

WINE News

*This is the year to learn Italian:
Bianco; Barolo; bellissimo!*



MARCH 4, 2019 FEATURES

- 2 Italian White Wine Renaissance—er, *Rinascimento*
- 3 Piedmont's Spectacular 2015 Vintage—In Stock and Pre-Arrival
- 4 Guido Rivella's Retirement Project

Piedmont Plus: 2015 Barolo, Barbaresco and More Italy

By Greg St. Clair

I feel that if there is one wine region in the world that could be said to have benefited the most from global warming since 1995, it is **Piedmont**. This region that used to have a couple of “good” vintages a decade, and a great vintage every other decade, now has so many superb back-to-back vintages that they’ve had to recalibrate what they consider to be “good.” The 2015 vintage across Europe has produced a lot of wonderful wines. In general, they are fuller, riper, show more fruit, and are overall delicious. Continual success hasn’t stifled creative growth in Piedmont. While the “Barolo Boys” revolution of the 1980s changed a

lot of winemaking, many wineries have gone full circle and returned to using large wooden barrels—*botti*, rather than *barrique*. The series of quality vintages has also allowed a bonanza of capital to be reinvested in winery buildings and upgrading vineyards, as well as allowing an easier transition to organic farming practices. The quality increases are not merely vintage related in Barolo and Barbaresco, and on page 3 we’ll focus on these—but the world does not live by red wine alone (at least in my world), so page 2 will highlight some stunning whites that are most likely off your radar and should be on it!

Pizza Cola

2017 Iovine Gragnano Rosso Frizzante (\$15.99) Be forewarned: once you’ve tried this you won’t be able to resist it ever again. A dry, fizzy red wine from just outside of Naples on the Sorrento peninsula, this is *the* wine for pizza. So much so, the locals call it *pizza cola*! It’s made from a bunch of grapes you’re not familiar with like 50% Piediroso, 30% Aglianico and 20% Sciascinoso, but this wine will make you become lifelong friends with them! Try it with burgers as well!



Marvelous Bianco for Salmon

2016 Bruno Giacosa Arneis Roero (\$24.99) Bruno Giacosa was one of the masters of Arneis and if you’ve never had this un-oaked Piemontese white now’s the time! This wine blends supple texture with concentrated apple flavors and hints of honeysuckle that seem more savory than fruity. I love this wine for its focus, aromatics, palate presence and its superb ability to pair with so many different styles of foods, whether you’re grilling salmon, oven roasting, or adding it to a pasta.



Super Vintage Sangiovese!

2016 Argiano Rosso di Montalcino (\$24.99) You can feel the sun on your face in this wine from Montalcino’s southwestern slope. Argiano produces wines with exceptional texture while giving classic varietal flavors: a bit of earth, spice, and leather combine with the smoky spiciness. Red plums come in at the end and drive those into a more singular flavor. The finish shows Sangiovese’s long, natural structure and in this vintage everything lines up perfectly. It’s a great wine for pasta!



Taste the Italian White Wine Renaissance—or, *Rinascimento*

Having grown up drinking German Riesling, segueing into California Chardonnay and then learning the classic French array of white wines, none of it prepared me for Italian whites. Truthfully, way back that many years ago there weren't many really exceptional Italian white wines. Compared to today's spectrum of choices, it's as if they didn't exist! The multitude of varieties makes learning about Italian whites difficult. So, let me shorten your learning curve by suggesting some wines that will expand your horizon.

Let's start with the **2015 Cantina di Gallura "Genesi" Vermentino di Gallura (\$34.99)** from the northwestern corner of Sardinia. This is the best Vermentino that I have ever had—in fact I didn't think Vermentino could be this good at all. The nose is almost surreal. It is just full of dried flowers dosed with a hint of salty sea spray, coupled with a stone fruit compote. On the palate the wine is powerful, yet it has no oak aging. The fruit-filled, yet saline nature combines on your tongue to give a tactile experience in a finish that seems infinite... it carries through the complex fruit character in a full-bodied, un-oaked powerhouse that lasts minutes in your mouth. Pair it ideally with a full-bodied white fish like halibut or sea bass.



