

2016 BAROLO: A TREAT OF A VINTAGE

Andrew Jefford is bowled over by the quality and broad stylistic range of what may well be the finest of a quartet of great 21st-century Barolo vintages. Bruno Besa and Michael Palij MW add their notes and (very high) scores

This tasting was a treat—no other word will do. None of our three tasters had ever given such high scores in a *World of Fine Wine* Barolo tasting: everyone had at least two scores of 97 or above, meaning “a great wine of spellbinding beauty and resonance” on the *WFW* tasting scale. It wasn’t until we came to the 41st placed wine that our aggregate score dropped below 90. It surely ranks as one of the most generally successful tastings this journal has ever organized.

What were the weather conditions that produced this felicity? It’s surely significant, in these times of rapid climate change, that 2016 was a vintage that in some ways looked backed to 20th-century ideals rather than embracing “the new ripeness” that almost every wine region around the world can now take for granted. The winter months of January and February were “properly” cold, and spring was cool overall, with temperatures just below the previous decade’s average. Summer was mixed: June clung onto the freshness of May, while a warm July and a cooler August were both wetter than average. A beautiful September never goes amiss,

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and the 2016 version combined hot, dry days with cool nights.

Barolo, of course, is made from Nebbiolo alone, and Nebbiolo more than most red varieties around the world loves a long season and the chance to acquire skin and even pip maturity by slow increments. That was exactly what 2016 gave it: October continued September’s tempered beneficence, and growers were able to pick their fruit in unhurried conditions in mid- to late October: thick skins, small berries, loose bunches. The quality of what was in the vats was evident from the off, and a sense of excitement was palpable whenever growers showed 2016 samples. Aside from a little storm-damage and hail inflicted in late July on Santa Maria di La Morra, parts of Cannubi and Rocche dell’Annunziata on July 26 and 27, everyone was thrilled with what Barolo shipper and local resident David Berry Green described as “a classic harvest of relatively disease-free fruit, high in quality and in good quantity, with the vine functioning well throughout the season to give high values in all departments (alcohol, acidity, tannins) and thick skins allowing for long macerations.” The recent vintages with which 2016 is compared are 2010, 2006, and 2004, but many consider it the best of the quartet; indeed, Michael Palij MW said he couldn’t remember “tasting a more impressive range of young wines from this appellation.”

What about the manner in which the wines present themselves, and their aesthetic width? The battle between traditionalists and modernists seems less relevant and more historical with every

THE RECENT VINTAGES WITH WHICH 2016 IS COMPARED ARE 2010, 2006, AND 2004, BUT MANY CONSIDER IT THE BEST OF THE QUARTET

year that passes; as Michael Palij observed, it was “heartening” in this set of wines to see “the use of barricade on the wane as the radical enthusiasm of 20 years ago gives way to a more measured approach.” (Where new oak was palpable, it was considered a blemish.) David Berry Green, interestingly, has noted “more flexibility, more sensitivity to different conditions, as well as the humility to change and to challenge oneself” among younger winemakers, with the result that “*eleganza e finezza*” (and large wooden vessels) are now, he says, very much on the way back.

Comment on this vintage has stressed its classicism, purity, poise, and freshness, yet a careful reading of our notes underlines just how much latitude of both approach and expression the vintage permitted. There were fragrant, fine-drawn, silky wines among our favorites (like Enzo Boglietti’s Barolo Arione, from the southernmost cru in Serralunga, grown at 1,500ft [450m] altitude), but there were also acclaimed wines of breadth, power, density, and structure (like Paolo Conterno’s Ginestra from

Monforte, our first-placed wine). As the only taster of our trio lucky enough to have tasted both this set of wines and the 2016 Bordeaux wines included in our four-year “Déjà Bu” review, I would stress that Barolo drinkers can enjoy, after just half a decade, much wider expressive latitude than Bordeaux drinkers can, both in this vintage and others. (I would also say that, based on these two tastings conducted in a single week in September 2020, this vintage seems even higher in potential in Barolo than it does in Bordeaux.) A final affirmative point to note is that there was no universally disliked wine in this tasting. In other words, at least one of our tasters scored every wine, even those with lower aggregate scores, in the low to mid-90s. This, too, underlines the aesthetic width of these wines, and suggests that this is a vintage in which drinkers might like to experiment with modestly priced wines from less well-known growers, as well as the highly priced wines of acclaimed stars.

