

Wine Spectator

The background of the cover is a photograph of an older man and a younger woman standing in front of a dark wooden door with circular metal handles. The man, on the right, has grey hair and is wearing a blue sweater and light-colored trousers. The woman, on the left, has dark hair and is wearing a green jacket over a blue top and a patterned scarf. The door behind them has a circular seal with the word 'SASSICAIA' visible. To the right of the door is a brick wall.

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**BAROLO 2013:
CLASSIC VINTAGE,
GREAT WINES**

**EXPLORING
ITALY'S MARCHE**

**CALIFORNIA RHÔNES:
WHAT TO BUY**

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Giacomo Conterno Barolo
Montfortino Riserva 2010
97 POINTS, \$750

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Collecting guidance, online

of haves and have-nots, says senior editor James Molesworth, and that makes his annual trip to taste the young wines from barrel all the more critical. Which 2017s will be worth buying as futures? Look for his blog posts highlighting top châteaux and estates to watch. Plus, get his scores and tasting notes for hundreds of Bordeaux reds, dry whites and sweet wines.

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PIEDMONT'S BOUNTY

Recent harvests yield a string of successful reds and whites

Luciano Sandrone (center) works alongside his brother Luca and daughter Barbara at the Barolo estate he founded in the 1970s.



By Bruce Sanderson

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW MOLCHEN

It can be difficult for the stars to align in a wine region such as Piedmont, where multiple vintages come into play over a range of different grape varieties. But that's exactly what's happened in this famed Italian region, with the 2013 through 2016 vintages producing excellent wines across the board, from Nebbiolo in Barolo and Barbaresco to Barbera in Alba and Asti to

Dolcetto in Dogliani.

That makes this a great time for fans of Piedmont reds. Fruity Dolcettos and sleek, vibrant Barberas deliver more immediate gratification on an affordable budget, while the current-release Barbarescos and Barolos offer future promise. And though the latter wines are more expensive, there are values to be found.



Schiavenza's Walter Anselma (left) and Luciano Pira rely on traditional winemaking practices at their Serralunga d'Alba estate to produce exceptional Barolos, including this report's top-scoring 2013, as well as excellent values from Dolcetto and Barbera.

If you want bragging rights—and budget is no consideration—the current crop of Barolos, from the 2013 vintage, is the best since the stellar and ageworthy 2010s. They show more purity, perfume and elegance than their predecessors, with a bit less structure and a higher tone, more like violins than cellos.

The 2013 weather conditions benefited Nebbiolo. It was a long growing season, with a later harvest than is usual for the region. The Nebbiolo was picked from the first week of October through the end of the month. Many Barolo producers consider 2013 to be another 2010 or 2006, meaning the wines are classic in style, ripe yet with good acidity. And they show even greater elegance due to their lower alcohol.

“As soon as we brought the grapes in we knew immediately how great the vintage was,” says Barbara Sandrone, who handles the commercial side of her family's winery, Luciano Sandrone. “What characterized the vintage was this long ripening.” Sandrone's Barolo Le Vigne 2013 (95 points, \$155), a blend of four vineyards, and Barolo Aleste 2013 (94, \$170), are among the top Barolos in this report.

Luca Currado of Vietti also made a fine range of Barolos in 2013, leading with the classic-rated Brunate (95, \$175) and Ravera (95, \$175). “I wouldn't say it's a vintage like the 1970s, which were marked by high acidity, but more like the '80s and that's why producers are very excited,” Currado says, referring to a style that offers old-school appeal but isn't lean or acidic, in which a later harvest yields ripe fruit, intense aromas and better balance.

“I don't remember a vintage so explosive in its

youth like 2013,” Currado enthuses. “It's an academic vintage in the sense that it's a study in the differences between the *crus*.”

The top Barolo from 2013 comes from Schiavenza, a small, tradition-minded producer from Serralunga, whose Barolo Prapò (97, \$65) offers complexity and freshness, with cherry, plum, leather and cigar aromas that match the wine's flesh and dense tannins.

