

Print Edition of Weekly eLetter July 30, 2009

108 East 16th Street • New York, NY 10003 • (212) 473-2323
italianwinemERCHANTS.com

Barbaresco is often referred to as a junior Barolo: where Barolo is king, Barbaresco is queen. But Barbaresco always seems to be an also-ran to Barolo's pageant winner. Certainly, there's no way I can knock Barolo—it's Italy's most esteemed wine for many good reasons—but I can't help but wonder if Barbaresco doesn't pale by close comparison. The two regions, after all, abut; the wines derive from the same grapes; the big differences between Barbaresco and Barolo are that Barbaresco's territory is just a bit more elevated, a little cooler and a little more in the path of ocean breezes. No matter how close they are, Barbaresco has always lurked in the shadows of its more famous neighbor.

However, those days of relative obscurity seem to be on the wane. Though always popular among Italians, Barbaresco is now becoming wildly popular with wine collectors. Due to Angelo Gaja's single-vineyard efforts and precise viticultural and winemaking practices, Barbaresco started to gain attention and prestige in the mid-1960s. Over time Gaja's contributions to Barbaresco included reducing crop size, decreasing fermentation periods, utilizing temperature-controlled tanks, and aging wines in barrique. All of Gaja's tinkering with Barbaresco not only changed the wine; it also changed the way people understood Barbaresco. To some it was enlightening, to others it was outrageous.

Gaja may have opened the door for Barbaresco's cultish acceptance in the cosseted world of wine connoisseurs, but other producers have shoved that door wide open. Barolo maker extraordinaire Bruno Giacosa makes Barbarescos whose collectability rival that of Gaja. It's not surprising Giacosa's Barbarescos are that amazing, for Barolo producers have always traditionally made Barbaresco, and a winemaker who can craft a beautiful Barolo can pretty much make a glory of any wine he sets his mind to making. But it's not merely the old Barolo guard who has set the Barbaresco world on fire—Carlo and Bruno Rivettis' work has been incendiary and the making of a cult sensation. The estate founded by these brothers, La Spinetta, engaged in a methodology that took every tool reviled by the traditionalists—intensive pruning, rotofermenters, refinement in 100% new barrique—and delivered a Barbaresco that did something that was previously inconceivable: they offered an immediately drinkable, intense, ultra-ripe, hedonistic Barbaresco. Wine drinkers across the world were enthralled.

The product of three generations of committed winemakers, Bruno Giacosa nurtures a profound passion for Piedmontese wine. Giacosa is not an enologist, which surprises most people. He learned by working with his father and grandfather and became fascinated by what could be created from the grape. Giacosa feels that wines were better in the past, when there was less sophistication in the wine and less handling of the grapes. Until recently Giacosa owned no vineyards; he bought all the grapes he required, selecting, from some of the area's best sites, but in 1982, he bought the Falletto vineyard in Serralunga d'Alba and established himself as a winegrower as well as a winemaker.

Giacosa makes several Barbarescos, and IWM is featuring four today in both their normale and their riserva styles: Barbaresco Asili, Barbaresco Gallina, Barbaresco Santo Stefano are all Barbaresco crus; Giacosa also makes a cuvee and we are featuring his 1998 Barbaresco Riserva.

Asili

This cru Barbaresco comes from the first vines Bruno Giacosa purchased in this region. The 25-acre Asili vineyard generally yields just 250 cases because of Giacosa's strict grape selection. Giacosa practices long maceration periods that last over three weeks. However, the Asili generally receives slightly less time aging in both barrel and bottle, a choice that yields expressive fruit qualities. In the best vintages, this wine can bear the qualification "Riserva" on the label. Vibrant, elegant, balanced, Asili has a charming personality exemplified in its ripe red fruit, floral and spice aromatics, and touching spike of tannins.

Bruno Giacosa 2005 Barbaresco Asili (1.5) \$327.00** Drink 2013-2025
Bruno Giacosa 2001 Barbaresco Asili \$169.99 Drink 2009-2021
Bruno Giacosa 2004 Barbaresco Asili Riserva \$399.00** Drink 2010-2025
Bruno Giacosa 2004 Barbaresco Asili Riserva (1.5) \$829.00** Drink 2010-2025
Bruno Giacosa 2004 Barbaresco Asili Riserva (3) \$1399.00** Drink 2010-2025
Bruno Giacosa 2000 Barbaresco Asili Riserva (Red Label) (1.5) \$1078.00 Drink 2006-2020



Gallina

While Santo Stefano and Asili may receive wide attention, the prestigious Gallina Barbaresco in Neive also deserves acclaim, even if it's overshadowed by its towering cousins. The Gallina delivers concentration, depth and elegance, carrying bright fruit and a bold streak of minerality. Since Giacosa has been spending more time on his Barolo, he has not produced a Gallina since the late nineties. The wine is aged three years in 15-year-old French oak barrels, followed by an additional several months in bottle prior to being released. The Gallina Barbarescos are in ever-decreasing supply; serious collectors would do well to purchase theirs soon.

