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PIEDMONT SHINES WITH RELEASES, ESPECIALLY BAROLO 2016

You are going to find some great bottles right now if a trip to a wine shop, or a visit online, means buying wine from Italy's Piedmont region. First, plenty of new and classic quality 2016 Barolos and Barbarescos are now available and they are reminiscent of the excellent and well-structured 2010s, which some say is one of the best vintages ever. In addition, the hot and dry weather in 2017 made some wonderfully rich and opulent barberas that are exciting to drink due to all their exuberant fruit and ripe tannins. Plus, an array of other wines is available from bright and fruity whites such as arneis and chardonnay to lightly sweet and fruity moscatos as well as dolcettos and blends.

The Barolos and Barbarescos already out, or soon-to-be released, are really something special. I rated three 100 points: Bruno Giacosa Falletto Barolo Falletto Vigna Le Rocche Riserva 2016, Bruno Giacosa Barbaresco Asili Riserva 2016 and Roberto Voerzio Barolo Cerequio 2016. I also scored nearly 100 other wines 95 points or more including a number of older vintages. It's a great time to drink and keep great Barolo. It's hard to go wrong with just about every year being excellent in the last decade with the exception of 2014.

"The 2016s Barolos have a great richness in all their components and in tannic structure," said Roberto Voerzio, arguably the master of the appellation now. "The wines have bright colors, very intense aromas and flavors, and are extremely rich in red fruits typical of this variety with floral scents in the different crus (vineyard sites). All these characteristics give them great harmony and finesse immediately."

His last comment really hits the nail on the head. I tasted more than 250 different Barolo 2016s and am impressed with how so many have such beautiful early drinkability, yet they have a formidable structure of tannins, fruit and acidity. It's hard not to drink them now even knowing that they are wonderful wines for the cellar. I heard that legendary vintages such as 1964 and 1958 were like that when they were young and I can tell you that they are still great now, because I have drunk a number of 1964s and 1958s recently and they are superb.

"These wines are really open and beautiful," admitted Bruno Giacosa of Bruno Giacosa, one of the longtime great wineries of the region. "You can drink them already. The 2015 was really great because it had so much fruit but elegance. It was also more open to drink. The 2016 is different. The wines are more structured. It has more life ahead of it. 2016 was just right because the weather was perfect. Everything came at the same time and at the right time."

Indeed, everything seems to have come out excellent so far with 2016. I don't think it's possible to generalize about certain villages or vineyard sites being better. Just about everyone made great



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wines. So buy, drink and enjoy this marvelous vintage. Don't forget 2015 which is equally outstanding but produced slightly richer and dense reds due to the slightly hotter growing season.

"We love Barolo 2016," said Luca Currado, the head of the great house of Vietti. "It's one of the best vintages I made in 30 harvests. I am sure you have the same comments from all the wineries. The more 2016 I taste from my colleagues the more I like them!"

At first I didn't think that 2016 could be better than the excellent 2015 for Barolo, but I have to say the more 2016s I taste the more I like them and the more I think they are better than 2015 in the end. It's fair to say that we have two superb back-to-back vintages for nebbiolo. I think both produced Barolos and Barbaresco that need bottle age before opening. I would suggest three to four years but it's fun to taste and drink them even now.

I rated about 700 wines from Piedmont so far this year and I have more coming. The region really is shining bright in 2020 even though it was slightly overshadowed at the beginning of the year with the monumental release of Brunello di Montalcino 2015.

"We are extremely happy with the results of our 2016s and we believe that 2017 can be just as exciting but in a different style," said Pio Boffa of Pio Cesare. "Piedmont has a lot to offer in excellent wine at the moment."

– James Suckling, CEO & editor

FORTE MASSO BAROLO CASTELLETTO 2016

Tuesday, August 4, 2020



Country Italy
Region Piedmont
Vintage 2016

Score
93

Attractive berry, plum and white-pepper character with a medium to full body, round and juicy tannins and a savory finish. Drink after 2022.

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