



*The vineyards of Villa Sparina located in Monterotondo*

## Piemonte

Although I have been serious about wine since 1970, it was only in 1996 when I worked in Turino for a year that I discovered both the heart and soul of wine. My friends know that I drink wine from many countries and appellations, but I get most excited about wines made from the Nebbiolo grape in Piemonte (Piedmont). In fact, my first wine article in *QBarrington* was titled “The Wine of Kings, and the King of Wines”. It was an overview of Piemonte and focused on Barolo. (You can review my past articles online at [www.qbarrington.com](http://www.qbarrington.com).)

Although I have returned many times over the last two decades by myself and with my wife and/or friends, I had never put together a small group of friends to showcase this magnificent food and wine region. In late September of 2016, 15 of us left for Italy and met at Malpensa (Milan) airport.

We boarded a luxury motor coach and headed south to Gavi and made our first stop at Villa Sparina located in Monterotondo. It was a beautiful winery in a picture-perfect setting with perfect weather. What a first stop for a great trip! In fact, the thought crossed my mind that if I were left behind and the bus stopped in a week to pick me up, it would be a great trip.

We strolled the idyllic grounds and then sat outside and had a light lunch of salads, bruschetta, and antipasto. We started with a sparkling Gavi made from the Cortese grape and then followed with a more serious still Gavi which was perfect in this setting. After finishing lunch, some of us went on a winery tour and some opted to sit and decompress in this beautiful setting. Finally, this had to end, and we re-boarded the bus and headed for our home for the next week.

Our home for the trip is one of the very best options in Piemonte—the Relais Villa d’Amelia located in Benevello. Situated in a lush hillside on the edge of the small town, it was an easy access to roads for our 10- to 15-mile destinations each day. After a brief pause to unpack and freshen up, we assembled for a fantastic meal. The highlight of this great opening salvo included a beautiful appetizer of stacked eggplant with ricotta and a puree of peas. This was served with one of my favorite Italian white wines, 2015 Vietti Arneis. Arneis and eggplant is a match that is hard to beat. We then had a small pasta dish which was paired with two Dolcettos. One was a 2014 Visadi Dolcetto produced by Domenico Clerico, and the other 2014 from Abbona from Dogliani named Papà Celso. It is one of my favorites, but both matched very well with the pasta on a red pepper reduction sauce.

We finished with a beef filet which was accompanied by two Barbarescos. We started with the 2010 Sottimano Currá and then moved to the



Wines that were tasted at the Paitin Winery in Neive, Barbaresco.



Crispy skin pork served at Ciao Del Yornvento

2010 Maria di Brün by Ca'Rome, in magnum. Both wines matched very well with the beef. As it was midnight and we were tired from travelling, we skipped dessert to grab a few extra winks.

After a big breakfast on Friday we started with a comprehensive tour of the Paitin Winery in Neive, Barbaresco. This high vantage point proved to be a good place to start as we had commanding views of the surrounding vineyards. One of the family owners and winemaker, Giovanni Pasquero-Elia, was our guide and did a remarkable job orienting us and answering all our questions. The tasting was in an office with superb views of the vineyards. We started with the 2015 Arneis Elisa which was crisp and dry with a faint almond scent, a great way to start a day in Piemonte. We then had the 2014 Barbera D'Alba Serra. This was

a smooth wine with sweet floral spice and red stone fruit notes. We moved to the 2013 Nebbiolo D'Alba which exhibited typical characteristics of mushroom, tar, tobacco, and mint. We finished with the 2013 Barbaresco Serra Boella. This wine was wonderful with complexity resulting from notes of red cherry, rose petals, white pepper, mint, cinnamon, and chalk. What a great finish to our first stop.

Lunch was in Treiso at a fabulous restaurant, Ciao del Tornvento. We toured the wine cellar which was both beautiful and huge. Practically all the best Italian wines and vintages are contained here. Our meal was phenomenal with many courses and many wines, too numerous to describe. The setting was modern and beautiful with open wall windows permitting unimpeded views of the vineyards. Highlights included our first white truffles served on tagliatelle after plates of delectable appetizers. The main course was pork with a crispy skin. This course was perfectly paired with a new find for me—the Malvira Trinita Nebbiolo.

Our next visit was at the Bruno Rocca Winery in the town of Barbaresco. In a private room, we were served five wines from this “modernist” producer who incorporates new technological advances that enhance viticulture and winemaking. We started with the 2014 Chardonnay Cadet followed by the 2013 Barbera d'Asti. Both were

true to typical grape characteristics. Moving on to the serious wines, we started with the 2013 Barbaresco. This blend from different vineyard sites was very good, but was only a primer for what followed. We tasted the 2013 Barbaresco Coparossa which was my first exposure to this wine. It was more complex than the regular Barbaresco and served as a launch pad for our last and most famous wine, the 2013 Barbaresco Rabajà. It is soft and smooth liquid silk with notes of cherry, rose petal, raspberry, and wild herbs. It has tannins to enable it will last, but is approachable and will drink well from 2020+.

This article contains enough for a full day, but our last stop will be detailed in the next issue.

A vòtre santé! 🍷



White truffles served on tagliatelle at Ciao Del Yornvento in Treiso.

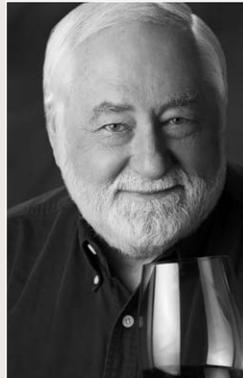


PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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