

# WINE News

*Greg St. Clair unwraps the enigma that is Amarone, plus previews of the 2010 Baroli, 2010 Brunelli and Guido's favorite Italian sippers for the summer...*



*Above: Versante Amiata Montalcino*

## MAY 19, 2014 FEATURES

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## A Surprise at Vinitaly: Unwrapping Amarone

*By Greg St. Clair*

I recently returned from Italy's annual wine extravaganza, **Vinitaly**, where many thousands of producers and tens of thousands of buyers and agents spend their days promoting or tasting wines and their nights traipsing through the streets of Verona, filling all of the restaurants past capacity and taking all of the available taxis. Each year I try to have a specific plan for Vinitaly in place for the category I most want to explore, since the sheer number of producers attending makes it difficult to focus without a clear agenda. Once I've accomplished my goal, I let myself absorb, taste and experience the pulse of the event, and from that something else interesting always pops up. This year my plan was two-fold: try as many 2009 Brunelli as I could, then taste the 2010 Baroli now on release. The 2009 Brunelli were wonderfully fruit-filled, remarkably balanced and drinkable now. Read my vintage report and tasting notes on our [blog](#). The 2010 Baroli were fabulous, too. Read John Downing's summary of the vintage on page two, along with my notes.

This year my "surprising" discovery was Amarone. It was more than surprising, actually, since Amarone comes from the hills surrounding Verona, and every year while I'm in Verona I'm always paying attention to something else. This isn't just by chance; Amarone is one of the most misunderstood wines from Italy. The process of making it is so unique, and the results are so varied, that it's hard to get a clear picture of what is going on. Traditionally, the heavily dried grapes (three to five months indoors, depending on producer and vintage) produced wines that had a distinct raisiny flavor and sometimes a bit of residual sugar. However, the wines we see today have a far broader spectrum of dryness and

flavors. Drying grapes is not an unusual practice in Italy. Piedmont, Tuscany, Friuli and Lombardia have a vibrant history of producing wines from dried grapes, but most producers of the style will tell you the wines lose their regional character. To me, the regional character of Valpolicella Ripasso and Amarone is the dried grape character. The distinctive wild cherry, chocolaty flavor derived from this method of winemaking is so uncommon, you don't find it anywhere else. Also, Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara, the particular blend of grapes that make Valpolicella and Amarone, are grown almost exclusively in the Veneto. The wines produced run the gamut from drier and fresh to thick and semi-sweet; I've brought in wines across the style spectrum.

The **2009 Allegrini Amarone (\$59.99)** is the more classic, slightly fruitier, slightly riper style of Amarone, very popular and traditional and perfectly correct; it may just be lacking Cindy Crawford's mole. I would suggest the **2007 Iginio Accordini "Le Bessole" Amarone (\$39.99)** as an example of an Amarone that tastes more of place. It's about whispers and veils, enticing and beckoning. It's classic, but an enhanced drinking experience. Similarly the **2007 Corte Rugolin "Monte Danieli" Amarone Classico (\$46.99)** has deeper chocolaty richness. It's warmer and fuller, meant to be enjoyed with a big hunk of Parmigiano-Reggiano while watching the sun go down. If past encounters with riper Amarones have turned you off, I have other styles of the wine in stock. The **2008 Musella Amarone della Valpolicella (\$41.99)** has less of the overt ripeness of the others. It's more savory and less fruity, with earth and herb, while having a focused central palate

*...continued on page three*

## 2010 BAROLI *World-Class Wines*

Vintages come and go, and we at K&L make a concerted effort to offer our best assessment of each of them. But it's especially gratifying to do when world-class wines like the 2010 Baroli come along.

A generation ago Barolo was a much firmer wine that, in most cases, required a good deal of cellar time to reach a window of drinkability. But the Baroli of today are different largely because of advances in viticulture that allow the growers to wait out Barolo's notoriously treacherous weather to achieve full phenolic ripeness. Winemakers have also learned to take a measured approach in the cellar, eschewing the long macerations of the past designed to extract color that also extracted rough tannins from Nebbiolo's thick skins and astringent pips. The wines these days often achieve the optimum balance of earlier drinkability while still remaining incredibly age-worthy.

This brings us to the 2010 vintage. Winter was cold and extended into early March, but the heavy snowfalls left substantial water reserves that served the vines well. Ideal temperatures in April and May resulted in excellent bud break. The vineyards endured heavy rainfall in June, a warm July and cooler than average temperatures lasting from the end of July through early August. From the last 10 days of August through September, the ideal combination of day and night temperatures helped ensure proper ripening and phenolic development. Nebbiolo was harvested mid-October and the quality of the fruit was outstanding.

