

The International Wine Review

November/December 2016

Report #59: Wines of the Piedmont: Arneis and Nebbiolo from Roero

Introduction



The Piedmont is internationally famous for its distinguished red wines, especially those made from Nebbiolo¹. The Nebbiolo wines of the Piedmont rank among the best red wines in the world. The Piedmont and the Roero region, in particular, have also become famous as the home of Arneis, the Piedmont's only world class white wine grape. The purpose of this report, and of our recent travels to Roero, is to focus attention on the high quality and exceptional values of the Arneis, Nebbiolo and other wines, such as Barbera, made here.

¹ The logo of the Consorzio Tutela Roero is a modern version of the coat of arms of the Roero family that ruled the area in the Middle Ages. It was a red shield with three carriage wheels. The ladybug common to the area is a sign of good luck.

² A map of the Roero appellation is given in Annex 1.

In this Issue

Introduction	1
Acknowledgements	2
A Brief History	3
Geography, Soils and Climate.....	4
Vineyards of Roero.....	6
Arneis.....	7
Nebbiolo	9
Barbera & Other Varieties.....	10
Cuisine of Roero	12
Marketing	14
Winery Profiles and Tasting Notes	16
Annexes	
1. Map of Roero	32
2. Crus of Roero.....	33

Located in the Piedmont between Alba to the south and Turin to the northwest, Roero is both an old and young wine region². Grapes have been grown and wine made here for centuries; the Romans certainly grew wine here, and later records from the 14th century give information about its production. But its emergence as a fine wine region began just a few decades ago. Roero Nebbiolo was granted DOC status in 1985 and Roero Arneis in 1989; they were both granted DOCG status in 2004. The appellation has advanced quickly. In 1985 just 85 wineries produced wine under the appellation; today 520 wineries do so, an increase of over 500 percent in just 30 years.

Continued on page 2

Introduction

Continued from page 1



While its wines are excellent, Roero lacks the recognition accorded to its Barolo and Barbaresco cousins to the south. This works to the advantage of the consumer as the prices of Roero's premium Arneis, Nebbiolo and Barbera wines remain low, especially considering their quality.

In recent years Roero has adopted several measures to raise the quality and reputation of its wines, including adoption of more stringent production standards. Most recently, the Consorzio di Tutela del Roero officially identified the highest quality growing areas, called Crus, after completing an evaluation process over several years³. In addition, the Consorzio recently introduced a new, higher quality level of Arneis called Arneis Riserva which came into effect with the 2017 vintage.

³ A listing of the Crus can be found in Annex 2.

The i-WineReview is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, VA 22101. Our email is: info@iwinereview.com Rates for one-year subscriptions are \$69 for the online edition and \$99 for 1 year combined online and print subscriptions. Commercial subscriptions are also available for \$149/year. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of iwinereview.com. Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at www.i-winereview.com Individual reports are also available for \$20. Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law. Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

The *International Wine Review* traveled to Roero in August and September of 2016 to learn more about the region and its wines. We met almost all the most important winemakers of the region, explored their vineyards, and tasted wines from the nineteen hilltop villages that comprise the appellation. Our tastings ranged from simple, easy drinking entry level wines to complex, layered wines of considerable depth.

This report provides a comprehensive review of the vineyards and wines of Roero. It explores the history of wine in the region and, especially, the relatively recent development of Arneis as its trademark white grape. We look at the important role of modern-day wine Roero pioneers like Cornarea, Correggia, Deltetto, Malvirá, and Negro and the significant role played by winemakers from outside Roero, including Bruno Giacosa, Ceretto, Marchesi di Barolo, and Vietti. Since Roero is relatively unknown to wine connoisseurs, we provide comprehensive profiles in this report of the region's major wineries together with tasting notes and ratings of almost 200 wines.

Recognition is a major challenge for Roero, a region of mostly small, family wineries that lack the scale and resources required to adequately market their wines. The Consorzio di Tutela di Roero does an admirable job of outreach on behalf of its member wineries; earlier this year it undertook an impressive trade tasting in New York City. We explore the marketing challenge for Roero in the final section of this report.

Promoting wine and food tourism is one of the tools in the Consorzio's toolbox. The charming medieval hilltop villages of the region are well-preserved, immensely attractive, and provide a peaceful look into the local culture. The small scale of the wineries means the wine tourist will very probably meet the winemaker and will certainly receive a warm reception. Anyone who has traveled the small towns of the region, met the winemakers, and tasted their wines will inevitably become ambassadors of the wines and people of Roero.

Acknowledgements.

We wish to thank the members of the Consorzio di Tutela del Roero and its member wineries for their very warm hospitality during our visit. The current president of the Consorzio, Francesco Monchiero, and his wife Lucrezia Scarsi are exceptionally engaging, committed and effective ambassadors of the Roero appellation. We would like to give special thanks to Federico Almondo of Almondo Giovanni, Giovanni Minetti of Tenuta Carretta, Anna Abbona of Marchesi di Barolo, Roberto Damonte of Malvirá, and Giovanni Negro of Negro Angelo. We also thank Sam Kass of Winebow for his encouragement and assistance in this endeavour. Constance Chamberlain of Wine & Co. also encouraged and facilitated this report, including organizing the Roero Tasting in New York City in May 2016. Finally, we thank Amato Bellotti of Wine Zone in Lorton VA for sharing his enthusiasm for Roero wines with us.

