



## **Wine Advocate Issue #203 - October 2012 - Piemonte ~ Antonio Galloni**

### **96 Points- Le Piane Boca 2008**

*A Proprietary Blend Dry Red Table wine from Boca, Piedmont, Italy*

*The 2008 Le Piane is more than a worthy follow-up to the gorgeous 2007. In this vintage, the wine is much more classic in style. The sweetest of black cherries, grilled herbs, menthol, spices and licorice all meld together in this beautiful, delineated, totally vibrant wine. The balance of focus and power is simply stunning. This is a dazzling effort from a small estate that seems to be ratcheting up quality with each passing vintage. One of the attributes of Nebbiolo-based wines from northern Piedmont is that they are often easy to drink when young, yet also age effortlessly for years, sometimes decades. That certainly appears to be the case here. This is magnificent effort from proprietor Christoph Kunzli.*

*Anticipated maturity: 2013-2038.*

### **94 Points – Francesco Rinaldi Barolo Brunata 2008**

*The 2008 Barolo Le Brunate is quite a bit richer, deeper and more powerful than the Cannubio, as one might reasonably expect. Here the fruit boasts tons of pure resonance and stuffing while never losing its essential classicism. Plums, black cherries, leather, tar and licorice meld together, supported by firm yet beautifully integrated tannins. The 2008 Brunate is an explosive wine just waiting to emerge. When it does, it should be striking. Actually, it already is. Anticipated maturity: 2018-2038. It is great to see a continued focus on quality at this historic, family-run estate.*

### **92 Points - Francesco Rinaldi Barolo Cannubio 2008**

*The 2008 Barolo Cannubio exhibits all of the classic notes typically found in wines from this site. Sweet, open floral notes lead to tobacco, leather, anise and spices as this gorgeous Barolo shows off its class. There is more than enough fruit to balance the tannins, but the 2008 remains tight and in need of further cellaring. Still, there is so much to admire in this classy, mid-weight Barolo. In 2008, the Cannubio is all class and finesse. Anticipated maturity: 2018-2038. It is great to see a continued focus on quality at this historic, family-run estate.*

### **90 Points – Francesco Rinaldi Barolo 2008**

*An excellent choice for near and medium-term drinking, Rinaldi's 2008 Barolo combines lovely depth of fruit with the vibrant acidity and expressive aromatics that are the signatures of the year. Sweet red cherries, plums, crushed rocks and flowers emerge from this effortless, gorgeous wine. There is a centerdeness to the straight Barolo that is impossible to miss. This is an impressive showing for an entry-level Barolo. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2020. It is great to see a continued focus on quality at this historic, family-run estate.*

## **Robert Parker Wine Advocate October 2012 Issue – Vintage Profile by Antonio Galloni**

### **Piemonte: 2009 and 2010 Barbaresco Plus Other New Releases**

It is always a challenge to keep current with the bevy of fabulous wines that emerge from Piemonte's top estates. This article covers the 2009 and 2010 vintages in Barbaresco, late-release 2008 Barolo, new releases from Roero and Piemonte's northern appellations, and a wide range of every-day drinkers that won't break the bank. The vast majority of these wines were tasted in Italy in August 2012, with follow up tastings in my New York office in September 2012. No matter how many times I have been to Piemonte, I never tire of the spectacular views, fabulous cuisine and wide array of superb wines that capture the essence of one of the most genuine, down to earth, artisan cultures on the planet.

#### **2009 and 2010 Barbaresco**

Readers will find two very different vintages in the 2009 and 2010 Barbareschi. The 2009s are the result of a year with very hot summer temperatures, while the 2010s emerge from an exceptionally long, cool growing season. In other words, the vintages are nearly polar opposites. At the time of my tastings, virtually all of the 2009s had been bottled, while the 2010s had been bottled for anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. I will revisit the 2010s later this year, so notes on those wines should be taken for what they are – previews of a big vintage that is likely to develop considerably over time.

The 2009 growing season was characterized by a snowy winter and wet spring with unseasonably cool weather. Temperatures heated up in June. A protracted heat wave set in during the middle of August. I remember that time well, as I was on vacation with my family in Tuscany. The middle of August is usually a time when daytime temperatures begin to lower, but, more importantly, a period when evening temperatures drop. None of that happened in August 2009. Readers might remember from previous articles that diurnal shifts are an absolutely critical element in achieving full phenolic ripeness and good color in Nebbiolo. In 2009, the heat was stifling to the point some plants shut down, leaving the stems and grapes with tannins that never fully matured. The overall maturation cycle in 2009 was also a bit shorter than optimal.

The first thing that is clearly evident about the 2009 Barbareschi is that they lack color. Of course, Nebbiolo is not a grape with tons of pigment, but still, young Barbareschi should have darker (yet translucent) tonality than is found in many 2009s. There are several factors that might explain the lack of color in many wines. The first of these is the mid-August heat spikes mentioned above and the ensuing stress placed on the vines. The usual criticism of Barbaresco is that on average yields are too high. In 2009 growers had to have the discipline to lower yields and leave the vines with only the amount of fruit that could be taken to full maturity. Grapes that weren't fully physiologically ripe presented more problems in the cellar. Destemming Nebbiolo is

challenging. The stems and jacks are very fragile, which means a small percentage always ends up in the tanks. But when fruit is not fully physiologically ripe, the stems and jacks don't separate as cleanly from the grapes, therefore more stem material makes it into the tanks, which has the effect of weakening the intensity of color.

