

Antonio Galloni/December 2015

Affordable Piedmont – Dolcetto, Barbera and Langhe Nebbiolo

It's easy to get discouraged these days as prices for the most desired Barolos and Barbarescos continue to spiral upward. The reality is that top-flight Piedmont wines don't have to cost a fortune. Readers will find plenty of terrific values next to the icons, but it will take careful selection given the current vintages on the market. These are some of the best Piedmont values I tasted this year. Many of the wines in this article retail for \$25 a bottle or less.

2014 – Later than Late

Two thousand fourteen will go down as one of the most interesting and challenging vintages in Piedmont. I spent an entire month in the region during the early part of the summer. The weather was cold, unstable and often overcast. The calm of the countryside was interrupted regularly around 5pm with the sound of hail cannons in nearby Barbaresco.

Peronospera was everywhere. The only question was how much. Barolo got the worst of the weather, including three hailstorms and heavy rain. All told, production was down around 40% across the board. Mother Nature was kinder in Barbaresco, which saw no hail and dramatically less rain, setting the stage for a vintage in which the overall quality of Barolo and Barbaresco is likely to diverge by a wide margin.



Burlotto's entry-level wines are among the year's highlights

Dolcetto suffered the most, as the grape does not like the cold and worst of the weather came at a particularly delicate point in the maturation cycle. To make matters worse, a cold snap in the days leading up to harvest shocked

the plants and caused the fruit to dehydrate on the vine, creating an unusual situation in which a number of 2014 Dolcettos are unusually dark and rich despite the cool year. Some growers spoke of the *suzukii* fruit fly as yet another issue that affected a Dolcetto harvest in which yields were down significantly. In tasting, many wines lack depth and structure. It is not unusual to see alcohol levels in the 12-12.5% range. Where the wines are well balanced, the lighter style recalls the Dolcettos of the previous generation. The Barberas are more variable. Some Barberas are thin, light and acidic, but others fared better, especially those that ripened later.

The glorious Indian summer arrived too late for Dolcetto and much of the Barbera, but played a huge role in saving the Nebbiolo harvest. Yields were down significantly, but on the average, things turned out better than originally expected. Given how difficult the season was, I expect to also see quite a bit of variability among the Nebbiolos, so choosing carefully is essential. At the same time, 2014 has quite a few surprises in store. I will have more on that in my report on new releases from Barolo, which will be published next month.



Cigliuti, Serraboella, Neive

2013 – Better Late Than Never

Two thousand thirteen was another late-ripening vintage, although conditions were on the whole much less traumatic than those growers faced in 2014. The cool, vibrant personality of the year comes through in the Dolcettos, Barberas and Nebbiolos that bristle with energy. It's pretty hard to go wrong. Most of the Dolcettos were released last year, so the best Barberas and Langhe Nebbiolos are the 2013s to search out this year.



Past and present at Bartolo Mascarello, Barolo

-- Antonio Galloni

Marchesi di Grésy

This is a solid set of entry-level offerings from Marchesi di Grésy. The whites are especially strong, but I found plenty of wines to like in this range. Only the wines from Asti are a bit lacking.

From [Affordable Piedmont – Dolcetto, Barbera & Langhe Nebbiolo \(Dec 2015\)](#) by Antonio Galloni

<u>Vintage</u>	<u>Producer</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Tasting Notes</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Drinking Window</u>	<u>Release Price</u>	<u>Review Date</u>
2014	<u>Marchesi di Grésy</u>	<u>Sauvignon</u>	The 2014 Sauvignon is quite pretty in this vintage. Lime, white flowers, slate and green pears are all pushed forward in a bright, tense Sauvignon Blanc loaded with personality. Drink this	91	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2018	\$21.00	Dec 2015