Blends and crus both shine
What of the relative success of the communes? Comparison between these

FRAGRANT, FINE-DRAWN, SILKY WINES WERE AMONG OUR FAVORITES, BUT SO, TOO, WERE WINES OF BREADTH, POWER, AND STRUCTURE

was more than usually difficult in this tasting, owing to the dominance of Serralunga (14 samples, whereas no other commune was represented by more than seven wines). Adding up every point given to a wine then dividing by the number of samples put Verduno in first place, with an aggregate score of 281.5; the fact that there were only two Verduno wines, though, makes this an unreliable victory. Serralunga came second with 278.93; having achieved this with 14 wines was a comprehensive demonstration of the quality of its sites. Monforte followed in third place with 277.14; and pan-DOCG blends, perhaps surprisingly, came fourth (276.2). Castiglione Falletto logged fifth position on 276 (though the score was based on only three samples), La Morra was sixth (273), and Barolo’s commune wines seventh (271). The score of 269 for our single sample from Novello meant an unreliable eighth place. It’s worth consumers noting that these identities now include two sorts of wines: single-commune blends (like Diego Conterno’s Barolo del Comune di Monforte d’Alba, blended in this case from Pajana in Ginestra, as well as Vigna Gris on the boundary with Serralunga), as well as single-vineyard or single-cru wines. It would be unwise, for all that, to draw any analogy with Burgundy’s pyramid of village, premier cru, and grand cru wines; the two regions are too dissimilar topographically, and a “village” bottling from a single commune in Barolo might still offer cru quality, depending on the producer’s ambitions and practices in making such a blend.



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ANDREW JEFFORD’S TOP WINES

Ca’ Rome’ Barolo Cerretta Serralunga d’Alba	97
Ettore Germano Barolo DOCG Cerretta Serralunga d’Alba	97
Enzo Boglietti Barolo Arione Serralunga d’Alba	96
Paolo Conterno Barolo Ginestra Monforte d’Alba	96
Massolino Barolo Margheria Serralunga d’Alba	96
Ascheri Barolo Sorano Serralunga d’Alba	95
Poderi Luigi Einaudi Barolo Cannubi Barolo	95
Grasso Tiziano Barolo La Briccolina Serralunga d’Alba	95
Figli Luigi Oddero Barolo	95
Luigi Baudana GD Vajra Barolo Baudana Serralunga d’Alba	94
Damilano Barolo Lecinquevigne	94
Paolo Scavino Barolo Bric del Fiasc Castiglione Falletto	94
Fratelli Alessandria Barolo	93
Ascheri Barolo Pisapola Verduno	92
Cabutto Barolo [pan-DOCG blend]	92
Cavallotto Barolo Bricco Boschis Castiglione Falletto	92
Ciabot Berton Barolo Roggeri La Morra	92
Pecchenino Barolo San Giuseppe Barolo	92
Castello di Verduno Barolo Massara Verduno	92

AVERAGE AND RANGE OF SCORES

	Average	Range
Tasting	92	84-99
BB	94	89-99
AJ	90	84-97
MP	92	84-98

Paolo Conterno Barolo Ginestra Monforte d'Alba (15.5% ABV) | **96**

BB | Garnet to pink. Intense and classic Nebbiolo nose of small red fruits, sweet tobacco, leather, rosewater, petrol, and forest undergrowth. Full body, with sweet fruit, big fine tannins, lively acidity, and a long, refined, mineral finish. Another masterpiece from this amazing vintage. | **96**