The vintage is an excellent one for Barolo. The wines are complex, structured, built for aging and will definitely appeal to those who prefer more classic vintages. It is considered among the finer vintages of late among growers, and the majority of producers, especially those with the better vineyard sites, made outstanding Baroli. They are rich, flavorful and well defined wines with ample tannins and balanced acidity.

Considering the limited availability and higher prices of comparable wines from Burgundy in the past couple of vintages, along with the difficult 2013 vintage in Bordeaux, Barolo is an excellent option for red wine connoisseurs as the wines are not only terrific but also in fairly good supply. We've been selective with 2009 Brunelli as well, so 2010 Baroli (along with the 2010 Brunelli) are the place to put your dollars this year. Don't miss these exceptional wines!

—John Downing

We are currently offering the following 2010 Baroli, mostly on pre-arrival. Others will be offered as they arrive in the market. Tasting notes are from K&L Italian wine buyer, Greg St. Clair.

**2010 Agostino Bosco "La Serra" Barolo (PA \$67.99)** 95 points James Suckling. Andrea Bosco's wines have taken a gigantic step forward this vintage; they are so much more complete and balanced. This is a classic representation of La Serra.

**2010 Agostino Bosco "Neirane" Barolo (PA \$54.99)** 96 points James Suckling. The Neirane is spicy and more full flavored than the more subtle La Serra, showing a bit of a rambunctious nature, wild and carefree.

**2010 Angelo Germano "Mondoca di Bussia" Barolo (PA \$66.99)** I love this wine's commanding palate presence, showing Monforte's richness, yet layers of structure and flavor.

**2010 Angelo Germano "Rué" Barolo (PA \$68.99)** Deep, brooding aromatics—earth, spice, leather and truffle—with lots of powerful tannins. This will reward time in your cellar.

**2010 Brangero Barolo (PA \$54.99)** 90 points James Suckling. I had never tasted these wines before this year, but fell in love immediately. Exceptionally elegant, the wine just seems full of energy, with wonderfully balanced fruit that reaches skyward. A real value.

**2010 Brangero "Monvigliero" Barolo (PA \$66.99)** 91 points JS. Similar to the *normale*, this wine has more spice and less floral character, with lots of depth and wonderful finish.

**2010 GD Vajra "Albe" Barolo (PA \$35.99)** 94 points Antonio Galloni. The wine's power, size and bold fruit just about knocked me over. Impressive and powerful.

**2010 GD Vajra "Bricco delle Viole" Barolo (PA \$79.99)** 95 points AG. The Bricco Viole is far more compact, yet more complex, than the Albe, with layers of spice and fruit tightly wound together with leather and earth. An excellent wine that needs cellaring.

**2010 Baudana "Baudana" Barolo (PA \$79.99)** 92-95 points AG. A surprising wine from Serralunga; more elegant, open and bursting with flavor. Seems remarkably well balanced.

**2010 Baudana "Bricco Ceretta" Barolo (PA \$79.99)** 92-95 points Antonio Galloni. Powerful, brooding, classic Serralunga Barolo with a firmly wound core of tannin and big shoulders.

**2010 Parusso "Mariondino" Barolo (\$57.99)** 93 points Antonio Galloni. Pretty red fruit aromatics with a swirl of vanilla; supple and rich on the palate. Good balance.

**2010 Parusso "Le Coste di Monforte" Barolo (\$79.99)** 95 points James Suckling. High-toned red fruit highlights a bold aromatic statement that ends with a supple, smooth, vanilla-laced finish.

**2010 Parusso "Bussia" Barolo (\$87.99)** 94 points Antonio Galloni. Powerful, expansive and rich, with silky layers of flavor. There's a bit of tannin, but it's in-line with the wine's size. Persistent finish.

### Arriving Late Fall 2014

**2010 Ceretto "Bricco Rocche" Barolo (PA \$184.99)** 96 points JS.

**2010 Ceretto "Brunate" Barolo (\$79.99)** 95 points Antonio Galloni.

**2010 Ceretto "Prapó" Barolo (\$79.99)** 96+ points AG: "...One of the most beautiful young Barolos I have tasted from Ceretto in a long time. Deep, layered and beautifully expressive, yet also mysterious, the 2010 exudes class and that warm, Serralunga resonance that is unique to the Barolos of the village. Sage, roasted coffee beans, licorice and new leather are some of the notes that emerge over time, all framed by firm, muscular tannins that suggest a long life lies ahead. Today, the 2010 Prapó is majestic. It also has plenty of room to grow from here."

