

Wine tasting in Piedmont and Bolgheri (Italy)

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The winery tour in Italy during March 2016 included Tali and Benzi Weiner, and Nurit and Asher Tishler. We visited 11 high quality wineries in Piedmont and 2 in Bolgheri, and tasted their current vintages (sometimes from barrels) and some older ones.

The best-known wines from Piedmont include Barolo and Barbaresco which are made from the Nebbiolo grape. In this trip we concentrated on Barolo, often described as one of Italy's greatest wines. The wines are noted for their ability to age. Barolo needs to be aged for at least 38 months after the harvest before release. In the past, Barolo wines tended to be extremely rich in tannin. However, it is now common to find quality Barolo wines with softer and less noticeable tannins, which can be consumed 5-10 years after the harvest.

Visiting many of the high quality wineries in the region requires a prearranged meeting, which may (or may not) be difficult to secure. High quality mature Barolo wine should be purchased in professional wine stores or in other professional outlets (local importers, internet stores, auctions, etc.) since almost all of the production of the high quality wineries is pre-sold (sometimes several years) in advance.

There are numerous hotels, quality restaurants and wine stores in Piedmont. We stayed at the town of Alba. The town is surrounded by some of the region's most famous wine villages. With a rich historical and architectural heritage, Alba is an interesting place to visit.

The region of Bolgheri is located in the Province of Livorno, south of Bibbona. Bolgheri became an internationally known region following an event in 1974 arranged by Decanter where the 6-year-old Sassicaia won over an assortment of Bordeaux wines. The grape varieties of Bordeaux origin (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot) thrive in this region. There are many hotels, quality restaurants and wine stores in the Bolgheri region. We stayed at Bibbona (an interesting place to visit).

We ranked many of the wines that we tasted as 'very good' or even 'excellent'. Almost all of these high quality wines will age and continue to develop, some of them for decades. The evaluation of the wines below is my own, but all four of us had similar views on the majority of the wines that are discussed and evaluated below.

There are many sources of information on Piedmont's and Bolgheri's wines, wineries, history, climate and geography. Wikipedia and the references therein is a good place to start. We thank Yagil Barel for very helpful info and tips about Piedmont and Bolgheri.

Vietti

Ruero Arneis, 2015. (white wine). 13.5% alcohol. 14.5 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Elegant. Fresh. Light wine. Very dry. Young. Fruity. Ready to drink. Can be stored for 2-5 years. Very interesting wine. Very good wine.

Barbera D'Alba, Tre Vigna, 2014. 14.5% alcohol. 14.5 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Very dry. Light wine. Drink now up to 6-10 years. Reasonably good wine.

Barbera D'Alba, Vigna Scarrone, 2013. 14% alcohol. 30 Euro. Close to full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Very dry. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Nebbiolo Perbacco, 2012. 14% alcohol. 14 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink now up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

Barolo, Casteglione, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 40 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful hilly area and produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Vajra

Langhe Riesling, 2014. (white wine). 12% alcohol. 25 Euro. Light body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Somewhat elegant. Fresh. Light wine. Ready to drink. Can be stored for 5-6, possibly more, years. Good wine.

Dolcetto D'Alba, Coste & Fossati, 2013. 13% alcohol. 15 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Simple wine. Fresh. Soft tannins. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Good wine.

Barbera D'Alba, Superiore, 2013. 14.5% alcohol. 25 Euro. Full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Elegant. Light wine. Drink now up to 6-10 years. Very good wine.

Langhe, Freisa, 2012. 14% alcohol. 25 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink now up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

Barolo Albe, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 35 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Round. Drink now up to 10-20 years. Very good wine.

Barolo, Bricco delle Viola, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 62 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink now up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good to excellent wine.

Barolo, Bricco delle Viola, 2012 (from a barrel). 14.5% alcohol. 62 Euro (estimate). Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 2-3 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Better than the 2011. Very good to excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Giuseppe Rinaldi

Barolo, Tre Tine, 2012. 13.5% alcohol. 36 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 2-3 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good wine.