AJ | Dark, glowing black-red, and scarlet to the rim. Warm, spicy, peppery, and curranty scents: admirable complexity here. Lots of classic Monforte red fruits, but the refinement of licorice and orris, as well as an oak-copse complexity. Fresh yet ripe, and very good. An outstanding wine on the palate: deep, ringing, and concentrated, packed with lively fruit and with hugely energetic, juicily drawn tannins and lively, no-less-juicy acidity. The aromatic refinements of the palate need a year or two to show up on the palate, perhaps because the palate is just so energetic at this stage, but they will be along in due course. Very fine. | **96**

MP | Majestic nose redolent of both red and black fruit, with concentration and intensity. Black cherry, plum, blackberry, damson, cedar, strawberry, and thyme. The palate is just fabulous, with huge levels of both intensity and grip. This rolls on and on through the back of the palate, delivering a thrill every step of the way. Very bright future ahead of it—give it a decade. | **97**

Ascheri Barolo Pisapola Verduno (14.5% ABV) | **95**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Complex, deep black-fruit nose, almost impenetrable with black fruits, road tar, dried herbs, truffles, forest floor, and hints of leather and tobacco. Full-bodied, compact palate, with mature black fruit, lively acidity, and a long, complex, clean finish. A wine for long-term aging. | **95**

AJ | Dark, clear black-red, with a little garnet at the rim. Warm, glowing, and rounded: embers of fruit in the glass. Very autumnal and reposeful. Not highly allusive or hugely detailed, but ample enjoyment in the soft harvest-home fruits of this wine. That's exactly what you will find in the mouth, too: a delicious cascade of pure, singing, beautifully ripened fruits in easy, unfussy style. But how good it is! How pure and how true to the regional ideal. Gorgeous, soft yet ample tannins perfectly bonded to the ringing, church-bell fruits. All the loveliness and deliciousness you might wish for from Verduno is here. | **92**

MP | Signature Nebbiolo nose offering red and black fruit including currant, plum, cherry, and herbal tones (oregano, marjoram), with licorice and white pepper completing the picture. The palate is superb, with exceptional length, fine tannins, and mouthwatering acidity propping up the pulpy mass of dense black fruit. The balance here is all one could really wish for, and the finish seems to go on forever. | **97**

Enzo Boglietti Barolo Arione Serralunga d'Alba (14.5 ABV) | **95**

BB | Pale garnet to tawny. A touch closed yet refined on the nose; complex, with small red fruits, tobacco leaf, orange peel, prunes, wild

strawberries, and cedarwood. Complex, refined, mineral, layered palate, with a great mineral, almost salty finish. Another classic Nebbiolo for long-term aging. | **96**

AJ | Deep, clear scarlet, modulating to garnet at the rim. Fine, dancing, vigorous fruits, with lots of tea leaf and earth for complexity: engaging and vital, as well as complex and multilayered. Rich, mouth-filling, and good: a perfectly judged compromise between the wealth and amplitude of fruit (redcurrant and pomegranate) you could get from fine Serralunga vineyards in this vintage, and the wonderful levels of aromatic complexity and finesse you could then create through sage vinification and aging in the cellar. A masterclass in a glass. Buy with absolute confidence. And it has so long ahead: The core of fruit is grand and enduring. | **96**

MP | Tightly wound, complex, yet slow to reveal its fruit comprising a complex and textbook nose of redcurrant, dried hay, licorice, and South African *garrigue*. Firm acidity and tannins confirm the Tortonian origins of the fruit; this really needs another decade to show at its best. | **94**

Ca' Rome' Barolo Cerretta Serralunga d'Alba (14% ABV) | **95**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Compact, impenetrable, complex, refined, mineral black and red fruits nose, with black cherries, prunes, plums, blood oranges, road tar, hazelnut, tobacco leaf, and forest undergrowth. Full body, full of energy and youth, layered black and red fruit, mint, and a salty finish. Impeccable winemaking and great aging potential—definitely a wine that should develop gracefully for decades to come. | **97**

