

THE FINE WINE REVIEW

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Number 113

2005 IN GERMANY PART I:

Historically Great Late Harvest Wines in the Mosel-Saar-Ruwer and Nahe

NEW RELEASES FROM PIEDMONT

The wines coming to market from Piedmont are of mixed quality. **2005** appears to be a good vintage overall. **2004** is a superb vintage for all grape types, as I already have indicated in earlier issues with reviews of the splendid Dolcetti. **2003**, the year of the great heat, is extremely good for Barbera and was very good for Dolcetto, but 2004 and 2005 are potentially better vintages and fresher. Certainly, there will be fine wines from Nebbiolo, especially Barolo (see barrel sample from G. Conterno reviewed below), but more on that next year. **2002** was marked by a rainy summer and hail that hit very hard in La Morra, large parts of the Barolo commune, and part of Castiglione Falletto. Many producers declassified what they had to generic Barolo or Langhe Nebbiolo, but others, most notably Bruno Giacosa, sold off what they had and bottled nothing under their own label. Certainly, there are decent wines, but one has to ask the question of comparison of what's on the market: a Barolo 2002 that may contain grapes from a superior vineyard or at half or a third the price a Nebbiolo d'Alba or Langhe Nebbiolo 2004 that may be as good or even superior? The question answers itself. **2001** Barolo and Barbaresco in bottle continue to look better and better and I provide some further reviews of wines I tasted on my last visit.

2002 BAROLO

ALESSANDRIA FRATELLI

2002 BAROLO

87/C+

The wines from this Verduno estate never seem to disappoint me, even in the difficult 2002 vintage. The regular Barolo is perfumed with a touch of white pepper in the nose. In the

mouth, the wine shows the finesse typical of Verduno with a silky texture, but the depth of a better vintage is, as is to be expected, lacking. Now-2010.

GIACOMO CONTERNO

2002 BAROLO MONFORTINO

SEE NOTES

This is a first for me, writing up a wine that I was not allowed to taste. Already in July 2002, Roberto Conterno said, he was receiving calls from journalists who were concerned about the rainy summer, but he told them to have patience. He was spared the hail of September 2, and pulled leaves to give more light and oxygen and had an important green harvest. After the hails, he had forty days of magnificent weather and began harvesting on 15 October. He was so surprised by the final quality that he decided to make only Monfortino, no Cascina Francia, and no tastings from barrel would be allowed. He says the wine is extremely powerful and still doesn't have finesse, so seven years in cask may not be enough, he may wait eight, but predicts a great wine.

MASSOLINO

2002 BAROLO VIGNA RIONDA

87/C+

One has to be careful with Massolino because not all the wines are made in the same style. The *Vigna Rionda* shows a little wood in the nose, but not terribly bothersome. In the mouth, the wine shows good concentration and freshness with enough tannin to give structure and dark, mostly blackberry, fruit on the palate. This is somewhat new-style, but very well done and a success for the vintage. 2007-2012.

MICHELE REVERDITO

2002 BAROLO SERRALUNGA 87?/C+
This is a relatively new estate, with bottlings only begun in 2000. I am impressed by this wine in the difficult 2002 vintage. A closed, high-toned nose of iodide and violets is followed by a dense, dark, tannic body. It may develop into something special, or the tannins may wind up dominating – with no previous experience, I have no basis to hazard a guess. 2010-2016?

G. D. VAJRA

2002 BAROLO ALBE 90/B+
Hail hit the vineyards here on 20 June; in green harvesting the vines, Vajra kept but one eye per shoot, a probable explanation for the extraordinary quality of this wine – as well as the fact that these are old vines. The wine shows a lead pencil nose. In the mouth, it is a bit alcoholic, but it is pure and not dilute like so many 2002s. Fine length. Now-2012.

SOME LATE-TASTED 2001 BAROLI AND BARBARESCI

BREZZA

2001 BAROLO CANNUBI 89/B
2001 BAROLO SARMASSA 89(+)/B
2001 BAROLO BRICCO SARMASSA 90(+)/B+
Brezza produced no 2002 Barolo. In 2001, the *Barolo, Cannubi* features black currant aromas, followed by fruit in the mouth that is almost sweet from its ripeness, good length, and very fine tannins. The 14% alcohol is not apparent. The *Barolo, Sarmassa* is a bit spirity in the nose, and is darker and heavier in the mouth with grapy, slightly sweet fruit and some alcohol and tannin showing, but I think with age this will smooth out. Brezza does not make a *Barolo, Bricco Sarmassa* if he feels that there is not a different character to it from the Sarmassa, but he did in 2001. This wine has perfumed, duty dark fruit aromas, followed by dark fruit in the mouth with depth, power, and elegance. The wine is a little jammy, but still impressive. The tannins argue for another 7-8 years' cellaring.