Malabaila 2015 Arneis Roero 88 The 2015 Arneis is exceptionally clean and pure, revealing scents of green citrus, apple, and chalky minerals that are mirrored on a focused palate. **Malabaila 2015 Pradvaj Arneis Roero (\$22) 90** The single vineyard Pradvaj is ripe in style, revealing passion fruit and stone fruits both on the nose and on the palate. Passion fruit and tropical fruits show on a fresh, bright attack along with orchard fruit, all well balanced with crisp acidity on a long finish.

Malabaila 2013 Bric Volta Roero (\$22) 89 This 100% Nebbiolo from the Bric Volta vineyard offers a vibrant nose of red cherry with light earth and toast notes. In the mouth, it is silky smooth with firm tannins and a good extract on the finish. Aged partly in tonneau and partly in botti. **Malabaila 2010 Castelletto Roero**

Riserva (\$51) 92 The 2010 single vineyard Castelletto is an impressively earthy, concentrated and structured wine. Densely packed with spicy notes of mushroom, leather and dark cherries, it has a deceptively soft attack followed by excellent focus and richness with a firm backbone and impressive purity and length. The 2004 vintage tasted at the same time was more evolved with a lush palate, but the earthy character was still there. Impressive! **Malabaila 2015 Giardino Barbera d'Alba 89**

Dark ruby. Showing a bright, fresh red berry and plum, effusively fruity nose, this is a very pleasant medium weight Barbera that's packed with fruit. Fruity and delicious.

Malabaila 2013 Mezzavilla Barbera d'Alba Superiore 91 A single vineyard Barbera made from 65 year old vines. Shows scents of vanilla, smoke, red plum and berry. Nicely structured thanks to 16+ months in barrique. Should improve still further with a bit of time in bottle.



Malvirà (Canale) Established in the 1950s by Giuseppe Damonte, this estate is run today by brothers Massimo and Roberto Damonte (shown here). This is one of Roero's larger wineries with 43 ha of vines, 30 of which are in the Roero appellation. They are located in 8 different vineyard sites, mostly in Canale, including the historic Vigna Renesio. The

San Michele vineyard has 80 year old vines. Roberto and his son Giacomo are the winemakers. The hotel Villa Tiboldi and its excellent restaurant are also located on the estate. Importer: Indigenous Wine Selections Website: www.Malvirà.com

Malvirà 2015 Arneis Roero 88 This is a straightforward wine offering white peach and pear aromas and a clean, soft palate with an additional note of blanched almonds. **Malvirà 2015 Arneis Unfiltered Roero 89** A very fresh, pure Arneis showing tangy grapefruit citrus and sour apple scents. The palate has good density with stone fruit flavors, finishing long and rich. Goes through malo so it is bottled unfiltered. **Malvirà 2014 Saglietto Arneis**

Roero 90 Sourced from the Saglietto vineyard, this Arneis is 50% aged in 450L oak for 10 months. It reveals appealing lemon citrus and a hint of vanilla oak on the nose, and offers a firmly structured palate with good extract on the finish. **Malvirà 2015 Vigna Renesio Arneis Roero 90** A flavorful Arneis sourced from the Renesio Cru, the ancestral home of Arneis. The wine is ripe in character, showing lush white stone fruit and ripe pear aromas and flavors. Very good. **Malvirà 2015 Vigna Trinità Arneis Roero 91** This partially barrel-aged Arneis from the Trinità vineyard is especially refined. It offers a perfume of acacia and pear and a firmly structured palate of layered flavors and a mineral laden finish. Fermented in stainless steel and aged 90% in stainless tanks and 10% in 450L barrels for 8 months.

Malvirà 2012 Roero 89 A medium weight, pleasantly aromatic and full flavored wine showing notes of red cherries and berries with light earth and dried herb notes. **Malvirà 2009 Renesio Roero Riserva 91** A Roero Riserva that's especially full and flavorful with a layered palate and finely textured, silky mouth feel, showing notes of tobacco, earth, licorice and red berry compote. This was Malvirà's first vintage using a one week cold soak. The fermentation is slow and long and used indigenous yeast.



Cantine dei Marchesi di Barolo (Barolo) This historical Barolo winery has been run by the Abbona family for five generations. Anna and Ernesto Abbona (shown here) are the current owners and managers of the estate, one of the largest in Barolo. The estate owns 52 ha of vines throughout the Piedmont, including 3.9 ha of Guyot VSP

trellised vines in Roero, where it produces Roero Arneis from vineyards in Corneliano, Monteu Roero and Vezza d'Alba (from the Bricco Bastia and Valpura vineyards). Total production is about 1.5 million bottles annually. US Importer: Website: www.marchesibarolo.com

Marchesi di Barolo 2015 Arneis Roero 89 Platinum straw. Showing a vibrant citrus nose of lemon and a twist of lime peel, this Arneis has bright acidity and good minerality, finishing with good length and the same citrus notes as the beginning. **Marchesi di Barolo 2014 Peragal Barbera d'Alba 90+** This is a very appealing Barbera. It is delicious, rich and elegant with fresh dark red fruit and hints of chocolate and toasted oak. Finishes with soft tannins. Aged 9 months in barriques.