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12 Barberas to Discover Now

New reviews of reds from the northern Italian region of Piedmont for \$30 or less



Photo by: Courtesy of Paolo Scavino

Paolo Scavino's Affinato in Carati bottling is made from old Barbera vines from the estate's Bricco Ambrogio vineyard.

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Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.

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Italy's Piedmont region is best-known for its ageworthy Nebbiolos from Barolo and Barbaresco, but another grape here, Barbera, deserves your attention. And today's picks are all \$30 or less.

The recent releases of Barbera d'Alba hail from the warm 2016 growing season, which saw a wide range of temperatures between day and night, and the hot, dry 2017 vintage. Barbera loves heat, so these conditions were ideal to attain ripe, juicy fruit flavors without losing the grape's characteristically high acidity.

Barbera comes in many styles, from lush and wrapped in toasty oak to elegant, pure and focused. Vineyard sites in Alba are generally higher in elevation than those from Asti, Barbera's other major home in the Langhe. This results in brighter acidity, making these wines particularly compatible with food.

The Paolo Scavino Barbera d'Alba Affinato in Carati and Cascina Adelaide Barbera d'Alba Superiore Vigna Preda are good examples of the elegant side of the grape, while Albino Rocca's Barbera d'Alba and the Giacomo Ascheri Barbera d'Alba Fontanelle epitomize the lush style.

PAOLO SCAVINO Barbera d'Alba Affinato in Carati 2016 Score: 92 | \$30

A hint of bread dough graces the fruit and spice aromas in this intense red. Macerated black cherry, blackberry, bittersweet chocolate and spice flavors permeate the rich texture and solid structure as this cruises to a long finish. Drink now through 2024. 110 cases imported.—B.S.

LUIGI PIRA Barbera d'Alba Superiore 2016 Score: 90 | \$26

A rich version, boasting blackberry, blueberry and earth flavors. The structure is bright and dense, and this persists on the lingering finish. Drink now through 2022. 250 cases imported.—B.S.

ALBINO ROCCA Barbera d'Alba 2017 Score: 90 | \$21

A distinctive graphite aroma is matched to flavors of black currant and blackberry, tinged by violet. This is elegant and focused, with a long, harmonious aftertaste. Drink now through 2023. 150 cases imported.—B.S.

GIANFRANCO BOVIO Barbera d'Alba Il Ciotto 2017 Score: 89 | \$20

A mix of blackberry and boysenberry fruit gains depth from accents of earth. Though polished, there is a light grain from tannins on the juicy finish. Drink now through 2021. 1,200 cases imported.—B.S.

GIANFRANCO BOVIO Barbera d'Alba Regiaveja Superiore 2016 Score: 89 | \$27

Dark, dense and brooding, this red evokes blackberry, plum, chocolate and spice flavors. Feels a bit awkward today, but all the elements are in the right place. Best from 2019 through 2024. 700 cases imported.—B.S.

CASCINA ADELAIDE Barbera d'Alba Superiore Vigna Preda 2016 Score: 89 | \$30

This is spicy, with vanilla, milk chocolate and toasty oak notes framing blackberry and plum fruit. Concedes to dense, dusty tannins on the finish. Drink now through 2023. 600 cases imported.—B.S.

MATTEO CORREGGIA Barbera d'Alba 2016 Score: 89 | \$20

A contemporary style, this red offers aromas of cinnamon, vanilla and black cherry, following up with black cherry, violet and iron flavors. Balanced and firm. Drink now through 2023. 700 cases imported.—B.S.

M. MARENGO Barbera d'Alba Vigna Pugnane 2016 Score: 89 | \$29

This red is bright, exuding plum, blackberry, violet and earth aromas and flavors. Supple and balanced, with a long aftertaste supported by a dense matrix of tannins. Drink now through 2023. 100 cases imported.—B.S.

MALVIRÀ Barbera d'Alba San Michele 2015 Score: 88 | \$23

Ripe, with chocolate-tinged black cherry and plum flavors, this red is dense and shaded by earth and leafy underbrush notes. Offers a rustic feel on the finish, where firm, dry tannins linger. Drink now through 2023. 875 cases imported.—B.S.

GIOVANNI SORDO Barbera d'Alba Superiore Massucchi 2016 Score: 88 | \$30

Plum, earth and spice flavors are showing some development as this red mellows. Rich and dense, turning rigid on the finish. Best from 2019 through 2023. 375 cases imported.—B.S.

PODERI VAIOT Barbera d'Alba Lupestre 2017 Score: 88 | \$18

Abundant lush black cherry and blackberry fruit flavors are balanced by lively acidity in this open, fluid red. Ends with a light dusty feel. Drink now through 2021. 1,600 cases imported.—B.S.

GIACOMO ASCHERI Barbera d'Alba Fontanelle 2017 Score: 87 | \$20

A light earthy note signals this vibrant style of Barbera. Sleek and mouthwatering, displaying black cherry and loam flavors. Drink now through 2021. 400 cases imported.—B.S.

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