COMMENDATORE BURLOTTO

2001 BAROLO ACCLIVI 92/A
2001 BAROLO MONVIGLIERO 92(+)/A
2001 BAROLO CANNUBI 94/A
No 2002 Barolo here, either. The *Acclivi* is a blend of three different terroirs from Verduno. It is pure and deep with substance and structure on the palate and elegance underlying its pure red cherry fruit. The *Monvigliero*, from Verduno's top vineyard, is relatively closed in the nose but shows a meatiness that is typical. In the mouth, the wine is crystalline and pure with great finesse to its lacy red cherry fruit. This is an architectonic wine that still needs 6-10 years' bottle aging. The *Cannubi* has figs and plums in the nose and greater depth than the foregoing wines with saltiness to it. The wine is deep and shows plenty of tannin, but also the balance to repay the patience for the tannins to subside. 2011-2031.

GIACOMO CONTERNO

2001 BAROLO CASCINA FRANCIA 93(+)/A
Certainly one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, estates in Piedmont, the 2001 Cascina Francia is very pure and immediate on the palate with fine tannins and firmness. As attractive as this is now, it has the stuff for aging. Incidentally, beginning in 2005, all the wines here are fermented in wood, following on experiments that began in 1998 (although stainless steel is still available for overflow in abundant vintages). Roberto Conterno says that there are two different characteristics from the wood that he seeks: it is easier to keep the temperature (he likes to work with high temperatures for fermentation) and he can obtain better polymerization with the wood. Malolactic fermentations take place after the wines have been put in large wood ovals.

GIANNI GAGLIARDO

2001 BAROLO 89+/B
This wine comes primarily from vines located in La Morra, but there is also fruit from Monforte and Serralunga. Relatively shy
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in the nose, the wine shows its La Mora origins in the mouth with a sensual, round texture and underlying ripe tannins. It is juicy and still needs a little time to mature. 2011-2030.

BRUNO GIACOSA

2001 BARBARESCO ASILI 92/A
2001 BARBARESCO RABAJÀ RISERVA 93+/A
2001 BAROLO ROCCHES DI FALLETTO RISERVA 95(+)/A+
Bruno Giacosa suffered a stroke earlier this year, but seems to be recovering. It appears not to have affected his mental abilities at all. We all wish him the speediest of recoveries. The other news from Giacosa is that there will be a Barolo from La Morra in 2004. Giacosa sold off all of his 2002 Barolo and Barbaresco. Giacosa's *Barbaresco, Asili* is part from old vines, part from vines planted in 1996; the soil is rather sandy. It is pure with red fruits, acidity, balance, clarity, and length. It needs 10-12 years still to fully develop. The *Barbaresco, Rabajà riserva* is from soils where limestone is more dominant. The wine is meaty in the nose with purity and calm. In the mouth the wine is very pure with long dark fruits and greater depth than the Asili. 2012-2032. The *2001 Barolo, Rocche di Falletto riserva* shows intense, incisive blueberry aromas with a touch of spice. In the mouth, the wine is round, pure, and deep with some chewiness and plenty of tannin. Racy is an excellent summation, and there is tremendous potential here. 2015-2040.

G. MASCARELLO E FIGLIO

2001 BAROLO VILLERO 90(+)/B+
2001 BAROLO SANTO STEFANO DI PERNO 90/B+
2001 BAROLO MONPRIVATO 95/A+
Mascarello, too, has no 2002 Barolo, as all was sold off to negociants. The *Barolo, Villero* is still closed in the nose, but is very fine, light, and harmonious in the mouth with dusty cherry fruit. 2011-2030. The *Barolo, Santo Stefano di Perno* shows more structure and depth, but less finesse. The fruit is almost, but not quite, kirsch, and the wine does not, gratefully, go over the top. 2011-2031. Last, the *Barolo, Monprivato* shows the power of the Santo Stefano and the elegance of the elegance of the Villero. One can enjoy it already, but it will age well. 2012-2032.

