Cab Franc.

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.

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.

Alessandria Fratelli Barolo Monvigliero 2009 (Piedmont) **(*)**

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.

Luigi Baudana Barolo « Baudana » 2009 (Piedmont) **(*)**

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 still young, the finish is exceptionally long and complex. A beautiful Barolo.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.