AJ | Deep, dark black-red, though clear now. Very deeply hued, nonetheless, with no garnet at all, and black-scarlet to the rim. Sumptuous and multilayered aromatically, Richebourg-like in a Barolo register, with bright yet opulent red fruits. Very enticing. Lush, rich, deep, flamboyant, and grand, this is a wine that has tossed all caution to the wind and just run with the magnificent ripeness of the vintage. There are other wines that have more aromatic finesse than this does, but few that are more artlessly generous and—there is really no other way to say it—life-enhancing than this. Some might fault it for being just a little bit too ripe, but not me. It just sings with ripe fruit and stomps with ripe fruit and shouts with ripe fruit. And since that fruit has come from this very special place on the surface of the earth, it is full of complexity and nuance and engraved finesse. Gorgeous, and it will go on being gorgeous for many years to come. | **97**

MP | Youthful, primary, and obviously reflecting a fully ripe harvest, the aromas are skewed to fully ripe black-fruit, dried-fruit, and herbal aromatics. This wine cannot deliver the impact and intensity on the finish that we have seen elsewhere in this tasting. Well made and correct, it is lacking conviction on the finish. | **91**

Ciabot Berton Barolo Roggeri La Morra (14.5% ABV) | **95**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Inviting, complex, elegant, refined black and red fruits nose, with rosewater, road tar, blood oranges, oriental spices, and hints of truffles. Balanced and clean, with big yet

THE PALATE IS JUST FABULOUS, WITH HUGE LEVELS OF BOTH INTENSITY AND GRIP. THIS ROLLS ON AND ON THROUGH THE BACK PALATE, DELIVERING A THRILL EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

super-refined tannins. An inviting palate, with clean small red fruits and a long, almost floral finish. Love it. | **94**

AJ | Clear, deep red, just beginning to hint at a little garnet toward the rim but not at the wine's heart. Primary, fresh fruits, though soft and understated, as if the aging process held them in check a little rather than actually took them through any kind of substantive modulation; kirsch and crushed kernels behind. Intriguing and characterful—and successful. It grows more aromatic and allusive, and notably less primary, with time in the glass: 15 minutes later, you can see dry leaf and oak copse. In the mouth, this is sustained and long, with relatively fine-grained tannins and well-aged, refined fruits: graceful, deft, fresh, and elegant. Beautifully poised wine, both refined and drinkable. Pure class. | **92**

MP | Delicate aromatics typical of this commune, with rose petal, tinned strawberry, red plum, hay, and licorice. Palate is stymie, with the red-fruit strings leading to black-fruit brass and the herbal timpani all working together. A textbook example of peerless Nebbiolo and utterly delightful in the glass. Irresistible now but will no doubt carry on gaining stature. | **98**

Poderi Luigi Einaudi Barolo Cannubi Barolo (14.5% ABV) | **95**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Restrained, tobacco and leather nose, with small red fruits, rosewater, cedarwood, minerals, blood oranges, and dried herbs. Beautifully balanced palate, with super-refined tannins, a clean, small citrus and red fruits character, and a long, refined finish. Another classic Nebbiolo for the cellar. | **96**

AJ | Clear, deep black-red with garnet glints. Complex, intricate, nuanced fruits, with forest-floor complexities: an intricate and compelling aromatic weave, resonant and fine. Some incense lurks inside the profile, too: very satisfying and enticing. Even a truffliness; you keep going back to this and find a little more every time. On the palate, too, this is a very classy, multilayered, unobvious wine, with a very rich fruit profile and ample aromatic nuance. In textural terms, it is just a little bit abrupt, but it is young, too. This is fresher than many wines this year but a great success in its chosen style. Really commanding Barolo, with much to offer the drinker. | **95**

MP | Traditional and pronounced nose, with lashings of black fruit, including cherry, plum, and berry, supported by attractive aromas of hay, toffee, and licorice. The long finish and fine

tannins derived from grape rather than from oak give way to thyme, rose petal, tar, and licorice. Competent and round, with plenty to like. | **94**