G. D. VAJRA

2001 BAROLO ALBE 90/B+
2001 BAROLO BRICCO DELLE VIOLE 92/A
Vajra's *Barolo "Albe"*, which comes from three different sites, is relatively closed in the nose, but on the palate shows open cherry fruit. This is not a heavy or alcoholic wine, but one that does need some aging to bring out all the qualities. 2010-2020. The *Barolo, Bricco delle Viole* is calm and pure with plenty of tannin. Still it is more closed and harder, but also deeper, than the Albe, with cherry fruit that is pure, deep, and stony. Exceptional balance here. The vines are 35 years old, rather aged for Piedmont. 2014-2025.

2000 BAROLO RISERVA

CAVALLOTTO FRATELLI

2000 BAROLO BRICCO BOSCHIS VIGNA SAN GIUSEPPE 89/B
This is an interesting wine from Castiglione Falletto. It is floral, scented, and sweet with hazelnuts, chocolate, and raspberries in its surprisingly complex nose. In the mouth, the wine shows raspberries, red cherries, some warmth, and some tannins, with a little hotness on the finish. It is forward, and the balance is a bit tenuous, so I would drink it over the next 2-4 years.

2004 NEBBIOLO D'ALBA AND LANGHE NEBBIOLO

BREZZA

2004 NEBBIOLO D'ALBA 90/A
Really outstanding wine here with plenty of violets in the nose and mouth and great purity.

COMMENDATORE BURLOTTO

2004 LANGHE NEBBIOLO 90/A
Fruity and floral in the nose, followed by purity in the mouth

with great finesse and a touch of sappiness to the red cherry fruit. Outstanding!

PODERI COLLA

2004 NEBBIOLO D'ALBA 89/A
This is just a beautiful expression of Nebbiolo with tar and chocolate hints in the nose, followed by a lovely mouth that is harmonious and not overly tannic or acidic, but that does show structure, and raspberry and chocolate flavors. Balance and finesse both here. Now-2015.

TENUTA LANGASCO

2004 NEBBIOLO D'ALBA SORI COPPA 87/B
From the commune of Alba, this wine shows excellent structure with plenty of grip underlying its raspberry fruit. It is not overly tannic but needs a little time. 2009-2012.

G. D. VAJRA

2004 LANGHE NEBBIOLO 87(+)/B
This wine is pure and racy, but tannic, with red fruits and excellent acidity. Ideally, it needs 3-5 years to reach its peak.

GIACOMO VICO

2004 LANGHE NEBBIOLO 89/A-
Violet, tar and a bit of dark plum in the nose and mouth, finesse, good balance in the mouth, no excess of tannin or alcohol. No great complexity, but this is a very good, elegant and charming wine for drinking now-2012(+). From younger vines.

MISCELLANEOUS

CASCINA ADELAIDE

2004 DOLCETTO D'ALBA 87/A
Dark, rich, and soft, this is not a flabby wine, but a wine of pleasure to drink over the next year or two.

BREZZA

2005 CHARDONNAY 87/A
2005 DOLCETTO D'ALBA SAN LORENZO 87/A
2005 BARBERA SANTA ROSALIA 88/A
2004 BARBERA SANTA ROSALIA 88/A
Brezza, to its credit, is leading the way to alternative closures in Italy. All of the above wines have been bottled in part with glass stoppers. The *Chardonnay* has floral aromas and is intense and fine on the palate with a fruit that is just short of sweet (but not from residual sugar), and a nice gentleness. The *Dolcetto, San Lorenzo* is open and fruity with a touch of toast and coffee at first that opens to blueberry aromas. In the mouth, the wine is soft, round, and grapy with dark fruits that are very caressing. The *2005 Barbera, Santa Rosalia* shows violets and minerals with pleasing finesse. The *2004 Barbera, Santa Rosalia* shows rather high-toned violet flavors and aromas that with time develop into intense blueberries.

