

WINE News

*Bring in the Spring with Beauties
from Northern Italy*



MARCH 20, 2023 FEATURES

- 2 Teroldego from Foradori
- 3 The Piedmont Report
- 4 The Hit Parade with John Downing

The Delights of Northern Italy

Though the rolling hills of Tuscany are what you'll find on most postcards from Italy, and its wines on many American tables, we'd like to zoom in on what's happening in the far northern reaches of the country. In the Alto Adige region, where Italy meets Austria and shares the towering mountains of the Dolomites and the Alps, you'll find some of the most exciting wines in the country. With roots straddling Austrian winemaking, plenty of indigenous grapes, and extreme cool-climate conditions, Alto Adige is delivering wines that are fresh, fruity, and exceptionally drinkable. If they're not on your radar yet, not to worry: SF Italy Specialist Dejah Overby suggests you start by getting to know the grape Teroldego, a deceptively dark-hued charmer that drinks with bright, berry-fruited charisma. On page 2, Dejah highlights the wines of Agricola Foradori.

Farther to the west, the Piedmont region is no newcomer to

international fame with its Barolo and Barbarescos. On page 3, Ryan Moses, our Key Accounts Manager and a specialist in collectible wines, walks us through the last few vintages from these powerhouse regions. He highlights the best bottles for popping open young and those that are the most deserving of a long slumber in your cellar.

On our back page, Hollywood Italy Specialist John Downing features some of his current faves—one from Alto Adige with a few from Tuscany for good measure.

And, lest you think we've foresaken Tuscany, we're throwing in our top three picks below.

Many exciting things are happening in Southern Italy, but we'll save them for another day, another newsletter. For now, put on a warm coat and transport yourself to the cool climes of the north!

Top Picks from Tuscany



2017 Costanti Brunello di Montalcino \$79.99 97WE

The 2017 vintage was warm in Montalcino, but the best producers, like Costanti, were able to retain the freshness to create wines that are both vibrant and rich. This is velvety with deep black fruit, truffle, and earth

tones. It will drink well early if you give it a nice decant, but will also continue to evolve in your cellar for a decade—if you can wait for it!



2019 Felsina Fontalloro Toscana (Elsewhere \$70) \$49.99 96JS

Felsina is a benchmark producer in Tuscany and a fan favorite at K&L, and with good reason: their wines embody an approachable, delicious style that overdelivers on complexity. This 100%-Sangiovese Super Tuscan

is a prime example—especially at this price! Herbs, spice, and layers of fruit on a succulent, long finish. Exquisite!



2018 La Massa "La Massa" Toscana \$21.99 93JS

Italy Buyer Greg St. Clair calls this the best vintage he's had of La Massa for some time, and that's saying a lot considering that this wine hits it out of the park with each release. At this price, it's a wine to load up on, as it will happily evolve in the

cellar. If you are looking for something that will warm your bones while retaining zippy acidity, look no further.

Getting to Know Teroldego with Agricola Foradori

By Dejah Overby, Italy Specialist



The beauty of Italian wine is that there's always something new to discover.

You can go deep on well-known and well-loved quantities, such as wines from Tuscany, or you can explore the myriad other grapes and wine producing regions in the country. Teroldego is a variety that is not commonly known around the world, but it is well worth discovering!

Teroldego 101

Known formally as Teroldego Rotaliano, Teroldego is a dark, thick-skinned grape from northern Italy that historically was used in blending to add color to wines that lacked rich pigment. Its home turf is one of the most distinguished winegrowing areas in the northeastern corner of the country, Trentino-Alto Adige/Sudtirol.

While its exact origin is up for debate, we know it is the parent of Lagrein, another ancient red variety not very well known outside of northern Italy, and a sibling to Dureza, a dark-skinned French grape from the French Rhône-Alpes. Teroldego thrives the best in calcareous granitic soil. California has been also known to grow Teroldego in such places like Amador County, Calaveras, El Dorado Lake, Santa Barbara, and Santa Clara.

Its homeland is Campo Rotaliano, a plain in northern Trentino that was formed by an ancient glacier that broke through what is now the Rocchetta Pass and flattened a plain surrounded by massive mountains. There is a unique combination of factors that make this such a special place for Teroldego: the fertile valley floor is nourished by the Noce and Adige Rivers and the surrounding mountains protect the vineyards from the north wind and retain warmth—perfect conditions for ripening Teroldego grapes.

Tasting Teroldego

On first look, the deep color can be deceiving, especially when you compare it to the fruit you actually taste in the glass. There is a rich and deep-purple-to-dark-ruby color that might trick you into thinking that the flavor profile would resemble that of grapes like Syrah, Malbec, and Petite Verdot. Rather, the nose is vibrant with bright notes of red berries such as cherry, cranberry, and pomegranate, with some underlying aromatics of blackberry and raspberry. There can also be savory notes of fresh soil, earth, and gravel. It is quite captivating to swirl, I must admit.