Ascheri Barolo Sorano Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV)

BB | Garnet to tawny. Sweet tobacco, cedarwood, small red fruits, truffles, road tar, and rosewater nose, complex and refined. Super-balanced palate, with fine, big tannins, sweet fruit, and a long, herbal finish. Another great Nebbiolo for long-term aging. | **96**

AJ | Clear and translucent glowing garnet red. Very fine aromas: sweet, warm fruits; wild mushrooms; cream, roses, and cologne-like spices. Rosehips, too. Fragrant, floating, and completely satisfying. Very hard not to keep tripping back to the glass after this: Romeo and Juliet. Mmm! Superb craftsmanship here, and I can't wait to sip. On the palate, it is refined, delicate, and mouth-filling. There is fine vintage concentration, but it isn't even a tiny bit overripe. All of the aromatic finesse that could be smelled in the glass is duplicated on the palate: that wealth of refined fruit, those flowers and rosehips. The tannins have been glasspapered and chamfered to perfection, and of course the vintage itself comes glowing through and drives the wine's poise and remarkable length. A ravishing wine object and a privilege to drink. Many congratulations to the family behind this wine. Wow! | **95**

MP | Dried herbs, licorice, thyme, potpourri, tomato leaf, and baked plum single this wine out as having rather immediate charms based on a very late harvest and consequently elevated levels of alcohol. The acidity takes a back seat to the fruit and the alcohol, and this leaves the palate slightly heavy and disenchanting. | **90**

Luigi Baudana GD Vajra Barolo Baudana Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | **94**

BB | Deep ruby to garnet. Deep, impenetrable, black and red fruit nose, with black cherries, prunes, cedarwood, road tar, forest undergrowth, and dried herbs. Full body, with mature tannins, mature black fruit, and a long, clean finish. Generous and clean Nebbiolo. | **94**

AJ | Deep, clear scarlet, right to the rim. No garnet yet, but less saturation of hue than for many. Fine, light, vigorous, and intensely expressive raspberry fruits: commanding,

THE VINTAGE ITSELF COMES GLOWING THROUGH AND DRIVES THE WINE'S POISE AND REMARKABLE LENGTH. A RAVISHING WINE OBJECT AND A PRIVILEGE TO DRINK. WOW!**BRUNO BESA'S VERDICT**

It is difficult for me to add anything to what has already been described as a once-in-a-generation vintage for both Barolo and Barbaresco—and more widely almost all other wine-producing areas in Italy. It is a rarity to taste such an array of outstanding wines, showing a combination

of purity, complexity, vibrancy, and clear age-worthiness. I strongly advise purchasing these wines and giving them a few years to mature; for this you will be rewarded with the essence of a developed Nebbiolo. I don't know about the wine of kings, but this is evidently the king of wines.

TOP WINES

Francesco Rinaldi Barolo Cannubi Barolo 99	Diego Conterno Barolo del Comune di Monforte d'Alba Monforte d'Alba 95
Ca' Rome' Barolo Cerretta Serralunga d'Alba 97	Giacomo Conterno Barolo Francia Serralunga d'Alba 95
Ceretto Barolo Bricco Roche Castiglione Falletto 97	Corino Barolo Arborina La Morra 95
Pira Luigi Barolo Margheria Serralunga d'Alba 97	Damilano Barolo Cannubi Barolo 95
Ascheri Barolo Sorano Serralunga d'Alba 96	Fontanafredda Barolo Vigna La Rosa Serralunga d'Alba 95
Enzo Boglietti Barolo Arione Serralunga d'Alba 96	Ettore Germano Barolo DOCG Cerretta Serralunga d'Alba 95
Paolo Conterno Barolo Ginestra Monforte d'Alba 96	Grasso Tiziano Barolo La Briccolina Serralunga d'Alba 95
Poderi Luigi Einaudi Barolo Cannubi Barolo 96	Casa E di Mirafiore Barolo Lazzarito Serralunga d'Alba 95
GD Vajra Barolo Bricco delle Viole Barolo 96	
Vietti Barolo Lazzarito Serralunga d'Alba 96	
Ascheri Barolo Pisapola (village Verduno) Verduno 95	

