NEWS

First Taste: Barolo, Barbaresco and Roero

08 FEBRUARY 2023

By Filippo Bartolotta

There is great anticipation of the 2017 and 2019 vintage of Barolo, Barbaresco and Roero among

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sommeliers, collectors and wine lovers. Fillippo Bartolotta reports from the *Nebbiolo Prima, Nebbiolo premiere* to give us the top of this year's crop.

Blind Barolo

Each January, the Langhe region in Piemonte is the first to kick-off its anteprima (en primeur) tasting. This year a select group of 36 journalists from across the world was invited to this one-of-a-kind event with the opportunity to taste more than 300 wines in the four days tasting.

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As its name suggestions, the *Nebbiolo Prima, Nebbiolo premiere* is all about the Nebbiolo grape – the common denominator of Piemonte's three great appellations: the famous Barolo and Barbaresco and its lesser-known brother Roero.

Each appellation presented its new vintage. In Barolo's case, this was the 2019 vintage and the 2017 Riserva, Barbaresco presented the 2020 vintage and the 2018 Riserva, while Roero debuted the 2020 vintage and the 2019 Riserva. (The lean 2018 vintage meant that nobody really produced Riserva during that year). Below, is out outline of the characteristics of each vintages in each appellations, and the best performing wines so far.

BAROLO RISERVA DOCG 2017

2017 was a very generous — sometimes even too generous — hot vintage which saw the release of some pretty powerful Barolo Riserva. The best ones have a remarkable juiciness which helps them retain balance and drinkability. The "less is more" philosophy always pays during this intense vintage.

We had only twenty samples of 2017 and these are two examples of well-interpreted Barolo Riserva.

Ettore Germano, Barolo Lazzarito Riserva 2017

White pepper, mulberries, violets and goji berries blend with a really savory palate with so much juiciness. A blood orange and Mediterranean herbs finish give this Riserva a high drinkability … together with aging potential.

Gomba, Barolo Boschetti Riserva 2017

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Sweet red fruit with some leathery notes blending with dry rose petals and raisins. A lovely earthiness with a hint of gun flint and a transparent voice give the wine a ready- to-drink bonus despite its important structure.

BAROLO DOCG 2019

Now let's get to the largest group of wines Nebbiolo Prima 2023 showcased: the mighty 2019 Barolo. A slight drop in production and a long growing season show promise for the 2019 vintage.

The Consorzio di Tutela Barolo Barbaresco Alba Langhe e Dogliani talks about the 2019 as a classic vintage displaying signs of good structure, ideal balance and excellent aging ability.

It was a late-starting vintage with a lot of rain all the way to April — a true blessing given the droughts of the last few years. Sadly some of the flowering suffered, which brought lower yields. The summer was unusually hot but with occasional rain and even some stronger storms at the beginning of September — which didn't affect most of the vineyards thanks to the vineyards' skillful management of most vigneron protecting the crop with nets.

The harvest took place during the second half of October and exhibited fruit with good sugar levels and a superb polyphenol profile. In the field 2019 was a tough vintage with many hours required to defend the vines from truly frightening climatic moments. This meant a slight drop in quantity in comparison to 2018, but an overall above-average quality of grapes, resulting in wines with a distinctive character.

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But how does this translate into the glass?

Most samples showed a spectacular brilliant color, excellent structure and the feeling of a really solid vintage with an austere style which resulted in some relatively tough tannins, some restrained fruit character, but with a sense of expectation and revelation which makes these wines really thrilling.

As you know, Barolo and Barbaresco can be classified according to the MGA which is a sort of Climate or Cru system referring to a specific and official geographical area.

So here is a list of some of the most "talkative" wines of this very reserved vintage, which we believe is going to start showing signs of light and expressiveness starting from May.

Grimaldi Bruna Barolo Camilla 2019

One of the most open, friendly Barolo at this point, it showcases some dry red berries and plums with an intriguing shiitake-mushroom smokiness and a wonderful contrast of salinity and juiciness. This vintage is a wine of balanced proportions and really enjoyable sweet juicy fruit.

COMUNE DI VERDUNO "MONVIGLIERO MGA"

Castello di Verduno, Barolo Monvigliero 2019

Bright red, ruby color with even brighter red fruit, forest floor and spicy aroma and some enticing floral notes. A

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very elegant structure with some sweet red fruit and delicious mineral traits. Great refreshing character and a delicate silhouette for such a big vintage!