Close on its heels are several others from around the zone. The G.B. Burlotto Barolo Monvigliero 2013 (96, \$72) offers a perfumed mix of rose, sandalwood, cedar and cherry flavors on an ethereal frame. Gaja's Barolo Sperss 2013 (96, \$250), once again made from 100 percent Nebbiolo from the Barolo DOCG, is powerful yet harmonious, with textbook rose, tar and cherry flavors that show accents of oak spice, licorice and tobacco.

Giuseppe Mascarello & Figlio's elegant Barolo Monprivato 2013

(96, \$175) evokes floral, cherry, kirsch and licorice flavors. Masolino's Barolo Margheria 2013 (96, \$97) shows the minerality and structure typical of Serralunga, yet its core of ripe fruit should meld with the tannins in time. Renato Ratti's Barolo Conca 2013 (96, \$80) combines power and finesse, while a pair from Paolo Scavino, its Barolo Bricco Ambrogio 2013 (96, \$54) and Barolo Cannubi 2013 (96, \$85), deliver harmony, grace and elegance. Bartolo Mascarello's Barolo (96, \$135) is round and smooth, with a core of cherry surrounded by leather, licorice and underbrush notes.



Monica, Paola and Daniela Rocca (from left) are the third generation to oversee the family's Barbaresco estate, Albino Rocca, which navigated the weather challenges of 2014 to make one of the vintage's best wines.



Overlooking the town of Barolo, with the jagged peaks of the Alps in the distance, rows of Nebbiolo vines line the sloping hills of Barolo's Ravera *cru*, which produces some of the region's most sought-after wines. The 2013 vintage yielded excellent Raveras from G.D. Vajra, Vietti, Elvio Cogno and Marziano Abbona.

“It’s an academic vintage in the sense that it’s a study in the differences between the crus.”

—Luca Currado of Vietti



Despite a more difficult growing season, 2014 also favored the late-ripening Nebbiolo, particularly for Barbaresco. Cool weather and rain were the challenges in 2014, yet Barbaresco received less rain than Barolo—4 inches less, according to Daniela Rocca of Albino Rocca. In addition, conscientious growers green-harvested to reduce the crop, cutting the wings and tips of the Nebbiolo clusters, a technique that promotes ripening.

At Gaja, twice as much time as usual was devoted to managing the vineyards, and a strict selection resulted in some excellent wines, with reductions in yields of 40 percent to 45 percent compared with an average year. Gaja's Barbaresco Sorì San Lorenzo 2014 (95, \$485) is one of the year's top Barbarescos, alongside Albino Rocca's Barbaresco Vigna Loreto Ovello 2014 (95, \$57), Cascina delle Rose's Barbaresco Rio Sordo 2014 (95, \$56) and Paitin's Barbaresco Sorì Paitin Serraboella 2014 (95, \$50). All are vibrant and elegant and should drink well from 2021 through 2035.

These are among the highlights of the nearly 650 Piedmont wines I have blind-tasted in our New York office since my previous report (“Happy Surprise,” April 30, 2017). Nearly 200 are Barolos from the 2013 harvest, with about four dozen more from older vintages, mainly 2012 and 2011. There are also nearly 100 Barbarescos, the bulk of them from the current-release 2014 vintage. The rest are primarily Barbera and Dolcetto, along with a range of whites and miscellaneous reds. Overall, the 2013 vintage earns a rating of 97 points on *Wine Spectator's* 100-point scale, primarily on the strength of its Nebbiolo-based reds.

The earlier vintages of both Barolo and Barbaresco included in this report are showing beautifully as well, led by Giacomo Conterno's Barolo Monfortino Riserva 2010 (97, \$750), Falletto di Bruno Giacosa's Barolo Falletto Vigna Le Rocche Riserva 2011 (97, \$400), Roagna's Barbaresco Montefico Vecchie Viti 2012 (97, \$187) and Cantina del Pino's Barbaresco Ovello 2013 (97, \$62).



Franco Massolino continues a century-old winemaking tradition at his family estate in Serralunga d'Alba, consistently turning out a range of highly rated Barolos.

(A free alphabetical list of scores and prices for all wines tasted is available at www.winespectator.com/043018.)