fragrant, and warm, if more primary and less layered and secondary than some. There's a little sweet leather, too. The palate is deep, vigorous, searching, with very sustained (though beautifully fruit-fragrant) acidity and amazingly energetic tannins, too, which also seem almost to squeak with fruit flavor. This is a very complete palate: bright, lively, energetic. It is not one of the most unctuous of the vintage's wines, but it's hard to match it for sheer energy and lift. Magnificent work here. | **94**

MP | Immediately attractive, with notes of black cherry, plum, blackberry, raspberry, blackcurrant, white pepper, and tobacco. Palate shows the structure and form of Serralunga, with astringent tannins and lively acidity matched to close-coupled fruit. This will age well and develop further complexity. | **95**

Corino Barolo Arborina La Morra (15% ABV) | **94**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Intense, mineral, iron, and graphite nose, with rosewater, road tar, sour cherries, prunes, and blackberries. Generous, rich, full black-fruit palate, with rich, refined tannins and a long, mature finish. A wine of great concentration and complexity. It should develop gracefully for many years to come. | **95**

AJ | Deep, clear scarlet red, and just off opaque. Very sweet scents, but not much fresh fruit. I'm exaggerating, but there is almost a whiff of doughnut. Subtle overall, though, so nothing disconcerting. On the palate, it is exuberant, round, and ripe, with accessible and yielding tannins, very fair concentration of fruit, good length, and a kind of lip-smacking enjoyment to it (and forget the doughnut, honestly). Lovely, welcoming and rewarding Barolo, which would score more highly, for sure, with slightly better aromatic refinement. | **89**

MP | More exotic interpretation of Nebbiolo, with soy sauce, cranberry, black cherry, oregano, cooked plum, and cut grass. Palate is equally intriguing, with the aromatic potential of Nebbiolo allowed to strut its stuff. The fine acidity and chiseled tannins do a sterling job supporting the fruit, and this leads to a lingering finish. Great wine; needs another decade. | **97**

Ettore Germano Barolo Cerretta Serralunga d'Alba (15% ABV) | **94**

BB | Ruby to garnet. Tobacco, leather, petrol, tar, wild strawberries, mint, truffles—another spectacular Nebbiolo, open and mature, super-refined and complex. Weightless and mature at the same time, with refined tannins and lively acidity. Long and mineral, maybe lacking only a bit of exuberance. | **95**

AJ | Clear deep black-red, and scarlet to the rim. This is very good and very sensually alluring, too; almost truffley or the very best sort of animal, ruffled belly fur, mingled with gorgeously ripe fruits, dragging you in to the glass as the best Pomerol does (though the aesthetic register is completely different here). A wonderfully complete aromatic profile, just bottoming out with a little gravitational tar at the end of all that sensual fruit. Very ripe but works well, as you quickly see on the palate, since any lush richness is more than compensated for by the splendidly ample ripe tannins and by sustained and sober acidity. The overall effect is mouth-filling, dramatic, still young (it will certainly be better in five or ten years); this has the cleansing rich bitterness of the flavors of tannin on the finish. Dramatic, alive, multidimensional wine of almost shocking intensity. | **97**

MP | Ripe aromas of confected fruit and obvious tarry notes combine with the leather, tobacco, and baked fruit in this very ripe Nebbiolo utterly

characteristic of the vintage. Keen judgment at harvest was everything, and this wine just tips over into the overtly ripe, simple, and obvious. There is some delicious fruit here, but the wine is missing the precision and focus of the very best. | **91**