COMMENDATORE BURLOTTO

2004 DOLCETTO D'ALBA 89/A
2004 BARBERA D'ALBA 88/A
2004 BARBERA D'ALBA L'AVES 87/A
2004 LANGHE FREISA 91/A
Burlotto's *2004 Dolcetto* has perfumed and dark fruits in the nose, followed by a pure body with dark cherries, good concentration, and excellent balance and finesse. This makes for one of the best Dolcetti of a stellar year. This can even take a little age. Now-2008. The regular *Barbera*, raised in large *botti*, shows black raspberry fruit that is a touch chunky, but still for the grape, the touch of Verduno shows through. The *Barbera "L'Avès"* is raised in new oak barriques and from better-sited vines. The wood is marked, but blends well. The wine is somewhat tannic on the finish, but shows richness and high quality with perfumed fruit. *Freisa* usually is made as a sparkling wine, but a few producers in Piedmont, including Burlotto, make it as a still wine. What a surprise this was! It shows raspberry and strawberry aromas and is dense on the palate with raspberry flavors, purity, and finesse.

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GIACOMO CONTERNO

2004 BARBERA (86-89)
2003 BAROLO CASCINA FRANZIA (90-94)
1999 BAROLO MONFORTINO (95-98)

I tasted the *Barbera* in May, less than two months before it was to be bottled. Intensely dark in color and still reduced in the nose, the wine was elegant and sweet from its dark fruits in the mouth. Roberto Conterno says that it should be at its optimum in 2008-2009. At the same time, I tasted the *2003 Barolo, Cascina Francia*, as well as the Monfortino that will be blended into it prior to bottling in 2007. The wines showed beautiful finesse with depth, a chewy texture, and violets. Last, the *1999 Barolo, Monfortino*, which I tasted in May 2006 and was to be bottled in July. The wine is more fruit-driven than floral in the nose. In the mouth, it is deep and pure with a little spice, red currant fruit, and chewy and velvety in texture. Great Barolo.

GIANNI GAGLIARDI

2003 BARBERA D'ALBA LA MATTA 87/A
2002 LANGHE NEBBIOLO ZERO DUE 90/A
The *Barbera* shows violet aromas that are deep and intense. No woody hints here. In the mouth, the wine is smooth, round, and medium weight with finesse to its violet fruit, and only a hint of new wood, used as a seasoning not to dominate. The *2002 Langhe Nebbiolo* is an example of declassified Barolo boosting a wine. It has the tobacco perfume and firm texture of a Barolo with cherry fruit and admirable finesse. Now-2013/14.

BRUNO GIACOSA

2003 SPUMANTE EXTRA BRUT 90/A
2005 ROERO ARNEIS 87/A
2005 DOLCETTO D'ALBA 90/A+
2004 BARBERA SUPERIORE FALLETTO 90/A+
2000 BAROLO ROCCHIE DI FALLETTO RISERVA 93/A

Giacosa's *2003 Spumante* is an amazing wine for 2003, the vintage of the great heat in Europe. The wine is from Pinot Noir vinified as a white wine, and Dante Scagliari, the winemaker, says that the Spumante is capable of aging 12-15 years! The wine is pure and stony in the nose and shows small bubbles. In the mouth, it is slightly sweet and also very pure and noble with a gentle attack and the austerity of a fine Champagne. The *2005 Roero Arneis* is entirely from bought fruit from about 70 different producers. There is some botrytis in this wine. It has melon and spice aromas, followed on the palate by melon and green apple flavors with a touch of honey and some density to the texture. The *2005 Dolcetto d'Alba* also is from purchased fruit. The grapy black fruit with a touch of pepper in the nose is followed in the mouth by more grape fruit with calmness and purity. The *2004 Barbera superiore Falletto* shows ripe and round dark berry fruit that is smooth and flowing and moderate acidity. No hint here of the 14.5% alcohol. Last, the *2000 Barolo, Rocchie di Falletto riserva* shows black fruits that clearly put it in the same line as the 2001 reviewed above, but it is much more immediate and sensual here. The nose is also perfumed and the wine is elegant. Now-2020.