Nebbiolo also enjoys the spotlight in Alto Piemonte, an area in the Novarese hills about an hour and a half north of Alba. Gattinara is the most important appellation and routinely delivers the top wines. A prime example is Antoniolo's Gattinara Osso San Grato 2012 (95, \$88), with its intense cherry, spice and mineral aromas and flavors and tightly wound structure. The Travaglini Gattinara TreVigne 2012 (92, \$30), Le Piane Boca 2012 (90, \$72) and Tenute Sella Bramaterra I Porfidi 2010 (90, \$51) are worth seeking out as well.

For everyday enjoyment, the Piemontese reach for wines from the Barbera and Dolcetto grapes, and there are dozens of excellent examples of both among recent releases. It's no surprise that the Braidà di Giacomo Bologna Barbera d'Asti Bricco dell'Uccellone 2015 (93, \$67) and Vietti Barbera d'Alba Scarrone Vigna Vecchia 2015 (93, \$85) lead the pack: They are perennial top-scorers, and the hot, dry 2015 vintage was a year in which Barbera—a grape that loves heat—excelled.

Winter snowfall and spring rains in 2015 recharged groundwater, preventing drought stress for the vines during the summer. By

September, the weather had cooled off at night, and the yield for Nebbiolo was slightly less than average due to smaller clusters and less juice, according to Pio Boffa of Pio Cesare. The resulting wines are rich and concentrated.

Although 2016 began on the cooler side, which delayed the growth of the vines, the growing season was consistent, without the heat spikes of its predecessor. As a result the harvest started slightly later, with the whites kicking off in early September. Nebbiolo, the last grape to be picked, benefited from the delay, with warm days and cool nights intensifying aromas and preserving acidity.

"All the grape varieties seem more consistent in quality [in 2016] than in 2015, with less alcohol and better acidity," says Giovanni Pasquero-Elia, whose family owns Paitin in Neive. "It reminds me of 1982, my first harvest."

The newly released 2016 Barberas certainly bear this out. "Specifically, 2016 is a great vintage for Barbera, which achieved perfect maturation thanks to a warm season, especially the range of temperature, day to night, that gave the Barbera its incredible aromas and long aging potential," says Matteo Molino, whose Mauro Molino Barbera d'Asti Leradici 2016 (93, \$18) is a muscular style, boasting blackberry, plum, chocolate and spice flavors. One of the year's best values, it's a new wine from this Barolo producer, whose roots are in the village of Costigliole d'Asti.

The Cascina Chicco Barbera d'Alba Granera Alta 2016 (92, \$21) is another excellent value for Barbera, as are these three from 2015: the Marchesi di Grésy Barbera d'Asti 2015 (91, \$18), Giovanni Rocca Barbera d'Alba Pianromualdo 2015 (91, \$15) and Giovanni Viberti Barbera d'Alba La Gemella 2015 (91, \$17).

Dolcetto is an early-ripening grape that also likes heat and dry weather, even better if the temperature is uniform as the fruit nears full ripening, since it's especially sensitive to extreme swings. Both 2015 and 2016 were favorable for this variety, with the '16s showing greater elegance and perfume. Dolcetto d'Alba is the most widely available version, with most bottlings in the \$15 to \$25 range.

The best from Alba are the seamless, vibrant Ca'Viola Dolcetto d'Alba Vilot 2015 (92, \$20), which evokes blackberry, plum and

Rating Barolo Vintages in Piedmont

2013	97	A cooler growing season and late harvest resulted in wines of purity and finesse, with fine acidity; best Barolos since 2010	<i>Hold</i>
2012	94	Barolos are elegant, balanced and expressive, with fruit and savory elements; elegant, intense, even austere Barbarescos	<i>Drink or hold</i>
2011	93	Rich, fleshy Barolos and balanced Barbarescos; the best have vibrant structures for aging. A fine year for Barbera	<i>Drink or hold</i>
2010	97	A cool growing season and ideal weather before harvest; pure, elegant and structured reds, with fine potential for aging	<i>Hold</i>
2009	90	A warm year with inconsistent ripening; the best reds offer immediate fruit and flesh, others show underripe tannins	<i>Drink</i>
2008	94	Warm late season rescued a cooler-than-average growing season; ripe reds show good structure, purity and elegance	<i>Drink or hold</i>
2007	95	A warm, dry year; wines offer flesh and immediate appeal	<i>Drink or hold</i>
2006	95	Many outstanding reds; cool weather made austere, muscular Nebbiolos with aging potential	<i>Drink or hold</i>
2005	91	Balanced and elegant reds, delivering fruit and ripe tannins for producers who worked well in the vineyard	<i>Drink</i>

