

# Food-friendly reds from Italy for spring

Italy produces more wine per capita than any other country, and its wines make for a perfect transition into spring. Italian wines also have a balance and drinkability that make them especially food-friendly — they come from a county of people who consider

wine as much a part of a meal as the silverware.

All across Italy, there are wine regions I urge you to discover: Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige, Sicily, Veneto, Umbria, Abruzzi ... Today, we're tasting from Tuscany and Piedmont. In terms of branding (not character), they are the Napa and Sonoma of Italy.



**On Wine**

**MARK TARBELL**  
 Special for  
 The Republic

**2009 ERA Sangiovese, ITG Marche (\$9-\$12):** The color is light and fresh. The aroma is simple and very pleasant, with some red fruit showing. The taste is a little spicy and green but pleasant. A low-cost, good-value wine. 84 points.

**2008 Mastrojanni "San Pio" Cabernet/Sangiovese Blend, Montalcino (Tuscany) (\$25-\$30):** Montalcino, a sub-region of Tuscany, is the home of the great Brunellos. This Mastrojanni is a

lovely dark, currant red with aromas of great dusty Cab notes and a hint of wild strawberry. The taste is that of a luscious Euro Cab. It's not at all jammy, balanced with just enough earth and fruit. 90 points.

**2008 Bruno Giacosa Barbera d'Alba, Piedmont (\$27-\$32):** The color is medium- to high-intensity currant red. The aroma is wonderfully Old World and earthy, with some nice subtle ripeness in the end. The taste is surprisingly forward. It's very attractive and balanced. You'll find this wine beautifully suited for sipping or for pairing with food. 88 points.

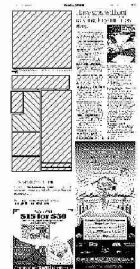
**2008 Vietti "Perbacco" Nebbiolo, Piedmont (\$18-\$24):** This wine is a deep, lush purple, almost opaque. The aromas are focused dark berry. At first taste, there's a punch of extracted dark fruit, but then the wine softens and shows more lushness in the finish. 89 points.

**2009 Vietti "Tre Vigne" Barbera d'Alba, Piedmont (\$19-\$24):** Pour this into a glass and just enjoy looking at it for a bit. It's a deep, vibrantly toned ruby, thick and rich but not opaque. The aroma doesn't disappoint, either — it's expressive and forward for the wine's age, a lovely basket of tart and ripe red berry. And the taste just seals the deal, balanced and lush with good structure and some terroir. It's a great value. 91 points.

*Reach Tarbell, owner of Tarbell's in Phoenix, at wine@tarbells.com.*

**KEY TO THE RATINGS**

- 100:** A perfect wine.
- 95-99:** Excellent. Worth looking for.
- 90-94:** Extremely good. A standout in its class.
- 85-89:** Very good. A solid, well-made wine



and a good value.

**80-84:** Good. Fine for everyday entertaining and large parties.

**75-79:** A soundly made wine for everyday drinking.



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