G. MASCARELLO E FIGLIO

2003 BARBERA SCUDETTO DI MONFORTE D'ALBA 87/A
2003 BARBERA D'ALBA SUPERIORE
SANTO STEFANO DI MONFROTE D'ALBA 88/A
2003 BARBERA D'ALBA SUPERIORE
CODANE DI MONFORTE D'ALBA 90/A+
2003 FREISA TOETTA 87/A
1999 STATUS 90/A
2003 LANGHE NEBBIOLO 88/B+
1999 BAROLO MONPRIVATO 93(+)/A
1996 BAROLO MONPRIVATO CA' MORISSIO 96/A+

Mauro and Giuseppe Mascarello not only make some of the greatest Barolo in Piedmont, but a variety of other excellent wines, too, all in the most traditional style. The *2003 Barbera, Scudetto di Monforte d'Alba* is smooth and silky with animal red fruits and a round body. This wine is very forthcoming. No new wood here. The *2003 Barbera d'Alba superiore, Santo Stefano di Monforte d'Alba* shows a gamy nose, followed by

more depth and structure in the mouth than the previous wine. This is serious wine with lovely dark fruits, especially blueberries. The rarest of the three Barbera reviewed here is the **2003 Barbera d'Alba superiore Codane** (only about 80 cases produced), but if you come across it, bite. This comes from 100 year-old vines and shows complex dark fruit with a velvet texture. Exceptional. Mascarello is one of the few to make a still wine from the Freisa grape. The **2003 Freisa, Toetta** is round and deep with good tannins and peppery dark fruit. The **Status** is a blend, primarily of Nebbiolo, but with some Barbera and a touch of Freisa thrown in. The **1999 Status** is a mixture of roughly 70% Nebbiolo, 25% Barbera, and 5% Freisa. The wine is gamy and truffle in the nose, and smooth with red cherry fruit in the mouth. I'd guess drink it over the next 2-5 years. Last, the **2003 Langhe Nebbiolo** is very pure in its red cherry fruit and it has round tannins, making for a delicious wine to drink over the next 4-5 years. The **Barolo, Monprivato**, from Mascarello's monopole vineyard, is leathery and gamy in the nose, and shows elegance and depth together with red fruits on the palate, with some chewiness but also finesse. This wine has begun to move on to secondary flavors and aromas. 2010-2035. Finally, the **Barolo, Ca' Morissio** is a special portion of the Monprivato. The wine shows depth, complexity, and some gaminess in the nose which only adds to the complexity. In the mouth, the wine is still a baby, but there is so much depth, complexity, power, and finesse all combined that one cannot help but be astounded by this wine. 20152040.

FRANCESCO RINALDI & FIGLI

2004 BARBERA D'ALBA 88/A

This wine is perfumed in the nose and soft and smooth in the mouth with dark fruit and elegance, and none of the coarseness and over-oaked qualities that mar too many Barbera.

GIGI ROSSO

2005 DOLCETTO DIANO D'ALBA 88/A

Lovely, deep, fruity nose that is very fresh, followed by a smooth texture with dark fruit that is still young. Now-2007.

G. D. VAJRA

2005 LANGHE BIANCO 86/A

2005 DOLCETTO D'ALBA 87/A

2004 DOLCETTO D'ALBA COSTE & FOSSATI 88/A

2004 BARBERA D'ALBA SUPERIORE 88/A

1999 FREISA KYÈ 90/A

Vajra is one of the great estates in Piedmont, not just for its Barolo, but also for the other wines that it produces. The **Langhe bianco** is in fact from Riesling. It shows nice minerality in its lemony nose, and is lemony in the mouth and rich. Honestly, it's not going to make you forget top Rieslings from Germany, Austria, or Alsace, but it is an interesting wine, and one that can take 3-4 years' aging. 20 year-old vines. The **2005 Dolcetto d'Alba** has intense, grapy blueberry fruit in both the nose and mouth. This is a simple, but delicious wine for drinking young. The **2004 Docletto d'Alba "Coste & Fossati"** (27 year old vines) shows some spice in the nose and is smooth, round, and dense with some tannin to its dark fruit. The fruitiness is less obvious here than with the previous wine, but the alcohol is 14% (doesn't show it) vs. 13% for the previous. The **2004 Barbera d'Alba** has red fruit aromas and flavors with no oakiness showing. It is less dense than the Dolcetto and has fine acidity. Sixty year-old vines. Vajra has the oldest Freisa vineyard in the region, at 27 years. The **Freisa Kyè** is a still wine. It is smooth, deep, and round with dark, musky fruit and will be excellent with typical Piemontese cuisine and the like. Now-2011+.

CASTELLO DI VERDUNO

2004 PELAVERGA BASDONE 87/A

Pelaverga is a grape that the commune of Verduno specializes in. This one shows white pepper in the nose, and in the body with a juicy texture and white pepper and red fruit flavors, fine balance, and finesse.

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