<u>Vintage</u>	<u>Producer</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Tasting Notes</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Drinking Window</u>	<u>Release Price</u>	<u>Review Date</u>
			delicious, refreshing Sauvignon over the next few years. -- Antonio Galloni					
2014	<u>Marchesi di Grésy</u>	<u>Dolcetto d'Alba Monte Aribaldo</u>	The 2014 Dolcetto d'Alba Monte Aribaldo is a pretty, if old-school effort with all the classic Dolcetto notes. Blue and black fruit, smoke, licorice and dark spices all take shape in the glass. Slightly angular - but not unpleasantly so - the 2014 is a terrific effort in a year in which Dolcetto was the most challenged grape in Piedmont. -- Antonio Galloni	89	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2017	\$20.00	Dec 2015
2014	<u>Marchesi di Grésy</u>	<u>Langhe Nebbiolo Martinenga</u>	Delicate and liting on the palate, the 2014 Langhe Nebbiolo is a gorgeous wine to drink now and also an excellent introduction to the house style. Crushed flowers, mint and sweet red berries are some of the notes that inform this attractive, mid-weight Nebbiolo. The 2014 is a bit linear, in the style of the year, but also very nicely balanced.	88	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2020	\$22.00	Dec 2015

<u>Vintage</u>	<u>(Hover for Commentary) Producer</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Tasting Notes</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Drinking Window</u>	<u>Release Price</u>	<u>Review Date</u>
			-- Antonio Galloni					
2014	<u>Marchesi di Grésy</u>	<u>Barbera d'Asti</u>	The 2014 Barbera d'Asti is a soft, supple wine with good depth to drink now and over the next few years. Sweet red cherry and plum notes add juiciness in this straightforward offering.	86	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2016	\$18.00	Dec 2015
			-- Antonio Galloni					
2013	<u>Marchesi di Grésy</u>	<u>Chardonnay Grésy</u>	The 2013 Chardonnay Grésy is quite beautiful. Crisp and vibrant in the glass, the 2013 hits all the right spots. Lemon oil, almonds, smoke and dried pear all meld together in the glass.	91	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2018	\$35.00	Dec 2015
			-- Antonio Galloni					

Vietti

While Vietti's 2013s are mostly solid, they don't over perform relative to the vintage, as is so often the case here. If anything, the Barberas are a bit underwhelming. In particular, the Scarrone Vigna Vecchia, which I tasted a few times, came across as forced and overdone. That may simply be a reflection that the vines are getting older and perhaps require a different approach. Regardless, both Scarrone Barberas this year don't have that thrill factor that is so customary at Vietti.

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[\(Hover for
Commentary\)](#)

<u>Vintage</u>	<u>Producer</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Tasting Notes</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Drinking Window</u>	<u>Release Price</u>	<u>Review Date</u>
2013	Vietti	Barbera d'Alba Scarrone	<p>The 2013 Barbera d'Alba Scarrone is dense, powerful and focused in the glass, with terrific energy throughout. A dark, sumptuous beauty, the 2013 is going to need time to develop the full breadth of its aromas. There is plenty to look forward to. Overall, the 2013 Barberas are restrained in style, both a reflection of the cold year and a stylistic shift towards great finesse at Vietti.</p> <p>-- Antonio Galloni</p>	90	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2023	\$43.00	Dec 2015
2013	Vietti	Barbera d'Alba Tre Vigne	<p>Vietti's 2013 Barbera d'Alba Tre Vigne is soft, supple and open-knit, with good overall depth and solid balance. Crushed flowers, mocha, spices, black cherries, plums and tobacco are laced into the succulent, inviting finish.</p> <p>-- Antonio Galloni</p>	88	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2018	\$20.00	Dec 2015
2013	Vietti	Barbera d'Asti Tre Vigne	<p>The 2013 Barbera d'Asti Tre Vigne is quite dark and powerful, with more juiciness than is the norm for this wine. While the forward, rich style is sure to find many admirers, I miss some of the typical Asti energy that is often</p>	88	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2018	\$17.00	Dec 2015

found in this wine. To be sure, the Tre Vigne is a solid value, but I expected a little more from the 2013. As is typically the case, the Asti has a bit more freshness, verve and cut than the Alba Tre Vigne.

-- Antonio Galloni

2013	<u>Vietti</u>	<u>Barbera d'Alba Scarrone Vigna Vecchia</u>	The 2013 Barbera d'Alba Scarrone Vigna Vecchia wraps around the palate with serious intensity and richness. There is no shortage of fruit and concentration, if anything I find the 2013 excessively ripe and jammy (even within the context of this wine), while the initial burst of richness doesn't carry through to the finish. Personally, I prefer the greater freshness of the straight Scarrone in 2013.	87	Antonio Galloni	2015 - 2020	\$82.00	Dec 2015
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-- Antonio Galloni