Notable older vintages: 2004, 2001, 1999, 1996, 1990, 1989, 1982, 1974, 1971, 1967, 1964, 1961, 1958

A score range indicates preliminary analysis based on barrel samples and/or a limited sampling; many wines of the vintage not yet reviewed.

Vintage ratings: 95–100, classic; 90–94, outstanding; 85–89, very good; 80–84, good; 75–79, mediocre; 50–74, not recommended. **Drinkability:** "NYR" means most of the wines of the vintage are yet to be released; "drink" means most of the wines of the vintage are ready to drink; "hold" means most of the ageworthy wines have yet to fully mature.

pomegranate fruit, and the Bruno Giacosa Dolcetto d'Alba 2016 (92, \$25), whose pure violet and boysenberry notes show accents of earth and dark chocolate.

Dolcetto also takes center stage in nearby Dogliani. The region's slightly cooler climate, due to higher elevation and proximity to the Alps, results in later ripening. Versions from Dogliani typically cost a bit more than those from Alba, falling in the \$20 to \$30 bracket.

The top-scorers include a pair from Luigi Einaudi—its Dogliani 2015 (92, \$16) and single-vineyard Dogliani Superiore Vigna Tecc 2015 (92, \$26), with the latter showing more opulence—along with a trio from Pecchenino, another Dolcetto specialist. Pecchenino's Dogliani Superiore Bricco Botti 2015 (92, \$43) is the most concentrated and solidly built, followed by the Dogliani Superiore Sirì d'Jermu 2015 (92, \$28), still on the austere side, and the juicy Dogliani San Luigi 2016 (91, \$22), the most approachable of the three.

White wines from Piedmont make up roughly 10 percent of this report. The bulk of them are either Gavi, made from the Cortese grape, offering vibrant acidity and notes of apple and almond, or Arneis, a grape closely identified with the Roero, with peach and grapefruit flavors and juicy textures that are immediately appealing.

Most of the highest-rated whites hail from Gavi. Three are from Broglia, its Gavi Bruno 2015 (90, \$38), Gavi Il Doge 2016 (90, \$18) and Gavi La Meirana 2016 (90, \$25). The Bruno has elements of new oak, while the La Meirana is rich and fruity and the Il Doge vibrant and tangy. The Stefano Massone Gavi San Cristoforo 2016 (90, \$17), showing peach, apple, lemon and almond flavors, also offers fine value.

Bruno Giacosa's Roero Arneis 2016 (90, \$30) is a fitting tribute to the Maestro, who died this past January at 88. I tasted it at the winery in April 2017, then again blind at our New York office a few months later. It's impeccably balanced, harmonious and juicy, exuding floral, peach, melon and citrus flavors.

Piedmont offers a range of other whites, too. Some are from familiar grapes, like Pio Cesare's Chardonnay Langhe L'Altro 2016 (89, \$23) or G.D. Vajra's Riesling Langhe Pétracine 2016 (89, \$40). Others are made from local varieties, such as Nascetta, Favorita, Erbaluce and Timorasso. The Elvio Cogno Nascetta Langhe Anascetta 2016 (90, \$35) has a sumptuous texture that verges on oily,



The brother-and-sister team of Matteo and Martina Molino have taken the reins from their father at the family's Mauro Molino estate in La Morra. Producing outstanding Barolos and Barberas, they made one of this report's top-scoring values.

enveloping the floral, peach, nutmeg and white pepper flavors. The Malabaila di Canale Favorita Langhe 2016 (88, \$16) is bright, bursting with peach, apple, freesia and grapefruit peel notes.

As worldwide demand increases for the best Barolos and Barbarescos, prices are on the rise. Several Barolos tasted for this report are \$200 or higher, and about two dozen Barbarescos are upward of \$100, topping out near \$500. Nonetheless, there are values to be had if you look carefully.

