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Progress Report: 2006 Barolo

A great vintage is just now beginning to awaken from its 10-year slumber



Photo by: Bruce Sanderson

The 2006 vintage of Barolo presents a wide range.

Bruce Sanderson

Posted: May 9, 2016 2:20pm ET

One of the highlights of [Vinitaly](#) for me was a workshop I organized with some of Barolo's top producers to showcase the 2006 vintage. Now in their 10th year, this was my debut vintage of Barolo when I began covering Piedmont for *Wine Spectator*.

In addition to the nine Barolos tasted with the producers in the workshop, three poured different 2006 *crus* at OperaWine, a tasting of 100 of the finest Italian wines organized by *Wine Spectator* and [Vinitaly](#) that took place Saturday before the official opening of the fair. I also met separately with Silvia [Altare](#), who was unable to attend the workshop, to taste her Barolo 2006.

There were no extreme weather events in 2006, save localized hail in some areas. At Elio Altare, damage in Arborina and Brunate *crus* resulted in grapes from these vineyards declassified into its Nebbiolo Langhe.

A cold winter, with plenty of snow, provided adequate moisture reserves during the spring and summer months. After hot and dry conditions in July and August, a little rain refreshed the vines in September and harvest began at the end of September or the first week October, neither early nor late.

The consensus is that the 2006s are elegant, with high acidity, which made them austere in their youth.

As a vintage, the bouquets of the '06s are really beginning to blossom. Complex and expressive aromas of flowers, cherry, tobacco, licorice, tar, leather and wild herbs are emerging, however, there is still austerity and firm tannins present on the palate, depending on the commune.

The most elegant Barolos came from La Morra: **Ratti's** Rocche dell' Annunziata and **Scavino's** Rocche dell'Annunziata Riserva. Both had expressive bouquets of cherry and berry flavors, with the Ratti offering tobacco and wild herb notes while the Scavino was more floral, with a leather accent. Scavino also poured its complex, aromatic Bric dël Fiasc 2006 at OperaWine.

The Vigna Elena Riserva from **Elvio Cogno** also displayed elegance and finesse. Winemaker Valter Fissore showed the Ravera 2006 at OperaWine.

The **Sandrone** Cannubi Boschis exhibited a refined and harmonious profile with perfumed aromas of flowers, cherry and tar—a contrast to the equally complex yet more stern Le Vigne presented at OperaWine.

Elio Altare's Barolo, from vineyards in La Morra, Castiglione Falletto and Serralunga d'Alba showed more spice, with firm tannins on the peppery finish.

Castiglione Falletto is the central ridge in the Barolo zone, and the transition area between the soils that produce elegant wines on the La Morra and Barolo side and the more structured Nebbiolos of Monforte d'Alba and Serralunga d'Alba. **Cavallotto's** Bricoo Boschis San Giuseppe Riserva, whose nose was less expressive but with power and tannins present on the palate, indicated the shift in styles. Moving to Monforte d'Alba proved a notch up in austerity, first with the rose-, cherry- and licorice-scented Gavarini Chiniera from **Elio Grasso**, then the dense Bussia Colonello of **Aldo Conterno** with its essence of wild herbs.

We finished with two wines from Serralunga, the densest and most tightly wound of the group. **Vietti's** Lazzarito boasted spice, leather and mineral elements, while the complex, intense and firm Vigna Rionda Dieci Anni Riserva from **Massolino** is moving along at a glacial pace.

"It's an evergreen vintage," declared Vietti's Luca Currado. "Our kids will have a lot of fun with these wines."