About Foradori

For some of the best examples of wines made from this grape, your best bet is Agricola Foradori, an estate that whose history has been

deeply intertwined with Teroldego. Foradori has been around since 1901. The Foradori family's third generation, Elisabetta Foradori and Rainer Zierock, is credited with regenerating Teroldego through their cultivation of the grape's original genetic material. Teroldego was traditionally trained in pergola, but, from 1985, onwards the Foradori family initiated a qualitative revolution by planting massal selections and introducing the Guyot vine training system in Trentino.

The fourth generation is now at the helm. They have taken the estate into biodynamic and organic farming, earning Demeter certification.



2020 Foradori "Morei" Teroldego Vigneti delle Dolomiti \$48.99

Morei is one of Foradori's three different vineyard locations dedicated to Teroldego. Moro means dark in the Trentino dialect. The "Morei" bottling presents such freshness and a lively fruit profile. The nose shows wild strawberries, raspberry, mint and thyme/herbaceous characteristics. The palate has a zestful, vivid freshness along with a velvety, lingering fruit finish. This is a wine that is lighter than the others but still packs a robust finish. It is perfect for everyday enjoyment.

2020 Foradori "Sgarzon" Teroldego Vigneti delle Dolomiti \$48.99

Sgarzon means "the shoot that grows in the Campo Rotaliano," referring to the active vines that thrive in Rotaliano's cooler climate, which is key to the flavor profile of Teroldego. The "Sgarzon" bottling reveals more rustic expressions, displaying an appealing nose of fresh floral notes recalling tulips, calla lily, and peonies. The crispness of upland herbs, minerals, and crushed gravel spring up in the glass energetically. It has a black olive tapenade, fig, currant berry complexity that is mouthwatering and lengthy. Pure deliciousness. It finishes on notes of underripe berries, crushed pomegranate, and candied cherries. Such delightful and pleasure-filled wine to drink!

2019 Foradori "Granato" Teroldego Vigneti delle Dolomiti

\$74.99 Granato means garnet in Italian but also references to the pomegranate fruit of Mediterranean origin. The "Granato" bottling displays an appealing nose of black cherry, currants, and wild berries. The sweet-and-sour aromas blend together in a well-structured wine. The hints of savory alpine herbs, wild thyme, elder flowers, and dried violets are expressive together with the soft tannins here. There is a silky presentation of fine lingering flavors in addition to the fresh acidity. This is a lively wine with brisk, fleshy fruit that has a long life ahead in the cellar.

Post-2016 Piedmont: Value and Upside from Nebbiolo's Greats

By Ryan Moses, Collectible Specialist



The sun is setting on the availability of the last “banner vintage” in Piedmont, but the excitement is just starting in terms of high-quality wines from top-tier producers. From the accessible 2017s to the refined 2018s, there are plentiful wines that will overperform for the next decade-plus. On the heels of these two years, we’re getting into a compelling campaign for 2019 Barbaresco and Barolo, with high expectations for the following years as well. Piedmont

continues to deliver one wine after another at a world-class level at, with few exceptions, remarkably good prices for what they deliver.

The Heights of 2017 and 2018

Fratelli Alessandria is one of the rising stars of Piedmont, without a doubt. The wines deliver at every level, and their **2018 Fratelli Alessandria “Monvigliero” Barolo** \$99.99 95WA bottling stands tall as one of the must-have expressions—in any given vintage.

But that remarkable craftsmanship is also evident in the **2018 Fratelli Alessandria “Commune di Verduno”** \$57.99 94+WA, their baseline Barolo bottling, which has an uncanny level of depth and elegance.



Another undeniable start of the Langhe is Brovia, with their cult-caliber crus becoming harder to find by the year. They carry some of the highest accolades of the vintage yet again in 2017, whether it be **2017 Brovia “Rocche di Castiglione” Barolo** \$109.99 98WE, the elusive **2017 Brovia “Villero” Barolo** \$109.99 97WE, or the monopole **2017 Brovia “Brea Vigna Ca’ Mia” Barolo** \$109.99 98WE. Complex and finessed, they beautifully

highlight some of the most treasured terroir in Piedmont.

We also have a few opportunities from the iconic Roberto Conterno. The **2018 Giacomo Conterno “Cascina Francia” Barolo (Pre-Arrival)** \$269.99 97WA is from a non-Monfortino vintage, meaning that fruit from that famed terroir goes into this bottling. As *Wine Advocate’s* Monica Lerner aptly puts it, “it offers a complete portrait of vintage, variety, and vintner.”

Such is the case too with his **2018 Nervi-Conterno “Molsino” Gattinara (Pre-Arrival)** \$149.99 98+V, a wine that Antonio Galloni insists “will soon be the Monfortino of Alto Piemonte.” This is one of the first great vintages that was completely overseen by Roberto Conterno, and the remarkable quality that he’s already achieved here speaks volumes to his Midas touch with Nebbiolo.