Marco & Vittorio Adriano's Barbarescos are in the \$25 to \$30 range and typically earn outstanding ratings. Its Barbaresco Basarin 2014 (94, \$25) is a terrific bargain. The Castello di Neive Barbaresco 2014 (92, \$35) and Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco 2014 (92, \$40) are both widely available.

From Barolo, I was impressed with a number of outstanding wines for \$50 or less, including the Luigi Pira Barolo Serralunga 2013 (95, \$39), Ceretto Barolo 2013 (93, \$40), G.D. Vajra Barolo Albe 2013 (93, \$40) and Enrico Serafino Barolo 2013 (92, \$38).

Fans of Piedmont's reds and whites should be enthusiastic about the current releases available. It's rare that four successive vintages field so many excellent wines in every style. Despite some increase in prices, Piedmont wines still offer good value compared with other regions within Italy and beyond. There's never been a better time to enjoy all that Piedmont has to offer.

Senior editor Bruce Sanderson is Wine Spectator's lead taster on the wines of Piedmont.

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BONUS VIDEOS: Our four-part Best of Barolo video series features some of Piedmont's top wineries: Renato Ratti, Paulo Scavino, Aldo Conterno and Massolino. Watch them at www.winespectator.com/video.

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Bruce Sanderson's Recommended Wines From Piedmont

Nearly 650 wines were reviewed for this report. A free alphabetical list is available at www.winespectator.com/043018. WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

TOP WINES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
GIACOMO CONTERNO Barolo Monfortino Riserva 2010 Black cherry and plum fruit shows vanilla and toasty oak accents in this sleek, polished red, which is lively and beautifully integrated.	97	\$750
FALLETTO DI BRUNO GIACOSA Barolo Falletto Vigna Le Rocche Riserva 2011 This alluring red offers harmonious rose, cherry, raspberry and menthol flavors, picking up tar, tobacco and mineral elements.	97	\$400
CANTINA DEL PINO Barbaresco Ovello 2013 This pretty red offers delicate flavors and subtle power, evoking flow-ers, red berry, mineral, tobacco and tar on the nose and palate.	97	\$62
ROAGNA Barbaresco Montefico Vecchie Viti 2012 A fresh, cherry-scented red that boasts savory flavors of eucalyptus, tar and wild herbs, with a compact and energetic finish.	97	\$187
SCHIAVENZA Barolo Prapò 2013 An aromatic style, laced with cherry, plum, leather and cigar flavors, showing plenty of sweet fruit. Very complex and fresh.	97	\$65
G.B. BURLOTTO Barolo Monvigliero 2013 A perfumed style of Barolo, with berry, tobacco and spice flavors on the palate, all matched to a light-weight, ethereal frame.	96	\$72
CAPPELLANO Barolo Otin Fiorin Piè Rupestris 2012 Expressive aromas and flavors of ripe cherry, licorice, leather, menthol and eucalyptus are the hallmarks of this supple red.	96	\$95
GAJA Barolo Sperss 2013 This complex red offers textbook flavors of rose, tar and cherry, with oak spice, licorice and tobacco. Powerful yet harmonious.	96	\$250
GIUSEPPE MASCARELLO & FIGLIO Barolo Monprivato 2013 A perfumed style, boasting floral, cherry, kirsch and licorice flavors. Elegant overall, with fine balance and a lingering finish.	96	\$175
BARTOLO MASCARELLO Barolo 2013 Round and smooth, with a core of cherry surrounded by leather, lico-ric and underbrush. Tobacco and mineral accents add complexity.	96	\$135
MASSOLINO Barolo Margheria 2013 This red is packed with plum, cherry, leather and iron flavors. There's a solid base of tannins, but also freshness and balance.	96	\$97
RENATO RATTI Barolo Conca 2013 Richly textured, delivering cherry, strawberry and floral flavors backed by power and finesse, with tobacco, mineral and tar notes.	96	\$80
ROAGNA Barbaresco Pajè Vecchie Viti 2012 Sweet cherry and berry flavors mesh with licorice, tar, leather and cigar box nuances. Balanced and round, yet very structured.	96	\$187
PAOLO SCAVINO Barolo Bricco Ambrogio 2013 Enticing aromas of flowers, cherry, strawberry and wild herbs rise from this graceful red, which has a firm underlying structure.	96	\$54
PAOLO SCAVINO Barolo Cannubi 2013 Starts out with firm grip to the flavors, yet opens up with aeration, turning elegant, with vibrant acidity keeping this focused.	96	\$85
ANTONIOLO Gattinara Osso San Grato 2012 An intense and vibrant red, with cherry, spice and mineral flavors. Tightly wound tannins and lively acidity keep this focused.	95	\$88
CASCINA DELLE ROSE Barbaresco Rio Sordo 2014 A lively version, displaying cherry, plum, licorice, spice and subtle tar flavors. Taut and balanced, this is elegant overall.	95	\$56