Bruno Giacosa 1996 Barbaresco Gallina \$184.99 Drink 2011-2025
Bruno Giacosa 1988 Barbaresco Gallina \$313.40 Drink 2000-2012

Barbaresco Riserva

A blend of grapes from Giacosa's various crus around Barbaresco including Gallina, Asili, Rabaja and Santo Stefano, this Barbaresco is typically approachable earlier than Giacosa's single vineyard crus, and the '98 is ready to drink right now. Steeped in dark fruit, rich with leather and spice, underlain by earth and truffles, and touched by chocolate, this is a wonderful Barbaresco.

Bruno Giacosa 1998 Barbaresco Riserva \$315.00** Drink 2010-2023

Santo Stefano

Giacosa's signature Barbaresco, Santo Stefano, is often the most heralded wine in the region and very well may be the most collectible Barbaresco in the world. Originally bottled in 1960, the Santo Stefano is sourced from five acres planted between 1967 and 1977. Giacosa's Barbaresco Santo Stefano is on par with Gaja's three crus, representing the pinnacle of Barbaresco. It is characterized by a perfumed nose of rose petal, cinnamon, currant, and licorice, followed by a rich, velvety mouth-feel.

Bruno Giacosa 1997 Barbaresco Santo Stefano (3) \$750.00 Drink 2001-2016
Bruno Giacosa 1990 Barbaresco Santo Stefano Riserva (1.5) \$1688.00** Drink 2006-2016

Get the **WEEKLY eLETTER**

To receive a complete copy of the most extensive newsletter on Italian wine, sign-up at
italianwinemERCHANTS.com.

This week, we're pleased to be offering you a range of Barbarescos from these three astounding producers: Gaja, Giacosa and La Spinetta. The same type of wine, three different producers, three different styles, all incredible in their own right: it's a bounty of Barbaresco, one of the best summer reds. No matter which one you choose—and I urge you to try all three—you'll be drinking a wine that hits you like a bolt of sunshine from the inside, warms you with that unmistakable Piemonte beauty, and reminds you that life can sometimes be very sweet and very easy.

Studio Regionale TASTING SERIES

Beach Blanket Bonanza

Saturday, August 1, 1:00-3:00 PM \$50.00

No Barolo here—this Studio Regionale tasting on August 1 features wines whose easy-going personalities will complement your high-quality shore-time. In addition to whites like Sogno Due's tropically reminiscent Falanghina, Cecilia's crisp Vermentino, and Bruna's seductively complex Pigato, our sommeliers will be pouring some beach-ready reds: Rocche dei Manzoni's piquant Dolcetto, and a savory Nero d'Avola from Sicilian producer COS, among others. Accompanied by summery fare, the wines we'll be serving at our Beach Blanket Bonanza will show you how to pack your Italian wine basket when planning a day at the ocean. Don't forget the sunscreen!

Pomodori e Vini: A Match Made In Summer Heaven

Saturday, August 8, 1:00-3:00 PM \$55.00

That seductive red hue, that voluptuous flesh, that indescribable tang—tomatoes are a gift from the gods, and there's no time to enjoy them like August. On Saturday August 8, IWM's Studio Regionale tasting series will celebrate the season's harvest with a special pairing of wines and fresh, ripe, juicy heirloom tomatoes. Our sommeliers will be pouring specially selected wines chosen for their ability to elicit the best from Italy's favorite fruit, pomodoro. In this walk-around tasting, you'll be treated to wines that range from the top of the boot to its tip: Alois Caiati, a gorgeously subtle white from Campania; Veliko Bianco from Friuli's Movia and a Rosso from Valle d'Aosta; and a Barbera d'Alba, a Nebbiolo from Piemonte's Langhe Hills and a Rosso di Montalcino to represent Italy's center. Summer tomatoes come but once a year. Celebrate them with style—at IWM!

Lunch is Served: Panini, Porchetta, and More!

Saturday, August 15, 1:00-3:00 PM \$50.00

A lot of time has passed since Mom cut the crusts of your PB & J. You've grown up, and so has your palate. This special Studio Regionale tasting on Saturday, August 15 will show you ways to make your lunch reflect your maturity. At this walk-around tasting, IWM sommeliers will pour a bevy of wines as you enjoy delicious chef-made panini, steak sandwiches and porchetta sandwiches, all lovingly crafted from IWM's own in-house Salumeria. You'll be sampling some of IWM's favorite lunchable wines: Castello di Cacciano's vibrant Chianti, Valle dell'Acate's charming Cerasuolo, Tenuta dell'Ornellaia's robust Le Volte, along with a Merlot, a Syrah and other delicious sandwich-enhancing reds. After this tasting, you'll never look at lunch quite the same way again.