Figli Luigi Oddero Barolo [30% La Morra's Rive, 30% Castiglione Falletto's Scarrone (Rocche dei Rivera), and 40% Serralunga d'Alba's Baudana and Broglio] (14.5% ABV) | **94**

BB | Garnet to pink. Open, farmyard nose, a touch rustic but generous with black fruits, road tar, and hints of cloves and cinnamon. Layered, complex, sweet black and red fruits palate with compact tannins and long, inviting acidity. A wine of great generosity and richness that possibly lacks just a bit of refinement at this stage of its development. | **94**

AJ | Deep, dark black-red, though now clear and not opaque. Lots of berry-spice refinement, a little roast meat, warm leather: complex, multilayered aromas that draw the drinker into the glass. Ample sensual appeal here. In the mouth, the wine is deep, textured, almost plush, though Barolo tannins have an intrinsic dryness that require "plush" to be set in context. This is very dense still, and very young, but has splendid layering to it. It's not just fruity, either, but also has some of the vegetal notes of noble Nebbiolo at its ripest. A fine and complex blend that really does sum up the appeal of "the whole place." After the wine has had some air, it grows even more layered and expressive, yet even more gracious and stealthy, too. Utterly compelling classicism here. | **95**

MP | Immediate, pronounced, and complex nose offering that classic Nebbiolo nose of red cherry, plum, redcurrant, and strawberry overlaid with floral and herbal adornments. Stylistically, this is pure, and the palate reflects the complex aromatics, albeit allied to very high tannins. The finish is marginally too austere, but this may resolve with time. | **92**

Chiara Boschis Barolo Mosconi Monforte d'Alba 2016 (15% ABV) | **93**

BB | Deep ruby to garnet. Mature, refined, and complex, with black and red fruits, crushed stones, road tar, roses, and violets. Full body, with ripe, slightly one-dimensional fruit at this stage of its development yet clean and long. Should develop gracefully for a number of years. | **93**

AJ | Deep black-red in color and scarlet to the rim; no garnet hues yet. Fresh, sweet strawberry and cherry fruits. Ample, beguiling fruits, with a straw or hay sweetness. Lots of tannin here: a great sheet, which drifts almost surreally through rather sweet (and thus slightly fleshless) fruits. Not a paragon of harmony, then, but it is still an energetic and unusual example of this great vintage that I would relish drinking (and storing, too, to see what happens to those tannins). | **89**

MP | Delicious notes of red and black fruit predominant, supported by coffee, chocolate, toffee, tea, and hay. Mammoth levels of

FULL BODY, WITH BIG YET REFINED TANNINS BALANCED BY SWEET RED FRUIT. LONG, WITH FRESH HERBS AND A LIVELY FINISH. ANOTHER SUPERB NEBBIOLO FOR THE CELLAR

concentration, with a truly staggering level of complexity and all the tannins and acidity one could expect. This is exceptional. | **97**

Diego Conterno Barolo Monforte d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | **93**

BB | Garnet to pink. Clean, complex, tobacco, and leather nose, with layered small-red-fruit character offering orange peel, wild berries, forest undergrowth, hints of cedar wood and mint. Full body, with big yet refined tannins balanced by sweet red fruit. Long, with fresh herbs and a lively finish. Another superb Nebbiolo for the cellar. | **95**

AJ | Deep, vivid black-red, lightening to the rim, but not yet garnet. Slightly loose-knit aromas, with (as seems to be true for many of the Monforte wines from Alba this year) sweet red-fruit notes that almost seem to lack a little poise and assurance. They are, though, attractive and alluring. A full-frontal wine on the palate, with lots of wealth and depth to it, and the quality of fruit on the palate (once it is reunited with its tannins) is a lot more complex and intriguing than the nose suggested it would be. This is firm, full, fresh, and bear-like: very good. It needs a year or two yet to be at its best and acquire more aromatic finesse, but it won't disappoint. | **91**