Barolo, Tre Tine, 2013 (from a barrel). 13.5% alcohol. 36 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-4 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Better than the 2012. Very good wine.

Barolo, Brunate, 2012. 13.5% alcohol. 36 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 2-3 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good wine.

Barolo, Brunate, 2013 (from a barrel). 13.5% alcohol. 36 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-4 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Better (more complex, more elegant) than the 2012. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Giuseppe & Figlio Mascarello

Barbera D'Alba, Scudetto, 2012. 14.5% alcohol. 22 Euro. Close to full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Somewhat fruity. Drink now up to 6-10 years. Very good wine.

Langhe Freisa, Toetto, 2012. 13.5% alcohol. 15 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Somewhat fruity. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink now up to 10 years. Good wine.

Barolo, Monprivato, 2011. 14% alcohol. 100 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Non-aggressive wine. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 1-2 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Excellent wine.

The winery produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Elio Grasso

Dolcetto d'Alba, dei Grassi, 2014. 13% alcohol. 10.5 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Simple wine. Fresh. Fruity. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Good wine.

Barolo Gavarini Chiniera, 2012. 14% alcohol. 52 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Masculine wine. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Very good wine.

Barolo Ginestra Casa Mate, 2012. 14% alcohol. 52 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Somewhat feminine wine. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Very good wine.

Barolo Runcot Riserva 2008. 14.5% alcohol. 95 Euro. Full and powerful body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink now up to 20 or more years. Excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Sandrone

Barbera d'Alba, 2013. 13.5% alcohol. 20 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Light wine. Drink now up to 10 years. Will improve. Very good wine.

Nebbiolo d'Alba, Valmaggiore, 2013. 13.5% alcohol. 27 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink now up to 10 years. Will improve. Very good wine.

Barolo, Le Vigne, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 75 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good to excellent wine.

Barolo, Cannubi Boschis, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 85 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Excellent wine.

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Paulo Scavino

Langhe Nebbiolo, 2013. 14% alcohol. 15 Euro. Full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Fresh. Somewhat fruity. Light wine. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink now up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

Barolo Classico, 2012. 14% alcohol. 30 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Good to very good wine.

Barolo Carobric, 2012. 14% alcohol. 50 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft and very noticeable tannins. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good wine.

Barolo Bricco Ambrogio, 2012. 14% alcohol. 40 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good wine.

Barolo Bric del Fiasc, 2012. 14% alcohol. 60 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Closed. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 or more years. Will improve in several years. Very good to excellent wine.

Barolo Bric del Fiasc, 2006. 14.5% alcohol. 70 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Very soft tannins. Mature. Drink now up to 10 or more years. Very good wine.

Barolo Riserva Rocche dell Annunziata, 2010. 14.5% alcohol. 120 Euro. Full and powerful body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 2-4 years up to 20 or more years. Excellent wine.

The winery produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Bartolo Mascarello

Dolcetto D'Alba, 2014. 12.5% alcohol. 9 Euro. Less than full body. Not complex. Balanced. Simple wine. Very dry. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Good wine.

Barbera d'Alba, 2013. 13.5% alcohol. 15 Euro. Less than full body. Complex. Balanced. Dry. Fresh. Light wine. Very soft, almost unnoticeable, tannins. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Barolo, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 50 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Light wine. Very soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 20 years. Very good to excellent wine.

Small and interesting winery that produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Pira & Figli

Dolcetto D'Alba, 2014. 12% alcohol. 8.5 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fruity. Fresh. Light wine. Drink now up to 3 years. Good wine.

Barbera d'Alba, 2014. 14% alcohol. 14.5 Euro. Full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Floral aroma. Fresh. Young. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Langhe Nebbiolo, 2014. 14% alcohol. 17 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Very soft tannins. Fresh. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Barolo, Via Nuova, 2012. 14.5% alcohol. 48 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Drink in 2-5 years up to 20 or more years. Very good wine.