To learn more about IWM's Studio Regionale Saturday Tasting Series, or to make a reservation, please contact TARA CARILLE at (212) 473-2323 x145 or email tcarille@italianwinemerchant.com.

Angelo Gaja is a winemaker who galvanized winemaking in Piemonte with his radical and controversial departure from conventional viticultural techniques. The early innovations in his history, which formally began with the 1962 vintage, include the reduction of crop size, shortened pruning of Nebbiolo vines, and decreased fermentation periods. The 1975 vintage marked his inaugural use of small French oak barrels, and Gaja is widely regarded as having instituted this signature practice of the modernist movement, thereby softening the formidable tannins of the Nebbiolo grape and producing a wine that is richer and more expressive of its fruit than traditional models. Gaja continues to employ some of the largest and oldest botti in Piemonte to craft a traditional-style Barbaresco, sourced from various vineyards in the Langhe zone.

GAJA

Angelo honors his heritage in his Barbaresco bottlings, because it is a pure-varietal expression of the Nebbiolo grape. A Gaja Barbaresco will typically show a ruby-purple color and offer a complex bouquet of wild red fruits, accented by licorice, toasted aniseed, and coffee beans. Rich but toned, showing a vivacious stroke of acidity, Gaja Barbarescos possess well-integrated tannins that support their long finish. Open a bottle and see why the name Gaja is synonymous with outstanding Barbaresco. Not merely the best of Barbarescos, these wines of Gaja are among the world's most acclaimed and sought-after wine bottlings.

Gaja 2005 Barbaresco \$155.40 Drink 2015-2030
Gaja 1990 Barbaresco (1.5) \$798.00 Drink 1994-2014
Gaja 1982 Barbaresco (1.5) \$723.36 Drink 2005-2015
Gaja 1967 Barbaresco \$385.00** Drink Now

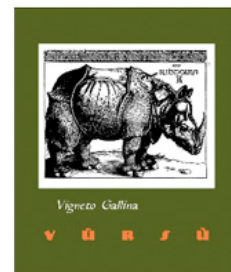
Gaja 2005 Barbaresco (1.5) \$425.00 Drink 2015-2030
Gaja 1988 Barbaresco (1.5) \$495.00** Drink 1995-2007
Gaja 1970 Barbaresco \$229.00 Drink Now
Gaja 1958 Barbaresco \$398.00 Drink Now

Since its founding in 1977, La Spinetta has become a modern Italian superstar winery, producing some of Piemonte's most delicious wines. Enologist Stephane Mazzetta, who settled in at La Spinetta several years ago after working at other top Langhe wineries, implements and oversees the work in La Spinetta's stunning, first-class cellars that handle grapes from over 250 acres of vineyards. The estate crafts three Barbarescos—Gallina, Valeirano, and Staderi—all of which IWM is featuring this week. Though clearly crafted with an "international" leaning, these wines are not overly modern; they're just incredibly voluptuous, heady, commanding, and delicious.

Gallina

The most approachable of the very approachable Spinetta Barbaresco, Gallina tends to really own its ripe core of abundant red fruit. The 2005 is no exception to this rule. It delivers a heady, sensuous, Spinetta perfume of dark fruit, spice, floral notes and tar. The '05 has tremendous structure that favors its flavors of super-ripe red cherry, plum, roses, and truffle. Drinking now through 2020, only 950 cases the '05 Gallina are available.

La Spinetta 2005 Barbaresco Gallina \$99.00 Drink 2010-2020



Staderi

If the name La Spinetta elicits a thesaurus of synonyms for opulence, Staderi is its tangible evocation. In vintage after vintage, it is the most dramatically concentrated of the estate's Barbaresco trio, oftentimes showing an exhibitionist abandon in its power and voluptuousness. Fresh, pure, and bright, the '05 will benefit with cellaring until 2012, when its core of candied red fruit, tar and earth will really mesh with its aromatics of roses and spice. A delightful Barbaresco, the '05 Staderi will drink until 2025.

La Spinetta 2005 Barbaresco Staderi \$99.00 Drink 2012-2025

Valeirano

Though restraint isn't the first word that comes to mind when La Spinetta's the subject, Valeirano is routinely noted for its structure and austerity, though the fruit is still quite ample and dense. The 2004 Valeirano shows strawberry, spice, coffee, and plum flavors, but it requires a brief period of aging in order to be fully fleshed. The 2005 Valeirano has a more masculine, powerful personality. In the glass, its dynamic persona slowly reveals a spectrum of flavor—black cherry, blackberry, menthol, tar, and truffle. Only 580 cases of both were crafted, making it the most limited of the crus, and both would benefit from four or five years in the cellar.

La Spinetta 2005 Barbaresco Valeirano \$99.00 Drink 2012-2022
La Spinetta 2004 Barbaresco Valeirano \$99.00 Drink 2009-2018