Tuscany is not exactly the place one thinks of for life-changing white wines (even more so for Vernaccia di San Gimignano), yet I just about fell out of my chair when I tasted this wine. The **2016 Colombaio di Santa Chiara "Campo Pieve" Vernaccia di San Gimignano (\$27.99)** is incredible. The nose is full of honeysuckle blossom while on the palate the powerful concentration of fruit and layers of distinct fruit and earth flavors offer an array of sensation and flavor. The finish is superb. This has balance and incredible length, and is a truly serious wine that is a pure expression of grape and terroir.

The **2016 Sarno 1860 Fiano di Avellino (\$25.99)** is one of the best Fiano that I've ever tried. The nose is classic Fiano, all beeswax and lanolin with hints of dried flowers and Asian spices. On the palate the Sarno shows an added dimension—the fruit seems to morph into textural waves with layers of Kaffir lime and ripe Bosc pear flavors. The wine shows real richness that gives real weight to it while still carrying a mineral center that lifts and gives focus to the wine. This 2016 vintage is thrilling for Sarno and shows best when paired with a meaty white fish like swordfish or sea bass. You'll love this wine.



San Gimignano, once looked over for wine—now a dynamic wine emerges.

OK, I love Timorasso. It's such an incredible grape and offers so much. It's a shame it's not known better. The **2017 Vigneti Massa "Terra" (Piccolo Derthona) Timorasso Colli Tortonesi (\$17.99)** is this winery's entry level and it shows lots of inviting Bartlett pear and stone fruit on the nose. On the palate, it shows a bit of a softer edge, with round, supple fruit marked by a vibrant central acidity that brings the flavor focus back to the center of your tongue, giving a long-lasting finish that shows power and a bit of tannin.



I love introducing folks to this grape with the **2017 Tenuta Montemagno "Nymphae" Monferato Bianco (\$19.99)**. This unique blend of 50% Timorasso and 50% Sauvignon Blanc is a delight, highlighting the herbal fruitiness of the Sauvignon while allowing the structural acidity of the Timorasso to add power and depth. I've never had anyone taste this wine that didn't like it!

OK, I overbought on the Massa Cru Timorasso, but that's only going to benefit you because our auto-closeout program is giving them to you at a song. These Timorasso Cru wines, in the words of one of my colleagues, "feel like Grand Cru Chablis"—they are that serious. The **2015 Vigneti Massa "Costa del Vento" Timorasso (\$36.99)**, **2015 Vigneti Massa "Montecitorio" (\$36.99)** and the **2016 Vigneti Massa "Sterpi" Timorasso (\$36.99)** are among the best white wines in Italy and certainly the best I've had. They show layers of complex fruit and mineral with a density and texture that say greatness. And on top of it all, they age incredibly well. I like to decant these wines a couple of hours ahead of time to allow them to open when they are young. Now's the time to try these one-of-a-kind wines at a bargain. They are at a quality level that will rival the best any region has to offer. I'm going to stock up myself.



Barolo e Barbaresco: Piedmont's Spectacular 2015 Vintage

I thought I'd lead into this with Barbaresco. They are frequently thought of as secondary to Barolo, sort of like a Sonoma to Napa, but in reality they are their own region and wine and suffer only because they are about a third the size of Barolo. We have some of these in stock now and a great portion of the wines are being sold pre-arrival. The pre-arrival sales are because for many of these producers, their productions are very small, and in many cases if you don't get it now you may never get a chance. While the average Bordeaux estate might produce 10,000–20,000 cases of wines a year, for many of these vineyard-designated wines production is in the 300–500 case range. The growing worldwide demand for wines from these regions has made supplies very short for those highly scored wines. Barbaresco and Barolo, once famous for mouth-searing tannins, have evolved, and while they don't lack for long term structure, gone are the days of harsh tannins.

