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text size: [T](#) [T](#) Wine of the Week August 25, 2011, 2:23 PM EDT

Versatile Vietti

The 2008 Vietti Barbera d'Alba, Tre Vigne, combines the seriousness of a Barolo with the liveliness of a fruitier, less-pricey wine

By [Nick Passmore](#)

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The Italian red wines I enjoy frequently fall into two categories: They are either lively, fruity, and unpretentious—wines to be enjoyed without being taken too seriously, or not seriously at all—and the great Barolos and Brunellos that demand long aging and very serious contemplation, indeed.

The current Wine of the Week, the Vietti Barbera d'Alba, Tre Vigne 2008 (\$18), manages to fall into both categories at the same time, or almost the same time.

Let me explain. The other evening, I opened a bottle. After I let it breathe for an hour, it was quite delightful with a steak. It showed lovely fruit—red and black cherries, with hints of strawberries—backed by nice woody touches. A great wine for a barbeque, I thought, even if evil Uncle Albert has smothered the ribs in his way-too-pungent sauce.

I then pumped out the remaining half-bottle and put it aside till the next evening, at which point I received a wonderful surprise. In the intervening 24 hours the wine had undergone a transformation. It had grown up. It had developed an unexpected depth and complexity and was now a really quite-serious wine.

Thirty-year-old vines and exemplary winemaking have produced that rarest of creatures—a wine that can be enjoyed today without any hint of compromise and also kept for several years as it matures into a great wine.

The Barbera grape is known for its versatility. If this is what's meant by versatility, I'm all for it.

When to Drink: Now and for the next five years

Breathing/Decanting: Yes—let it breathe for an hour

Food Pairing: Pasta, pizza, steak

Grapes: 100% Barbera

Appellation: Barbera d'Alba

Region: Piedmont

Country: Italy

Price: \$18

Availability: Moderate

Web Site: www.vietti.com

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[Nick Passmore](#) is an independent wine writer and consultant based in New York. For five years he contributed a widely read monthly wine column to Forbes.com, in addition to which his work has appeared in such publications as *Forbes*, *Discover*, *Town & Country*, the *Robb Report*, the *Wine Enthusiast*, *Saveur*, *Sky*, and *Golf Connoisseur*. He is currently Artisanal Editor for *Four Seasons* magazine and contributes a twice monthly column to BusinessWeek.com. He is also a judge at the widely respected annual Critics' Challenge wine competition.

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