The 2018 has been a light vintage which displayed more delicate and transparent wines than usual, with less aging potential than average, but still capable of a good 10-to-15-year life span.

COMUNE DI LA MORRA

La Morra is known for the its smooth, round and generous style. There were 40 samples which reflected this character — although with a much more structured palate than expected given the vintage.

Camparo, Barolo Boilo 2019

This wine is a concentration of the most wonderful dry fruit-basket mixed with rose petals and a dash of botanical herbs. The wine shows a lot of intensity and a very saline finish with a red berry-driven fruit character.

Enzo Boglietti, Barolo Brunate 2019

Sandal wood, hibiscus, white pepper, orange peel and brambles. The palate is generating a succulent experience of sweet tobacco, red fruit, some juniper and a very pleasant finish.

Cascina Cappellano, Barolo Castagni 2019

Intense medicinal herbs, pomegranate, strawberries and sea breeze. Great energy with a reactive palate and an easier-to-drink approach than others, but still with an important structure and length.

Burzi, Barolo La Serra 2019

Cherries under spirits, chocolate and leather with some great acidity, way more refreshing than expected, with a great cranberry and cherry-like finish. Medium to high tannic structure and a slightly astringent finish that needs time to smooth down.

Cantina Stroppiana, Barolo San Giacomo 2019

A floral-driven nose with wonderful lavender and sweet roots with a balsamic character and an herbaceous touch. I love the propolis and some nice beeswax and mulberries. Intense structure and a great lingering finish.

Mario Gagliasso, Barolo Rocche dell'Annunziata 2019

Sweet roots, cola, ripe black fruit with an important extractive character. This is a big wine with a round and relatively smooth palate which will need time to open up. Great tar and roses finish.

NOVELLO

Mauro Marengo, Barolo Ravera 2019

Balsamic notes and blue flowers with wonderful black berries and forest fruit. On the palate the wine shows some earthy tones and an intriguing mineral grip. A restrained Barolo with some good aging potential.

SERRALUNGA D'ALBA

Going through my tasting notes I realized Serralunga

performed really well with this 2019 vintage showing a lot of depth, structure and length but also a very precise architecture and complexity.

Giovanni Rosso, Barolo del Comune di Serralunga 2019

A wonderful juniper, mint and sage complexity with some delicious sweet red fruit on a great Michelangelo-like structure and requiring some patience to see this wine blossoming!

Fontanafredda, Barolo La Delizia Lazzarito 2019

Balsamic Barolo with delicious sweet roots, juicy with an orange peel complexity and a fortress of tannins and black fruit.

Anselma, Barolo Lazzarito 2019

Medicinal herbs, incense, tobacco and prunes with an intense herbaceous and dry floral character. Sweet and delicate on the palate at first, but then showing a more powerful grip.

Palladino, Barolo Margheria 2019

Ripe fruit, coffee, anice and plums. Great body, voluminous tannins with a really vibrant palate. This is a Barolo with a great gastronomic approach but also can be considered as a collectable item.

BAROLO

The Barolo area is home to some of the most historical crus, always able to deliver incredibile sweetness,

generosity and suppleness but also with a stunning aging potential.

G.D. Vajra, Barolo Bricco delle Viole 2019

Floral perfumes, incredible sweet fruit, reactive, juicy with a mineral crunch and delightful white truffles and incense.

Borgogno Serio, Barolo Cannubi 2019

Dry red currants, mountain flowers and a leather touch. Great refreshing palate which delivers a great deal of juiciness, more red fruit and a lingering finish.

Rinaldi Francesico & Figli, Barolo 2019

Power and elegance with a sour cherries and an umeboshi and beeswax complexity. Pretty reactive on the palate, with a hint of sea breeze and black cherries on the finish.

Marchesi di Barolo, Barolo del Comune di Barolo 2019

This vintage is all about the forest fruit, pomegranate with sweet tobacco and delicious sweet roots and incense. It's a vibrant Barolo with an easy-to-drink approach and a good structure for aging.

Borgogno, Barolo Fossati 2019

Red currant and cloves, cinnamon and violets never-ending sweetness with a very important structure and yet so elegant.

Brezza, Barolo Saramassa 2019

A super classic tar-and-roses with some botanical herbs, licorice and an earthy complexity. Very austere, but also starting to open up to with addictive sour cherries and white truffle notes.