An Intro to a Wonderful Vintage: 2019s Hit the Market

It will be compelling to see what the next few years bring, as there is abundant excitement for the 2019, 2020, and 2021 vintages. It is too early to get a read on the latter two, but we are already very impressed by what 2019s have delivered. The vintage itself is in a classic style, with a good depth of fruit and well-integrated tannins. While some that we’ve tried so far seem open and approachable, others seem to be structured to age. Both Barolo and Barbaresco saw a relatively long growing season, with some early season stresses that reduced yields, but not quality. Some localized hail and late season rains produced a bit of variability, but the overall season was one that will find a ton of admirers in the short and long term.



The **2019 Ada Nada “Valeirano” Barbaresco** \$34.99 96WE is a great place to start, not only since it is extremely classic and highly acclaimed, but also because it comes in at an incredibly fair price for the quality on offer. It’s interesting to note that Spinetta’s famed Valeirano Cru bottling sells for many multiples of this.

We also have been extremely impressed by the **2019 Giuseppe Cortese Barbaresco** \$39.99 95WE. Known for their flagship **2019 Giuseppe Cortese “Rabaja” Barbaresco** \$59.99 96WE, the Barbaresco bottling is a relatively new entry in the portfolio and still contains some Rabaja fruit, but also is built from the neighboring Teifolera. Graceful and complex, it shows a traditional profile with plenty of elegance, acidity, and bright fruit.



Last, but certainly not least, Ca del Baio knocked it out of the park with their 2019 bottlings. The **2019 Ca’ del Baio “Autinbej” Barbaresco** \$36.99 94JS is their three-vineyard, entry-level blend; a superb introduction to the house style. The **2019 Ca’ del Baio “Asili” Barbaresco** \$54.99 98ID is on another level altogether, bringing out the absolute best in a Cru that is known for some of the most indelible bottlings of Barbaresco out there.

On the Barolo side, it is early in the campaign, and we will be uncovering more opportunities as the year progresses. Some of the first releases on pre-arrival include a classic in the **2019 Conterno Fantino “Ginestra - Vigna Sori Ginestra” Barolo (Pre-Arrival)** \$99.99 96V. One of the most renowned labels in Ginestra, Conterno Fantino is on top of their game these days, and the 2019s are “simply stellar” according to Antonio Galloni.

Another champion of the modern era, **2019 E. Pira Chiara Boschis “Via Nuova” Barolo (Pre-Arrival)** \$89.99 97V has shades of what made it a perfect wine in 2016 and continues a storied chapter for the fan favorite bottling.

A Few of John's Favorites

By John Downing, Italy Specialist



Although we have a vast selection of outstanding Italian wines to choose from on our shelves, I've selected several of my favorites that, quite frankly, I'm surprised are still in stock. The quality-to-price ratio is so good on these that they are no-brainer buys for anyone looking to build their Italian collection. Snatch these up before they're gone!

Alto Adige



2021 Cantina Terlan "Terlaner Cuvée" Alto Adige \$29.95

We were fortunate to be among the first few to offer these wines when they arrived in California over 20 years ago. It was our opinion then as it is today that this winery is one of the jewels of Italy. Considering they are a cooperative with over 300 growers that supply their fruit annually, their level of quality and consistency is remarkable. This is thanks to high standards and strict quality controls. Although we have several of their outstanding wines in stock, I wanted to highlight their impressive white blend.

The "Terlaner" is a blend of Pinot Bianco, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon



Blanc. This flagship bottling has remained the face of the winery since 1893. While the Pinot Blanc provides freshness and acidity, the Chardonnay adds texture and weight. The Sauvignon Blanc enhances the aromatic quality and citrus nuances of the wine. The 2021 vintage was lower than usual in overall grape production yet yielded wonderfully complex wines. This exciting, versatile blend is an ideal accompaniment to cured meats, soups, light pastas, poultry and mild cheeses.



Tuscany

2020 Sesta di Sopra Rosso di Montalcino \$29.99 This memorable Sangiovese was one of the highlights of our recent Italian consumer tasting here in Hollywood. We were expecting noticeable French oak flavors since it is aged in small barrels, yet we experienced the opposite. The overall reaction was that this is about as close as you'll get to well-made Brunello at half the price. It's really one of the best Rosso di Montalcinos we've tasted recently, and it comes with our highest recommendation. Tasting notes not required!



2017 Sesta di Sopra Brunello di Montalcino \$56.99

94JS We've written about this wine on more than one occasion, but I wanted to re-state just how good it is. This is definitely among the best Brunellos of the 2017 vintage. It was an extremely hot and dry year that presented significant challenges for the producers to maintain balance and freshness while avoiding overripe fruit. Sesta di Sopra managed to craft a full-bodied, richly fruited and concentrated Brunello with excellent balance and freshness. Enjoy this gem over the next few years.

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