



WINE CLUB CHRONICLE

August 2017

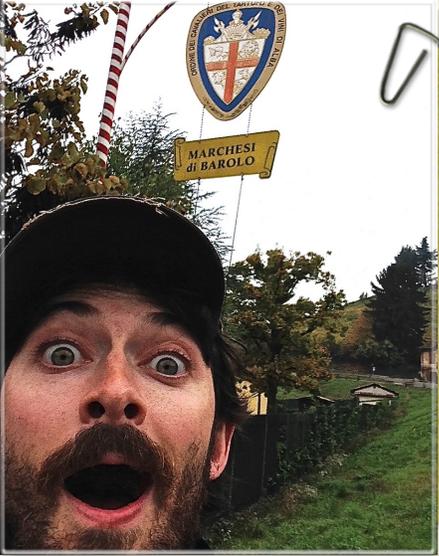
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THIS JUST IN

How can we explain just how excited we are for this month's wine club? The elusive, enigmatic wines of Piemonte are both in short supply and high demand, and you know how the economics of that usually work out... and it's just not everyday that an established, top-notch, **total boss** producer becomes available to us.

And then, lo and behold, an importer friend casually mentions that they might have a line on the wines of Marchesi di Barolo! For context, this was one of the first spots Matt went when he biked through Piemonte. It was a 1982 Barolo, made by Marchesi di Barolo, that Chad drank when working as a busboy in the Seattle fine dining scene that turned him onto wine in the first place...oh yes. We're exultant, agog, over the moon here folks. Look forward to us carrying more of this producer in the future!



*Matt,
a.k.a.
master of
the selfie :)
biking
through
Piemonte in
Oct 2016*

COLLECTOR CLUB



Aged in the traditional 30-hectoliter (~800 gallons) Slavonian oak barrels before being blended into one even larger old oak cask, the transparency of flavors here is simply awe-inspiring. Dried rose petals commingling alongside cherries and cured tobacco...but goodness this needs to breathe! That is classic Barbaresco: its light color and seductive aroma makes it easy to think it will be soft and generous, but in fact there are some firm, powerful tannins to be found. We found an hour at least in the decanter opened up its gorgeous palate. **Decant or drink 2020-2030**

Piemonte!!!

CELLAR WINE CLUB



Wine: **Marchesi di Barolo 'Servaj' Dolcetto 2015**
Grape variety: Dolcetto
Vinification: fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks
Tasting notes: Can you say ch-ch-ch-ch-cherry bomb?! That's we got right away on the nose of the "**Servaj**" **Dolcetto 2015**: perfectly ripe, sweetly perfumed Bing cherry fruit, tinged with almond and dried violet flowers. The no-oak treatment really lets the pure fruit shine, which is what Dolcetto does so well.
Drink: Now through 2020
Pairing: Hey, this is Italian wine after all; we had it with pizza topped with sausage and green olives, and it was a delight!

Wine: **Marchesi di Barolo 'Maraia' Barbera del Monferrato 2014**
Grape variety: Barbera
Vinification: aged one year in large Slavonian oak casks
Tasting notes: The nose has a lot of upfront oak; not so much heavy vanilla creaminess but rather a dusty, woody overtone, followed up by plenty of berries and subtler white pepper. Monferrato is a standout region for Barbera, and this certainly has more body and structure than many.
Drink: Now through 2021
Pairing: smoked pork, spiced fruit compote, and over-the-top charcuterie boards



CLUB RED

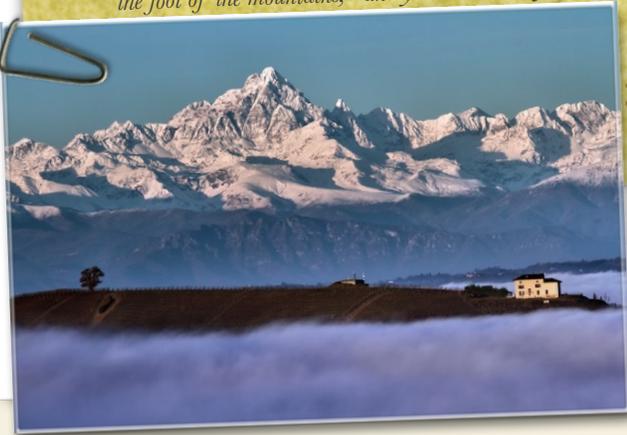


Wine: **Marchesi di Barolo 'Sbirolo' Langhe Nebbiolo 2014**
Grape variety: Nebbiolo
Vinification: gently pressed so as not to extract too much bitter tannin from the seeds; aged in concrete tanks
Tasting notes: Yummers! I could just about curl up and take a nap inside those aromatics: hints of tea leaves, orange peel, and raspberry all humming along in captivating harmony. We also love that while this is remarkably easy to drink, if you're looking more careful contemplation and nuance, it provides that in spades as well, as it evolves in the glass.
Drink: Now through 2022
Pairing: fresh pasta and sautéed mushrooms



A BRIEF ITALIAN LESSON

A hilltop vineyard of Barbaresco pokes through the region's famously thick fog; **Piemonte** translates to "at the foot of the mountains," and you can see why!



Nebbiolo, at left, grows perfectly fine in foggy Piemonte; its name in Italian even means 'little fog,' perhaps due to the dusky whitish bloom that comes on as it ripens.



To the right, a cluster of **Dolcetto** grapes; lower in acidity and not nearly as tannic as many other grapes of the region, its name means "little sweet one." *Awwwwww....*

A TALE OF TWO CITIES HILLTOP VILLAGES

Like much of Italy, Piemonte, in the northwestern corner of the country (see map below), is dotted with historic hilltop towns. Two of those towns, Barolo and Barbaresco, account for a very small proportion of all the wine from Piemonte, yet shine in outsize importance for many wine lovers. These are the two areas where Nebbiolo grows best. Barolo and Barbaresco are often thought of as 'the Burgundy of Italy,' and the Nebbiolo grape does have at least some comparisons with Burgundy's Pinot Noir: beguiling aromatics that seem to shift every time you come back to the glass, a strong sensitivity to vintage variation and a stubborn insistence on only showing its greatness in just the right soils and terroirs. In fact, while Pinot Noir has been shown to make very excellent wines in several areas outside of its native Burgundy (though we'd never tell that to a Burgundian!), Nebbiolo so far has resisted mass plantings anywhere outside of Piemonte.

While Nebbiolo is grown in many areas throughout Piemonte, Barolo and Barbaresco are the best known areas. In this foggy region, being on top of the hill has some solid advantages; the fog burns off much sooner in the mornings, and yet the temperatures typically don't get quite as hot as they do on the flatlands below. Nebbiolo is a late-ripening grape, and needs all the help it can get to bring that full flavor development around; it's no coincidence that many of the best vineyards straddle the ridge lines or occupy the sunniest aspects of these hills.

While there are big similarities, the wines of Barolo and Barbaresco do show some differences. The classic dichotomy says that Barolo is the 'bigger, more masculine' wine, while Barbaresco is 'more elegant, more feminine.' We'd like to think there are less stereotyped descriptions out there! Barolo is more like a summer action blockbuster, while Barbaresco is a breakout indie flick...? Barolo is to Beyoncé as Barbaresco is to Solange? At any rate, here is a quick breakdown of some of the differences between the two standouts of Piemonte:

BAROLO

- minimum aging of 3 years, 5 for Riserva
- more tannic
- often higher alcohol
- good vintages can age 40+ years



BARBARESCO

- minimum aging of 2 years, 4 for Riserva
- less tannic
- often lower alcohol
- good vintages age well for 20 years, sometimes more