CASTIGLIONE FALLETTO

From this area I usually get wines with structure and finesse, perfumes and elegance, but also a great deal of austerity. In a vintage like 2019 we will see some great wines to lay down for quite a few years.

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Cavallotto, Barolo Bricco Boschis 2019

Cedar, forest fruit, vanilla and dry flowers with a very structured palate with an echinacea and cola sweetness and a saline-intense finish. High tannins … long aging.

Sordo, Barolo Monprivato 2019

Blackberries, forest floor, prunes, cinnamon and truffles with wonderful finesse and yet powerful structure and a gentle floral finish.

Brovia, Barolo Rocche di Castiglione 2019

Rosemary flowers and plums with a touch of eucalyptus and shiitake. On the palate, the wine shows some serious ripe red-and-sweet fruit and a very lingering finish.

Poderi e Cantine Oddero, Barolo Villero 2019

Such a seductive Barolo with the classic red fruit which gets integrated with some iodine traits, soy sauce and tropical flowers. Wonderful acidity and a really vibrant finish.

MONFORTE

Very structured, powerful wines with a deeper color and an austere profile which will start soothing down and become more expressive after a few years. Great minerality and uncompromising longevity and, as a result, less open-friendly when young, particularly in a vintage like this one.

Anna Maria Abbona, Barolo Bricco San Pietro 2019

The mountain strawberries, the lovely forest fruit plus the sweet roots and spices bring this wine to a Burgundian elegance and joyful sweetness making it an exception in the austerity of Monforte. Delicious.

Poderi Luigi Einaudi, Barolo Bussia 2019

The structure of a great Renaissance fortress which gives way to some plums, white truffles, black currants, medicinal herbs and cedar. Can't wait to see this wine blossoming.

Giuseppe Rinaldi, Barolo Bussia 2019

Dry roses, tobacco and sour cherries. Built to last and yet already delivering an elegant licorice and juniper complexity over a vibrantly red currant driven palate. This is a very austere wine which will beed time, but finesse of its texture is very promising.

Fratelli Alessandria, Barolo Gramolere 2019

Plums, tar and a bright mediterranean light. Very deep character with some darker fruit on the palate. This is a Barolo with a tight structure which will need some time to smooth down.

Silvano Bolmida, Barolo Le Coste di Monforte 2019

A wine that shows gastronomic crunchy palate with some peppermint, cherries and licorice flavors. Lovely gun flint and a hint of forest floor blended with baskets of red fruit.

Rèva, Barolo

Brumale fruit, sage flowers, anice and red cherries. On the palate the wine stands out with so much energy, red-driven fruit and a balanced structure with a delicious incense and fragrant floral finish.

BARBARESCO 2020

The dry winter in 2019 got winemakers worried, but in the second half of the spring and early summer some very heavy rains brought happiness and ended worries about any potential drought. On the other hand, water heightened the danger of fungal diseases, forcing winemakers to work harder than usual. The cool nights of

September slowed down the ripening process and improved drastically the quality of the tannins and anthocyanin, allowing for some complex perfumes and intense structure.

BARBARESCO AND NEIVE AREA

Barbaresco and Neive are on the southeast of the city of Alba. These areas on the Sant' Agata blue calcareous and very compacted marls are known for their very structured, deeply complex and longer-living wines.

Tenuta Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Grey Barbaresci Martinenga 2020

Lovely prunes, blueberries and gun-powder tea. A very structured Barbaresco with elegant floral hints and some darker prunes and tobacco notes. Great structure, needs time.

Cascina Luisin Barbaresco Rabaja-bas 2020

Balsamic, sandal wood, strawberry jam and tropical fruit. What a kaleidoscopic nose. I love the juiciness, the minerality and the lengthy sour-cherry and blueberries finish. Great structure.

Giuseppe Cortese Rabaja 2020

A refreshing red-fruit-driven wine with so much energy, and austerity at the same time. Licorice, tar and dry flowers with a red currant juice. Needs time, but there's a great wine here.

Albino Rocca, Barbaresco Ronchi 2020

One of the wines the stood out. It offers enticing medicinal herbs, a balsamic touch, with a brilliant red-driven fruit palate made of pure vibrant juice and a great orange zest and seriously built tannin.

Francone Marco Barbaresco Albesani 2020

A floral nose with very perfumed red-fruit and a structured palate which seems to deliciously melt down after a few sips.

