

# WINE News

*Das boot! Our ship has come in—from Italy.*



## SEPTEMBER 2, 2019 FEATURES

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## A No-Fail Fall *Edizione* for Italian Wine

By Greg St. Clair

**It never seems to fail: When it is time for the Italian edition of the newsletter to come out, I have a shipping container full of all those new wines I want you to try...arriving a week later.** But, fortunately, this time I have another container that has just arrived! It's full of a bevy of Barolo and Barbaresco that have just hit the shelves, and these two tremendous vintages—2016 Barbaresco and 2015 Barolo—are not to be missed. Gone are the days when these wines were banished to the lowest rungs of your cellar—these are drinkable upon release, but will still age for decades. Check it out on page 4. When you get this newsletter, I'll

be on my way to Alto Adige for vacation. (I'm just now practicing my German for the trip!) This Alpine region produces some of Italy's best wines, and I'll be visiting Kellerei-Cantina Terlan in particular, which produces some of my favorite wines in Italy. If you haven't tried them before, on page 2 I give you a rundown of what we're carrying. Page 3 is for you Sesta di Sopra fans—they have arrived! Hurry in for the Brunello, Rosso, and Sangiovese. They rarely last for long. Italy is awash in quality wine these days, and I wish I could have a newsletter every week to go through them all. Alas, I'll have to settle for this. Hurry in!

### 2018 Tenuta Rovaglia Charetto Rosé (\$12.99)

When you think rosé, does French rosé come to mind first? But that's not the only wine in the game! If you haven't had an Italian rosé, this is a good time to start. Tenuta Rovaglia comes from the shores of Lake Garda, where pink wine, Charetto in this region, has been around for over 200 years. On the palate the wine is dry and crisp, with lots of fruit, excellent minerality, and a long and complex finish.



### 2018 Antonelli "Trebium" Trebbiano Spoletino (\$17.99)

Trebbiano is an odd grape. I'm sure you've all had some less than inspiring versions, but it actually isn't a grape at all—it's a family of similarly named grapes that are all very different. I know, it's Italy—it's confusing. There is no confusion with this wine, however. The Trebbiano Spoletino is sensational, with a nose full of spice, and on the palate, power, weight, definition, tremendous focus, and great acidity. This is a must try!



### 2017 La Capranera Aglianico Campania (\$12.99)

If you are not familiar with Aglianico, this would be a great place to start! Totally organic and made in the middle of Cilento National Park, this is a sensational red from southern Campania. The all-stainless steel fermentation and aging reveals the purity of the fruit and the site, and the wine is loaded with juicy black fruit. Layered with spicy notes, this has a really supple drinkability. Did you say pizza? This is your wine!







## Top Picks from the Roof of Italy: Wines of Alto Adige

I think that the northern Italian region of Alto Adige, or Südtirol, is one of Italy's most misunderstood, yet most beautiful regions.

It was annexed after WWI, but only became an official region of Italy in 1947. Perhaps it's most confusing that German, not Italian, is the region's native tongue. One of K&L's longtime favorite producers there has been Cantina Terlan. I first visited the winery back in 1995, when I remember tasting in their frigid cellar some incredible wines, including a Pinot Bianco from 1958 that was astounding. This is a cooperative winery that was founded in 1893 and is consistently regarded as one of Italy's best-run cooperatives, let alone one of Italy's best wineries.

I always love to have people taste the winery's flagship wine, Terlaner Classico. They've been making the same 60% Pinot Bianco, 30% Chardonnay, and 10% Sauvignon Blanc blend since 1893, and it is always delicious. On the palate, the Pinot Bianco is the backbone of the **2017 Cantina Terlan "Terlaner Classico" White Blend Alto Adige (\$23.99)**, giving structure, balance, and longevity, while the Chardonnay adds a supple layer of richness. Fermented in stainless steel, the wine is aged 20% in large oak barrels and 80% in stainless steel for six months, then blended, giving the wine exceptional palate presence and finish. **93 JS, 90 RP**



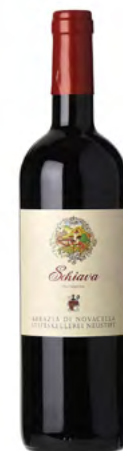
The **2016 Cantina Terlan "Vorberg" Pinot Bianco Riserva Alto Adige (\$39.99)** is perhaps the best Vorberg I have ever tried. This isn't really a single vineyard wine—Vorberg is a small region, with several growers (remember, this is a growers' cooperative). The steep vineyards look like a sloping shelf stuck onto the wall of a mountain. In fact, in German, Vorberg means "in front of the mountain." The south-facing vineyards stretch from 800 feet to over 2,900 feet, and the quartz porphyric soil gives the wine an unmistakable salty tang that adds to its food-pairing ability. The nose is divine: swirling aromatics full of white flowers, hints of bergamot, a saline breeze, spice, and depth immediately. On the palate the wine shows incredible size and richness, a powerful statement of the vintage. Then ripe pear emerges to blend with stone fruits and salted plum—just a wide variety of flavors. The finish once again shows that salty tang. You must try this. **95 JS, 95 RP**