## 2010 BRUNELLO *Worth the Hype?*



*Fabiano Ciacci from Il Valentiano.*

**On a recent trip through Montalcino I was able to taste through a dozen different 2010 Brunelli, and I'm glad to say that all of the industry ballyhoo about the quality of this vintage is not inaccurate.**

Brunello's four-year-long gestation period has given me lots of opportunities to taste the vintage as it has evolved, and from the beginning it has truly been a WOW

vintage. Most critics have not written about the 2010s yet, but their quality hasn't been a secret either, especially when talking to the individual producers and winemakers. For example, Paolo Vaggagini, one of the best-known consulting enologists in Tuscany, told me that he has never, in his almost 40-year career, seen quality of fruit at this level. Vincenzo Abbruzese, owner/winemaker for Valdicava, recently shared his personal vintage chart for Valdicava listing the "Good, Very Good and Great" vintages. Then in a separate category, above the rest, he highlighted the 2010 vintage. And 93-year-old Nello Barrici, one of Montalcino's most beloved producers and a total perfectionist, told his grandsons that their 2010 was "Good." High praise from the king of understatement.

Simply put: the wines are exceptionally well-balanced and show each winery's signature flavor profile. All the wines I tasted felt so effortless on the palate; there seemed to be an energy lifting them, driving the flavors to the back of the mouth. All of the flavors I expected were there, the acidity was plainly evident, and I could feel the tannins, but everything was in complete balance, just perfect harmony.

Of course, you shouldn't take the fact that the wines are balanced to mean that they are not structured. These wines are powerful and will age a long, long time. They are so well composed, with everything in

its place. I could have drunk any one of them now.

We will offer the 2010 Brunelli for sale in January 2015, but I thought it was important to tell you about them while they were fresh in my mind. Right now, you can put yourself on the waiting list for the wines you want, and we'll notify you by email when they are released.

**2010 La Velona\*** Sensational balance; the wine seems to levitate off the palate. Red fruit dominated with a long and elegant finish.

**2010 Belpoggio** Dark fruit, with powerful structure, but exceptionally well-integrated tannins. The flavors seem fused together they're so well-defined as one. Supple, warm.

**2010 Tenuta di Sesta\*** Effortless grace, layers of intrigue, powerful yet almost invisible tannic structure. This just goes on forever.

**2010 Ferrero\*** Deeper, darker fruit, with more sun reflected in the flavors, yet displaying such poise and freshness. Long, sinuous finish.

**2010 Baccinetti\*** Deeper, darker fruit; this seems to have as much width as length. Powerfully structured, "big-boned" and potent.

**2010 Sesta di Sopra\*** Intensely spicy, with dark fruit, minerals and plenty of vigor. Regal. I wrote "long" three times in my notes.

**2010 La Fortuna\*** Power and presence. Sweet, dark, perfectly ripe fruit, structure that comes across as a layer in the background and a long, long finish.

**2010 Baricci\*** Powerfully elegant, with layers of sweet earth, wild cherry and an almost visible brightness that seems electric.

**2010 Tassi\*** Effortlessly powerful with lots of dark, forward fruit. While accessible, it still seems very restrained, with plenty of depth.

**2010 Franci\*** Stunning depth, with layers of dark fruit interwoven with hints of soil. Exceptional balance, power and structure.

**2010 Il Valentiano\*** Warmth and chocolaty aromas, supple yet energetic, full of spice and intrigue.

**2010 Poggiarellino\*** Bold. Wild cherry and earth mingle together. Big shoulders and powerful structure, finishing with exceptional lift.

**2010 Pian dell'Orino** Extraordinary depth and layers of ethereal aromatics. Complex, with gentle power. Full, but balanced.

—Greg St. Clair

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expression rather than the expansive nature of some Amarone. Then there is the **2006 Trabucchi Amarone (\$74.99)**. Balanced, with less fruity ripeness and a fresher, more vinous quality, this bears more of a resemblance to Barolo than Amarone. I recently had dinner at the Trabucchi estate, and while tasting wine is always important, there really isn't anything like drinking it to get a complete picture. I was so impressed by the Trabucchi wines at the table. They had additional spice and earthiness and depth, not just the palate richness that one expects with Amarone, but real flavor/structure integration.

The wines grew and grew as they sat in the decanter. Of course, I realize not all of you can go out and drop \$75 on a bottle. Fortunately they make a less expensive version that's also very good: The **2009 Trabucchi "San Colombano" Valpolicella Superiore (\$29.99)** is fantastic, supple, aromatic, still showing the grace, flavor and depth of its more expensive brother, but in a less powerful way. I think it's also a little easier to match with a variety of foods. You owe it to yourself to try these!