Adriano Marco e Vittorio, Barbaresco Basarin 2020

An inspiring combination of orange zest, coffe beans, raspberries and licorice. The palate is delicate and yet powerful, the tannins are sweet with a great voluminous texture and a very lingering finish.

Poderi e Cantine Oddero, Barbaresco Gallina 2020

Interesting red currants, Mediterranean herbs, rosemary and orange peel with an intense structure, and a wonderful depth of flavors. The texture of the wine is very balanced with a yummy juiciness and some serious aging potential.

Bera, Barbaresco Serraboella 2020

Rosehips, dry violets, strawberries and red currants with so much salinity and a really appealing Mediterranean character. A balanced and refreshing Barbaresco with a balsamic touch.

Collina Serragrilli, Barbaresco Serragrilli 2020

A powerful red-driven fruit wine with a lovely energy,

reactive palate and juiciness. A forward style with sweet fruit and a generous palate. Drink it now or keep it in the cellar to enjoy after a few years.

TREISO

The higher presence of sand and less compacted gray marls of Treiso are home of very fine Barbaresco. Usually they tend to show a leaner structure and a lot of elegance.

Nada Giuseppe, Barbaresco Marcarini 2020

A medicinal-herbs-driven wine with so much balsamic inky complexity over some red plums. Great mineral tannic finesse, good red currant refreshing juice and a contra

Borgogno, Barbaresco Montersino 2020

Flinty, rocky, almost volcanic nose with a great austere style and a darker, driven fruit palate with some intense dark chocolate and a licorice finish. A full bodied wine with depth, length and a gentle touch.

Bel Colle, Barbaresco Pajore 2020

Dry red-currants, pot-pourri and gun powder. A seductive nose delivering some balsamic spiciness which is reflected on the very fine palate packed with sweet, juicy red fruit. Sea breeze, juniper and an iodine finish.

Socrè, Barbaresco 2020

Dry roses, thyme and a cherry-driven palate with a green

tea and laver complexity. Classic style: very perfumed and expressive but also structured and warm. Already enjoyable now, but also with some aging potential.

BARBARESCO RISERVA 2018

The 2018 vintage was a relatively cold and rainy one, yelding some fairly slender, perfumed and lighter Barbaresco. Maybe not the most consistent vintage overall for the Riserva category but when one comes across the right bottles, like our selection below, then the elegance and finesse of Barbaresco erupts gracefully.

Castello di Neive, Barbaresco Albesani Riserva 2018

Incense, black berries and a dash of dry violets. On the palate the wine shows an intense tannic structure which brings verticality and austerity to the wine and a great deal of aging potential.

Sarotto, Barbaresco Currà Riserva 2018

A smokey/leathery-style wine with some sweet oak spices, coffee, plums plus a very pleasant contrast of vanilla and tar aftertaste with a black cherry and licorice touch.

Punset, Barbaresco San Cristoforo Campo Quadro Riserva 2018

Uncompromisingly “Piemontese” with a wonderful combination of white truffle, vanilla, cherries and forest floor. A fantastic example of exceptional structure and balance. Sweet fruit with balsamic power and a saline finish.

ROERO 2020

This appellation is so far mainly about the Arneis crispy and refreshing white. But the small portion dedicated to Nebbiolo is starting to showcase some intriguing reds with a more fruit-driven, smoother and ready-to-drink style when compared to the Barolo and Barbaresco. But make no mistake, this appellation is on the rise and some of these examples will also have a great aging potential!

Bric Castelvej, Roero 2020

A combination of tropical fruit and sweet roots. Tobacco, caradamom and gingerbread offering a very subtle palate again with lots of spices.

Cascina del Pozzo, Roero Montegalletto 2020

Lovely cherry-driven nose opening up to some, cloves, cinnamon and white pepper. Infiltrating tannic structure with a velvet touch and a very generous blueberry finish.

ROERO RISERVA 2019

Across the Riserva I found a wee bit of over-extraction and some unnecessary oak, but when well-interpreted these Roero Riserva can display some serious power and generosity.

Fratelli Casetta, Roero Riserva 2019

Sweet roots, ripe black fruits cinnamon and some oak

spices. There's a leather and earthy complexity with some Mediterranean herbs a dash of chocolate and a refreshing finish.

Cascina Lanzarotti, Roero Riserva SRU 2019

Very intense gunflint notes with a wonderful juicy/reactive power over some chalky tannins which melt down thanks to some refreshing sour cherries and almost citrus acidity.

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