**2016 Cantina Terlan "Porphy" Lagrein Riserva (\$64.99)**

Many of you might not be familiar with Lagrein as a varietal wine, and I always get asked: is it more like Cabernet, or more like Pinot Noir? Well, it's really more like Lagrein. It has its own identity. More often than not, I find Syrah-like characteristics, yet not enough to say this is like Syrah. But it's as close as I can get. The wine's aromatics are a smoldering mix of smoke, raw meat, brandied cherries, tobacco, and... well, you get the picture. It's not like anything else. Cantina Terlan's Porphy is one of the region's best illustrations of Lagrein, and in this vintage perhaps one of its best examples. On the palate the wine is soft, supple, and seductive. The aromatics are filled with complex, fruit, earth, spice, and truthfully, a category I label as "exotic aromatics," because I'm not really sure what they are! But they are captivating. I remember having a previous vintage of this wine with gnocchi and a wild boar ragu—simply a thrilling match, but when I'm in the Alto Adige I surrender to goulash. That paprika kick just bonds with Lagrein in a way that takes my breath away every time. If you like wine, you owe it to yourself to try this. It is an experience you won't regret. **96 JS, 93 RP**



**2017 Abbazia di Novacella Schiava Alto Adige (\$14.99)** Okay, so this isn't a Terlan wine, but it is from the Alto Adige, so I'm sure they won't mind me taking a bit of their space. I really love this wine. I was sold immediately just by the nose, which is full of crunchy cranberry fruit, savory, smoky black pepper, and fresh herbs. Layer after layer, it just seems to go on and on. Yet this is a 12.5% abv wine. There's no big, muscular density—it just seems to float, while still being vibrantly flavorful. On your palate the wine is supple, yet has a bit of tannin just to frame the flavors. This wine is gorgeous, savory, and spicy while still being elegant. With great lift in the finish, the wine is fresh and easy, ready to be drunk now—but you should drink it at cellar temperature with a plate of *speck* or prosciutto!





## Sesta di Sopra: A Love Story for Any Day of the Week

I remember the first time I tasted Sesta di Sopra's 1999 Brunello.

It was in Montalcino at the annual Benvenuto Brunello, where the new vintage is released and tasted for the first time. I had never heard of Sesta di Sopra before, as this was their first release. But I was incredibly impressed with their 1999 Brunello. I thought it was one of the best of the vintage. I was very interested in buying their wine, so I wrote to them asking who their importer was, and they responded, "We don't have an importer. Would you like to be our importer?" We were their first client and it has been a love story ever since. I can always tell how much they're loved by how many times the staff asks me when their wines are arriving—it's an annual rite for them to stock up for themselves before they let you know.



Follow the signs to K&L favorite Sesta di Sopra in Montalcino.

Yet before I committed to be their importer, I told them that I was a little worried about the quality of the 2002 vintage (this was in February 2004) because the press had already trashed the vintage as something of throwaway quality, the worst on record. I didn't feel comfortable taking their spectacular 1999 and then telling them I can't bring in the 2002, so I went to taste it out of the barrel. Sesta di Sopra is a tiny winery, and they produce just one barrel of Brunello a year—that's not a typo, it's one 30-hectoliter barrel. That's about 340 cases annually from their one-hectare vineyard they call Magistra.

So, it would be a very quick tasting, but I was really stunned. The wine was excellent, with such balance, complexity, and savory aromatics, that I was completely won over. I asked them how they could produce a wine like this when so many in Montalcino declassified the entire vintage. They told me that they went into the vineyard with pairs of tweezers, yes tweezers, and they would pluck out any moldy or shot berries. They did this for the entire vineyard—six times!

While the 2002 Brunello wasn't something that I would age for 20 years, it was still an excellent wine. In fact, I recently tried the last bottle of 2002 I had, and it's still beautiful. I write this now because you've probably heard that 2014 is not a good vintage, but vintage is rarely the way to judge a prospective wine. Read this quote from Ian d'Agata of Vinous on his views about the 2014 Sesta di Sopra

Brunello: "Densely packed for a 2014 Brunello, at once fleshy and broad but also lively and precise, showing excellent power and cut on the strikingly long finish, characterized by youthfully dusty tannins and a hint of candied violet. One of the best Brunellos of the vintage, it just lacks the sweetness and ripe flesh of warmer vintages. Another standout Brunello from what is, given its small size and limited annual output, the least known of the top fifteen-twenty Brunello producers or so."