# Ask Guido: Summer Sippers

By Mike "Guido" Parres

**Summer is coming, and I am getting ready to sit in the backyard to watch my tomatoes and basil grow, Kindle and a glass of wine in hand.** Besides putting together a reading list, I also have a list of wines to try over the next few months.

Italian bubbles are always a great way to begin the season, and first on my list is the **San Venanzio Prosecco Valdobbiadene Brut\* (\$12.99)**. The nose is full of generous fruit, releasing hints of apples, peaches, tangerines and mangoes, plus pear blossoms. The palate is rich and creamy, with pretty fruit closely mirroring the nose, and admirable fullness and length. Wonderful balance and elegance complement a pleasurable spiciness. This is excellent as an apéritif by itself or in a Spritz: two to three ounces Prosecco, 1½ ounces Aperol, a splash of soda water over a couple of ice cubes, finished with an orange wedge.

I love all of the Ermacora wines currently in stock, and they're all on my list for drinking in the garden. The **2012 Ermacora Pinot Bianco\* (\$15.99)** is perfectly balanced, with incredible depth, concentration and focus. There are ripe apples, pears and minerality on the front palate. The wine is very rich and creamy on the mid-palate, with great length on the finish. A stunning wine from the brothers Ermacora, it could also last for some time in the cellar (if you stash enough away to keep your hands off). The **2012 Ermacora Pinot Grigio\* (\$15.99)** is strikingly clean, with elegant mineral, melon and pear notes with a touch of grassiness, a dry finish and great length.

Ribolla Gialla enjoys a long history as one of Friuli's oldest indigenous vines, and Ermacora's version is an extremely unusual wine that would be worth buying solely on account of its very low price, but I'm confident that once you try it you will be back for more. The **2012 Ermacora Ribolla Gialla\* (\$15.99)** is intense and full, with a supple body echoing the varietal's character—exotic and honeyed bliss, floral notes, hints of flint and citrus—delivered through several complex layers that transform as they evolve in the glass. The finish is dry with lots of acidity making it pleasantly fresh. Finally, we come to **Ermacora's 2012 Friulano\* (\$15.99)**. Put plain and simple: THIS ROCKS! This Friulano is very aromatic, with ripe pear and red apple on the full-bodied palate. Its very long finish has a hint of almond, balanced by crisp acidity and great length. This works great with all manner of vegetarian dishes.

Since I'm from the San Francisco Bay Area, I'm going to need some heartier summer reds on my list because it can be chilly here. (These are also very barbecue friendly, even if the evenings are warm where you live.) The **2010 Castello di Volpaia Chianti Classico Riserva (\$23.99)** has ripe and wonderful aromas of dark fruit. A full-bodied Riserva, it's a beautifully layered, expressive wine bursting with sweet, ripe strawberries and black cherries intermingled with subtle anise, earth and toasted oak notes, minerals and a hint of cocoa powder on the on the finish. Round and ripe tannins frame a long aftertaste. This is a classic 2010 Sangiovese and a must for the cellar, if you can. Try to give it five years or so. If not, about hour of decanting will open it, especially if you put a pork roast on the barbecue!

The **2011 Monteraponi Chianti Classico (\$24.99)** has the classic violet, lilac, cherry aromatic profile and certain suppleness in the mouth of a more feminine expression of Chianti without losing any strength, power or complexity. Drinkable now and over the next couple of years, try it with your favorite pasta or some grilled chicken.

We recently had the **2008 Sesta di Sopra Brunello di Montalcino\* (\$49.99)** at a staff tasting, and my colleagues are still talking about how well it was showing. I love the user-friendly 2008 Brunelli. This one has a charming nose, with loads of ripe fruit and spice, a full body, and great tannin structure that won't hurt your teeth. The fruit is impressive, rich and concentrated. The wine boasts excellent length, with sweet, ripe strawberries, black cherry, leather and a little Tuscan dust and minerals on the finish. It is drinkable now with a couple of hours in a decanter, or you could give the wine time to improve and continue to evolve for another two to four years. Give dad a bottle for Father's Day, and open another one up to share while you are throwing a beefsteak Italiano on the grill.

Finally, we come to the **2005 Terredora "Pago dei Fusi" Taurasi (\$34.99)**. This wine shows complexity with all its layers. Rich in body and texture, the wine evolves deeper and deeper in stages. Three sips tell the story. The first is full of white pepper and spice. The second shows deep, rich, ripe black plum, and the third a gliding texture across the palate—smooth and showing some maturity. This Aglianico leaves the partaker wanting to explore the wine more and more.

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