Barolo, Cannubi, 2012. 14.5% alcohol. 65 Euro. Full body. Powerful. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Drink in 2-5 years up to 20 or more years. Very good wine.

Barolo, Mosconi, 2012. 14.5% alcohol. 52 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Fairly powerful. Floral aroma. Noticeable soft tannins. Drink in 2-5 years up to 20 or more years. Very good wine.

Small and interesting winery that produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Domenico Clerico

Barbera d'Alba, Trevigne, 2013. 14% alcohol. 13.5 Euro. Close to full body. Fairly complex. Fairly balanced. Somewhat low acidity. Fresh. Fruity. Drink now up to 10 years. Good wine.

Barolo, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 39 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Noticeable tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 years or more. Very good wine.

Barolo, Ciabot Mentin, 2009. 14.5% alcohol. 55 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very noticeable tannins. Aggressive. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 years or more. Very good wine.

Barolo, Ciabot Mentin, 2010. 14.5% alcohol. 63 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Noticeable soft tannins. Fairly elegant. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 years or more. Very good wine.

Barolo, Aeroplanservaj, 2010. 14.5% alcohol. 75 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very noticeable tannins. Drink in 5-8 years up to 20 years or more. Somewhat unusual wine (too strong tannins, not approachable at this time). Good to very good wine.

Barolo, Percristina, 2007. 14.5% alcohol. 80 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Noticeable soft tannins. Elegant. Drink now up to 20 years or more. Very good to excellent wine.

Medium-size winery. It resides in a beautiful area and produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Giacomo Conterno

Barbera d'Alba, Francia, 2014 (from a barrel). 14% alcohol. 20 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Light wine. Fresh. Somewhat fruity. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Barolo, Francia, 2012 (from a barrel). 14.5% alcohol. 90 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Floral aroma. Very soft tannins. Drink in 2-3 years up to 20 years or more. Excellent wine.

Barolo, Cerreta, 2012 (from a barrel). 14.5% alcohol. 90 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Somewhat fruity. Soft noticeable tannins. Drink in 3-5 years up to 20 years or more. Excellent wine.

Medium-size winery. It resides in a beautiful area and produces high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Ornellaia

Le Volte, 2013. 13.5% alcohol. 20 Euro. 70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Sangiovese. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Elegant. Light wine. Somewhat fruity. Fresh. Very soft tannins. Drink now up to 4-5 years. Reasonably good wine.

Le Serre Nove, 2013. 14.5% alcohol. 40 Euro. 32% Merlot, 36% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 12% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Light. Soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

Variazioni in Rosso, 2013. 14% alcohol. 35 Euro. 28% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Sauvignon, 56% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Very noticeable tannins. Young. Drink now up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

Ornellaia, 2013. 14.5% alcohol. 140 Euro. 27% Merlot, 51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 12% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Soft tannins. Feminine. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 20 or more years. Very good wine.

A large winery. Very nice tasting facility. Great hospitality. The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces quality wines. Over the last several years it seems to become "too commercial". Visiting this winery (with appointment) is recommended.

Tenuta San Guido

Le Difese, 2013. 13% alcohol. 17 Euro. 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Sangiovese. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Light wine. Fairly simple. Very soft (almost unnoticeable) tannins. Drink now up to 2-3 years. Good wine.

Guidalberto, 2013. 13.5% alcohol. 40 Euro. 40% Merlot, 60% Cabernet Sauvignon. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Elegant. Light soft wine. Soft tannins. Drink now (better in 3-4 years) up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Sassicaia, 2012. 13.5% alcohol. 145 Euro. 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Soft tannins. Some desired bitterness at the end. Drink now (better in 5-8 years) up to 20 years or more. Very good to excellent wine.

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