The **2014 Sesta di Sopra Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99)** has the classic Sesta di Sopra nose of earth, sage, and leather, with hints of complex earth, stone, and plum notes. It is a supple, aromatic, pretty wine, lively on the palate, that has weight and persistence. If you're in Montalcino, it'd be a perfect match for your lunch or dinner, which undoubtedly would include wild boar. **93 VN, 91 RP**

**2016 Sesta di Sopra Rosso di Montalcino (\$23.99)** If you don't want to pop for the Brunello right off the top, you should try the Rosso di Montalcino. All Sangiovese, and from one of the region's best vintages of all time, it is stunningly good. The nose of Sesta di Sopra's Rosso just jumps out at you. Spicy, complex, with wild cherry fruit, salted plums, and hints of sage and leather, it's intriguing, seductive, and inviting. On the palate the wine is broad, full-bodied, and rich, yet not heavy. It has an elegance, is supple yet forceful, and it is savory, not fruity. It tastes like you should be having it with a meal, like veal shank or just a big hunk of Parmigiano-Reggiano. **90 RP**

If you're looking for that Tuesday night introduction to the property, just something to drink with your mac and cheese, then the **2018 Sesta di Sopra Sangiovese Toscana (\$16.99)** is your wine. This wine comes from the younger vines on this tiny estate. It's got crunchy, cranberry-like flavors, shows hints of leather, earth, and dried herbs, and has a luscious, supple texture—perfect even for Wednesdays.



Greg St. Clair (left) talks with Ettore Spina of Sesta di Sopra.





## Standout Wines from the Glorious 2015 Vintage in Barolo

You've probably heard that the 2015 vintage in Barolo is awesome. It might actually have been from me, but I was right—it's a tremendous vintage. One of the real hallmarks of this vintage is drinkability. There are comparisons to the very approachable 2000 vintage to be made, but 2015 is a much higher-quality vintage. The wines are much more structured, with real holding power. You may have had experience drinking Barolo in the past, where that first palate impression is shocking and makes your cheeks want to turn inside out, but not this vintage. It is amazing: the tannins are present but sweeter and exceptionally well integrated. So, how do I tell you about the more than 50 Barolos we have? Yikes, crazy difficult! I could make a list, but you can go to the [website](#) for that, so I'm just going to go through a few that I think are can't-miss standouts.

I'm a big fan of the Barolo from Serralunga, and because the powerful tannins from this commune are often so daunting, the 2015 vintage is the time to start! The Schiavenza wines are excellent examples. I love the purity, and classic Serralunga flavors in these wines: loads of gravelly, cigar ash aromatics with floral hints of roses, while darker fruits make the more prominent statement. This vintage is tremendous. The **2015 Schiavenza "del Comune di Serralunga" Barolo (\$44.99)** has loads of savory, smoky aromatics, with bold palate richness and a long finish. The **2015 Schiavenza "Brogljo" Barolo (\$54.99)** has more dried rose and truffle in the nose, with earthy, dark fruit on your tongue. The **2015 Schiavenza "Cerretta" Barolo (\$59.99)** shows more structure but still sweet tannins and lots of fruit richness. And my favorite of the bunch, the **2015 Schiavenza "Prapò" Barolo (\$69.99)** shows more upfront fruit, wild cherry, salted plums, and a real core of length and structure.



**2015 Massolino Barolo (\$39.99)** Here's another winery whose Serralunga roots usually predict an undrinkable period and long cellaring before glorious results can be enjoyed, but which produced a wine that can do both. The nose is ultra-inviting with warm, open fruit, layers of cherries intermingled with smoke, earth, and umami depth. On the palate is where the real shock is. This Barolo is supple, round, and smooth. The wine has a tannic border, but those tannins are sweet and act as a frame rather than a cage. Barolo from Massolino at this stage is almost unthinkable, yet this wine delivers. The finish is long, balanced, and shows lots of expressive fruit now, but I also envision a period of adolescence for this wine while it develops. **93 JS, 93 RP**



**2015 Elio Grasso "Ginestra Casa Matè" Barolo (\$79.99)** The nose of this wine is so inviting. It's not a typical closed-in Barolo behemoth. Rather, the aroma is enticing, full of dried figs, smoke, and porcini. But the really enticing part of this wine is on the palate. Supple, sweet tannins frame the outside of the wine, allowing waves of flavors: a savory, umami-rich roll starts it, then more forest floor, then smoke and truffle and back to the dried figs—I can't think of another flavor for that besides dried figs. This is super balanced, exceedingly long, and has an incredible finish. Though all this talk of supple balance and drinkability might make you think this is a short-term wine, *oh, no*—this is a Barolo's Barolo for the long term. It is really special and is going to last a long time. This is an extraordinary deal for one of Barolo's great producers. **97 RP, 96 JS**



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