Vintage 2010 is another story entirely. It is a year characterized by a very long growing season – one of the longest on record – and much cooler weather with no heat spikes. All it takes to understand how important ideal conditions are for Nebbiolo is to taste the young 2010 Barbareschi. The best wines are simply stunning, with virtually no perception of tannin and phenomenal balance. Stylistically, 2010 is much like 2004, but with more density. The 2010s are of course young, but what I have tasted so far has been very impressive. It is quite possible 2010 will turn out to be a truly great, iconic vintage for Barbaresco.

### **2008 Barolo**

The 2008 Baroli continue to be hugely promising. Many wines are starting to shut down post bottling, so readers will want to try to catch the wines before they become totally impenetrable. I can't remember any recent vintage that was this austere when young. The exception is perhaps 1999, although those wines always had tons of density and sheer heft. The 2008s aren't like that at all. They are much more mid-weight Baroli, but with tons of underlying structure. In many ways, 2008 sounds the way old-timers describe the classic vintages from the 1970s and early 1980s, all of which I was too young to taste when they were first released. It is a vintage that will thrill classicists. Overall I place 2008 just behind 2006 and 2010, the other recent vintages that are built on important foundations of structure.

### **Roero: So Much Promise, But...**

Of all the regions within Piemonte, the most disappointing is Roero. Frankly, many of the Roero wines showed extremely poorly this year. I am not sure why, but even estates I hold in high regard presented wines of little interest. There are a handful (but no more) of producers who are consistently excellent to outstanding – Correggia, Hilberg-Pasquero and Almondo come to mind – but the rest are unfortunately hit or miss. Roero is loaded with great terroirs for both whites and reds, but many estates have yet to find consistent excellence.

### **Dolcetto and Barbera Are Worthy of Love Too**

While most consumers focus on Barolo and Barbaresco, the vast majority of estates also make delicious entry-level wines. That is especially true of the elite producers, most of whom don't miss a beat throughout their entire lineup. You would think Dolcetto is a four-letter word, given how hard these wines struggle in the market. The best versions are full of flavor and character, and also frequently cost less than \$20 a bottle. The 2011s represent a nice stylistic middle ground. They aren't as mineral-driven as the 2010s, but also not as ripe as the 2009s.

Barbera is perhaps even more versatile than Dolcetto because it can handle a wider range of winemaking choices. The 2011 Barberas that are in the market are mostly of the unoaked variety, and they are delicious for their plummy fruit and vinous exuberance. The top 2010s are now becoming available. As mentioned above, 2010 was a very long and cold growing season, so readers should expect to find Barberas built on tension, minerality and acidity. Although a few wines are a little light, in my view the best 2010 Barberas are simply stunning.

#### **Northern Piemonte**

Piemonte's northern appellations are sadly often left out in serious discussions of Piemonte wines, where the vast majority of interest centers around Barolo and Barbaresco. That is a mistake. Each year I taste more and more wines from these tiny appellations that deserve serious attention. I encourage readers to check out the wines of Carema, Gattinara, Lessona and Boca, where Nebbiolo and Nebbiolo-based wines are distinctive and full of personality.

#### **The Legacy of the Modern School in Piemonte**

Thankfully, the traditional versus modern debates of ten years ago are largely a thing of the past, as most people now realize there is a large measure of conversion taking place in Piemonte's top estates. Today it is impossible to ignore a general trend of rediscovering traditionally-minded producers, many of whom had been unjustly neglected in the recent past. That is quite a change from the mid-1990s, when I first started visiting Piemonte. Back then the 'super-Piedmont' blends that added international varieties to Nebbiolo and Barbera were the highly allocated wines everyone fought over, Barolo/Barbaresco took several years to sell through a vintage, and French oak was all the rage. Today, the pendulum has swung completely in the other direction. The "super-Piedmont" category is dead in the water, and the best Baroli/Barbareschi sell through much more quickly. The traditional large cask or "botte" has made a major comeback. It is now obvious that some of the high-flying modern wines did not live up to all their promise. The French oak that was supposed to "integrate" over time never did, because wines have to be in balance when they are young to age gracefully.

I believe the greatest legacy of the modern school won't be the French oak-aged Baroli and Barbareschi many of us have in our cellars, but rather the undisputed fact that the leading producers in the 1980s introduced several innovations to Piemonte. Chief among these were the importance of green-harvesting and greater cleanliness in the cellar, concepts that elevated not just the modern wines, but all wines, to a consistently world-class level that was previously unattainable. So, while today it is tempting to be critical of the more modern Baroli/Barbareschi, the truth is that the experimentation of the 1980s and 1990s in Piemonte was just part of a normal learning process that was also taking place in other parts of the world. Once a poor, agrarian countryside that young people sought to escape, today Piemonte is a much more vibrant and prosperous region that attracts visitors from all over the world. It was the French oak-

aged, flashy wines of the 1990s and the ensuing attention of the world's most discerning consumers that made today's economic reality possible.

#### **La Festa del Barolo 2013**

The second Festa del Barolo will be held on Saturday April 27, 2013 at Del Posto in New York City. First held in 2011, La Festa del Barolo quickly established itself as the premier event globally for consumers who love the very best Piemonte has to offer. The afternoon session will feature fifteen reference-point and emerging producers presenting their wines in a formal, sit-down educational seminar. A Gala Dinner inspired by Burgundy's La Paulée, in which attendees share bottles from their own cellars, will follow. A group of New York's most talented sommeliers drawn from the city's top restaurants will oversee wine service of what is sure to be a jaw-dropping collection of older wines. Full details will be available shortly.

—Antonio Galloni