A word or two about points—and we as retailers love them! While they are regarded by most as an absolute, in reality, they are anything but. What they are is a snapshot of the wine on one day in the wine's evolution. With the myriad and ever increasing number of wine reviewers, I find it a good thing. But, it's like movie reviewers—we've all read a review and then seen the movie and said, "What the hell was that critic watching?" Wine reviewers all have their professional yet subjective opinions. Unlike film, which is a product of fixed images, wines are in a constant state of evolution. So as much as I love to have a bunch of 97 point scores, I believe in producers. Points are never the last word. I've been in the business professionally and specifically in the Italian business for more than 37 years and have always found this to be a truer path to understanding than chasing points. To that idea I was intrigued to read this piece from one of the myriad critics, Antonio Galloni, an Ital-Americano whose professional career started with a publication called the "Piedmont Report." You can see where his love lies, and without wading through an ocean of vintage weather reports and trying to use them as a divining rod, his words ring true.

"I generally advise Vinous readers to focus on producer above all else. Two thousand fifteen is a perfect vintage to see why that approach makes sense... Simply stated, there are more producers knocking on the door of the elite than at any time since I started visiting Piedmont more than twenty years ago. And that is incredibly exciting to watch as it unfolds." —Antonio Galloni, February 2019

It's trying to understand this region. It has gone from everyone making wine the same way, then the Barolo Boys started their revolution and it was easy to see which side of the fence you were on. You either used new French *barrique* or large Slavonian *botti*. But now it's not so easy—throw in some horizontal fermenters and a mix of ages, sizes and forest of origins for barrels, and then everyone has their own idea on how to age. Phew! You just have to trust the producer, and hopefully the retailer for selecting them!



2015 Barbaresco In Stock Now

- 2015 Ca' del Baio "Autinbej" Barbaresco (\$32.99) 94 JS
- 2015 Ca' del Baio "Vallegrande" Barbaresco (\$47.99) 93 JS
- 2015 Ca' del Baio "Asili" Barbaresco (\$52.99) 95 JS
- 2015 Cascina Alberta "Giacone" Barbaresco (\$36.99)
- 2015 La Ca' Nova Barbaresco (\$29.99) 91 VN
- 2015 La Ca' Nova "Montefico Vigna Bric Mentina" Barbaresco (\$34.99) 93 VN
- 2015 La Ca' Nova "Montestefano" Barbaresco (\$34.99) 94 VN



2015 Barolo Pre-Arrivals

- 2015 Einaudi "Ludo" Barolo (\$44.99) 90 VN
- 2015 Einaudi "Costa Grimaldi" Barolo (\$49.99) 94 JS
- 2015 Einaudi "Bussia" Barolo (\$64.99) 94 VN
- 2015 Einaudi "Cannubi" Barolo (\$69.99) 93 VN
- 2015 E. Pira Chiara Boschis "Via Nuova" Barolo (\$69.99) 95 JS
- 2015 E. Pira Chiara Boschis "Mosconi" Barolo (\$79.99) 97 JS
- 2015 E. Pira Chiara Boschis "Cannubi" Barolo (\$99.99) 99 JS
- 2015 Elio Grasso "Ginestra Casa Mate" Barolo (\$79.99) 97 JS
- 2015 Elio Grasso "Gavarini Chiniera" Barolo (\$84.99) 98 JS
- 2015 Silvio Grasso Barolo (\$29.99) 93 JS
- 2015 Silvio Grasso "Giachini" Barolo (\$39.99) 94 JS
- 2015 Silvio Grasso "Turne" Barolo (\$39.99) 94 JS
- 2015 Silvio Grasso "Plicotti" Barolo (\$44.99) 95 JS
- 2015 Cordero di Montezemolo "Monfalletto" Barolo (\$47.99) 94 JS
- 2015 Cordero di Montezemolo "Gattera" Barolo (\$79.99) 96 JS
- 2015 Cordero di Montezemolo "Enrico VI" Barolo (\$94.99) 97 JS
- 2015 Schiavenza "del Commune di Serralunga" Barolo (\$44.99) 93 JS
- 2015 Schiavenza "Broglia" Barolo (\$54.99) 92 JS
- 2015 Schiavenza "Cerretta" Barolo (\$59.99) 93 JS
- 2015 Schiavenza "Prapò" Barolo (\$69.99) 93 JS