TOP WINES (continued)

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
GAJA Barbaresco Sorì San Lorenzo 2014 Earthy notes lead off, with cherry, plum, graphite and tobacco flavors. Starts out broad and muscular, yet gains elegance with aeration.	95	\$485
MARCHESI DI GRÉSY Barbaresco Camp Gros Martinenga Riserva 2012 A dense style, offering fresh rose, cherry, licorice, tar and tobacco fla-vors aligned to a vibrant, refined frame.	95	\$118
PAITIN Barbaresco Sorì Paitin Serraboella 2014 Intense aromas and flavors of pure cherry, raspberry and flowers in-roduce this silky, delicate red, which is firmly structured.	95	\$50
PAITIN Barbaresco Sorì Paitin Vecchie Vigne Riserva 2011 Intense, with an amazingly fresh and vibrant structure. A beam of cherry cuts through, with elements of menthol, juniper and rosemary.	95	\$100
ALBINO ROCCA Barbaresco Vigna Loreto Ovello 2014 Pure and elegant, with cherry, strawberry, licorice and menthol flavors focused by juicy acidity. Cruises to a long aftertaste.	95	\$57

TOP VALUES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
MARCO & VITTORIO ADRIANO Barbaresco Basarin 2014 A sleek, elegant red, with rose, cherry, strawberry and white pepper.	94	\$25
MAURO MOLINO Barbera d'Asti Leradici 2016 Rich and concentrated, with blackberry, plum, chocolate and spice.	93	\$18
CA'VIOLA Dolcetto d'Alba Vilot 2015 A seamless version, evoking blackberry, plum and pomegranate fruit.	92	\$20
CASCINA CHICCO Barbera d'Alba Granera Alta 2016 A paean of purity and freshness, this red is elegant and intense.	92	\$21
LUIGI EINAUDI Dogliani 2015 Intense, with dark berry and graphite flavors and bracing acidity.	92	\$16
PAITIN Nebbiolo Langhe Starda 2015 A rich style, with cherry, berry, tobacco, mineral and earth flavors.	92	\$23
MARCHESI DI GRÉSY Barbera d'Asti 2015 Racy, with black cherry and blackberry flavors framed by herb notes.	91	\$18
PECCHENINO Dogliani San Luigi 2016 Black cherry, blackberry, earth and spice flavors mark this juicy red.	91	\$22
GIOVANNI VIBERTI Barbera d'Alba La Gemella 2015 A pure style, with blackberry, black cherry, licorice and black pepper.	91	\$17
BENI DI BATASIOLO Dolcetto d'Alba Vigna Bricco di Vergne 2016 A dense red, with effusive blueberry, pomegranate and violet notes.	90	\$19
LUIGI EINAUDI Dogliani 2016 A beam of pure cherry and blackberry holds court in this juicy version.	90	\$16
OLIM BAUDA Barbera d'Asti La Villa 2016 This brims with juicy cherry, raspberry and black currant flavors.	90	\$17
PICO MACCARIO Barbera d'Asti Lavignone 2016 Offers graphite and spice, with blackberry, pomegranate and fruitcake.	90	\$15
PRUNOTTO Barbera d'Asti Fiulot 2015 Coffee, iron and blackberry flavors mark this fluid yet structured red.	90	\$16