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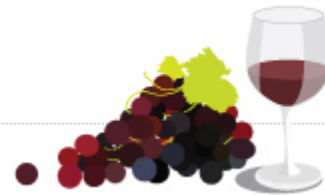
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Italian Red Wines for Summer

Seven fruity wines from Piedmont worth drinking
by Ted Loos

tasting notes



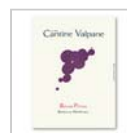
When it comes to drinking red wine in the summertime, I frequently reach for one from Piedmont, the storied northwestern Italian region that brings to mind mountains and risotto with white truffles. It's hard to resist the marvelous acidity in many Piedmontese wines that stems from the grape varieties grown there and the cool, often foggy climate. The best of the lot whet your appetite and remain light on their feet, making a good match for a variety of summer foods.

Barolo and Barbaresco reign as the king and queen of Piedmontese wines, and for good reason. Both of them are made from the full-bodied Nebbiolo grape, and the finest examples have a regal, age-worthy bearing. Come summer, I lean toward Barbaresco, with its lighter structure offering rich fruit in an elegant package. It's often described as feminine compared to Barolo, its more tannic, masculine counterpart. [Ceretto Barbaresco Asij 2006](#) (\$45) is amazingly supple, with a heavenly mouthfeel and tons of mild cranberry and pomegranate character. It really dances on the palate, providing an elegant drinking experience all the way to the long finish.

Pricewise, a \$45 bottle of Barbaresco is a relative bargain. A version from the legendary Angelo Gaja can cost you \$200 or more, and one Web site lists the average price of the 2006 vintage as \$55. So it makes sense to explore the more modestly priced side of the Nebbiolo grape, as well as the other grapes from Piedmont.

[Renato Ratti Ochetti Nebbiolo D'Alba 2008](#) (\$15) is a value that borders on an outright steal when you consider the dusky dark chocolate and wild blackberry tastes in play, not to mention the deep plush red color. You can kick it up a notch in intensity with a bottle of [Vietti Langhe Nebbiolo Perbacco 2007](#) (\$25), a heartier, almost Barolo-like wine with its brooding black cherry and spice notes. [Grilled pork](#) would be a great accompaniment; it's not exactly light, but it's just right.

wine picks



[Cantine Valpane Barbera del Monferrato 2006](#)



[Fontanafredda Langhe Barbera Eremo 2005](#)



[Marchesi di Gresy Martinenga](#)

Italy's *Vino a Denominazione di Origine Controllata* (DOC) regulates wine production with lots of rules, but the Langhe appellation was created in the 1990s to give winemakers freedom to blend with non-Nebbiolo grapes. What you get are wonderful wines such as [Ceretto Langhe Rosso Monsordo 2008](#) (\$25). Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah are mixed with the local favorite, and the result is a good beginner wine for newbies to Piedmont. The more international fruit-forward style is familiar and appealing yet uniquely local.

I would be remiss not to mention one other Piedmont grape: Barbera, notable for its racy acidity. The elegant crisp edge, the ruby color, the friendly featherweight charm—it's what I serve when I'm not sure exactly *what* to serve. It's a mighty versatile grape. Last summer, the Barbera performed beautifully during a memorable meal at the beach, flattering all the foods from [barbecue chicken](#) to [grilled zucchini](#). I find that Barbera pairs particularly well with beets in a slightly tart preparation such as this [roasted beet salad](#).

Vietti makes five different Barberas each year, all of them outstanding. [Vietti Barbera d'Alba Tre Vigne 2008](#) (\$25) is a paragon of freshness and tastes like a basket of just-picked raspberries and blackberries. There's a touch more structure (a.k.a. tannin) and cherry-spice character in [Pio Cesare Barbera d'Alba 2008](#) (\$25). [Michele Chiarlo Barbera d'Asti Le Orme 2009](#) (\$15), ripe and plummy, shows off the great vintage from which it hails. And as far as summer dinner parties go, all three of these wines just can't be beat.

Prices and availability subject to change.



Ted Loos, a former editor of [Wine Spectator](#), has written about wine for [Bon Appétit](#), [Decanter](#), [Town & Country](#), and many other publications. He also covers design and the arts for [The New York Times](#), [Vogue](#), and [Architectural Digest](#), among others. Follow him on Twitter: [@LoosLips](#)

[Nebbiolo DOC 2009](#)



[Prinsi Barbaresco Gaia Principe 2004](#)



[Pier Barbaresco Riserva Rio Sordo 2000](#)

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