Top-Notch Nebbiolo from Former Gaja Winemaker Guido Rivella

I hope that someday you get to meet Guido Rivella. He was Angelo Gaja’s winemaker for 40 years, and to say that he was in that great man’s shadow would be easy to say, because no one casts a bigger shadow than Angelo. While the incredibly impressive and room-filling personality of Angelo Gaja might make you think there was little room for another effusive personality, you’d be wrong. (I say these words in all humility, as Italy owes him a lot—he personally made Americans realize that there are great wines in Italy, and I’m in perpetual awe of him. No matter what you might think of his wines, he is amazing.) Guido Rivella is just a joy to be around. He’s energetic without being frenetic. He has a warmth, an openness, and a sense of self-confidence that gives you the same.

Did I say he worked as Gaja’s winemaker for 40 years? Yes that’s a long time, and now in his “retirement,” he’s making wine. I guess golf wasn’t for him. Guido’s winery is on the Montestefano vineyard, one of Barbaresco’s most famous, and it sits under the house he was born in. Today he and his daughter Silvia have turned it into an



Agriturismo (you can stay there if you’re interested) but that’s more of Silvia’s passion than Guido’s. When you first visit Guido’s cellar you notice he uses all tonneaux—those are 500-liter barrels, about double the size of your average barrique. These are the same barrels that Gaja uses. Indeed, Guido buys all of his barrels used from Angelo Gaja, and if you don’t know, Angelo Gaja has the best barrels available...but that’s a story unto itself. By using the used barrels you get the benefit of smaller barrel aging without the toasty, sweet, vanillin character. This allows the grape and terroir to be the center point rather than the winemaker, and that’s just what Guido wants. This year he’s changed his labels from what was a rather simplistic classic to a more impressionistic expression. They look nice. Being a retailer, I’ve been surrounded by labels my entire professional life and attractive labels make my day go easier. I wish there were more.



Guido Rivella’s new wine label design.

The 2015 vintage Barbaresco will be here by the middle of April, but we don’t get very much from this tiny winery, so secure yours now. I’m a great believer in the “trickle up” concept of wine—that to understand a winery, it’s best to start with their base wines—so when it gets here, you should try the **2016 Silvia Rivella Langhe Nebbiolo (\$29.99)**. It’ll give you an idea of what the wines are like before you invest in the Barbaresco to lay down in your cellar.

We still have some of the 2014 Barbaresco available that you should give a try as well.

2014 Rivella Barbaresco (\$49.99) 92 VN

2014 Rivella “Montestefano” Barbaresco (\$79.99) 94 VN

Pre-Arrival

2015 Rivella Barbaresco (\$49.99)

2015 Rivella “Fausoni” Barbaresco (\$69.99) 92 VN

2015 Rivella “Montestefano” Barbaresco (\$89.99) 91 VN

K&L REDWOOD CITY

3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061
P (650) 364-8544 **F** (650) 364-4687
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-7, Sun 10-6
LOCKERS Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5

KLWINES.COM

Toll Free (877) KLWINES (877) 559-4637
Email: Wines@KLWines.com

K&L HOLLYWOOD

1400 Vine Street, Hollywood, CA 90028
P (323) 464-WINE (9463) **F** (323) 836-0853
HOURS Mon-Thurs 11-8, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11-6

K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host regular evening and Saturday tastings at each K&L store as well as many special events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to KLWines.com/Local-Events.

K&L SAN FRANCISCO

855 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
P (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-6
LOCKERS Mon-Fri 10-6:30, Sat 9-5:30, Sun 11-5:30

We accept American Express, Discover, Visa, Mastercard and PayPal.

For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit KLWines.com

FOLLOW OUR BLOGS ON THE TRAIL AND SPIRITS JOURNAL FOR THE LATEST UPDATES FROM K&L