MP | Fine and delicate nose, with subtle aromas of red cherry, plum, wet stone, and camphor. This wine shows excellent balance but there are much better examples on the table. The fresh acidity and long finish are recognized in their own right but the concentration of fruit and intensity on the finish drag the score down just a little. | **92**

Giacomo Conterno Barolo Francia Serralunga d'Alba (15% ABV) | **93**

BB | Deep ruby to garnet. Open and mature, with a complex black-fruits character, generous and layered, with forest undergrowth, prunes, black cherries, cedarwood, and road tar. Balanced, mature, rich, and complex fruit, with a long, clean, herbal finish. Needs time to mellow its exuberance. Another one for the cellar. | **95**

AJ | Dark scarlet red, right to the rim, though translucent. Fresh and vigorous fruits, fleshy and spicy, too: generous and lots to enjoy, though not quite as refined and intricate as the very best of its peers. Lively and fresh in style, with quite pronounced acidity and lighter tannins than some.

Ample gathered concentration, nonetheless, and the qualities of the vintage are evident in the wine's length and overall poise. | **89**

MP | Perspective is the key in this flight, as the average quality level is exceptional. Nose shows primary fruit of red apple, honeysuckle, fig, black cherry, plum, and mulberry. Palate combines the subtle aromatics, acidity, and tannins of Barolo and leaves you wanting more. Superb glass of wine that can only get better. | **95**

Damilano Barolo Lecinquevigne [pan-DOCG blend] (14.5 ABV) | **93**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Tight and mineral, with refined tobacco and sour-cherries notes, opening up in the glass with prunes, small black fruits, and notes of orange peel and oriental spices. Round, with high-tone acidity, soft refined tannins, and a long, clean, slightly overdeveloped finish. | **91**

AJ | Light, clear garnet red at the rim shading to dark garnet at the core. Warm, rich, enticing scents of redcurrant and red plums: sprightly fruits, yet nothing pinched or sharp. Some dry hay, too, and richer dried mushrooms. Complex and refined, and indeed it only grows more so: two hours later, this is very complex, engaging, resonant, and triggered. The wine is very smooth and refined to taste, beautifully aged, with almost silky tannins: graceful and accessible already. There is, though, a fine subtle hinterland to it: closely woven fruits, nuts and forest notes floating down through the central palate to a gentle finish, where there is a hint of anise. Ample concentration in this classy, refined wine. Very stealthy and silky on the tongue—as valid a form of Barolo expression, of course, as more forceful incarnations. Bravo. | **94**

MP | Medium garnet, very pretty nose with pomegranate, cranberry, redcurrant, black cherry, hay, and licorice. Pretty, with fine tannins from grape rather than from oak, fine delineated acidity, and a long finish with tinned strawberry, cherry, and menthol notes. | **93**

Grasso Tiziano Barolo La Briccolina Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | **93**

BB | Deep ruby to pink. Complex, mineral, iron, and blood-orange nose, with mature black and red fruits, mint, and fresh and dried herbs undertones. Full body, with compact tannins, youthful red and black fruit, and a long, super-clean finish. A wine of considerable presence that needs a few years in the bottle to show at its best. | **95**

AJ | Deep, bright, clear black-red, with impressive depth of color, though translucent now. Wonderful orchestral fruits here, singing out with great engagement and sprightliness. Not much secondary evolution as yet, but give it time, give it time. An arresting, show-stopping aroma. The fruits on the palate are everything you would expect from the aromas: broad, vigorous, deep, perfumed (that alone alerts you to the quality of this wine), and diverting. Few wines we have tried are more fruity than this one, but this wine proves just how profound, moving, and complex fruit of this origin can be. A very fine wine of great assurance and still at the earliest stage of its life. | **95**

MP | More medicinal and tarry notes, but these are not to be mistaken for the oxidized note of overripe fruit, though the high level of alcohol and extract detract from the overall balance. The acidity is lower than expected, and the cloying black fruit suggests that this was crafted from very mature fruit. | **88**

Massolino Barolo Margheria Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | **93**

BB | Ruby to pink. Clean and mature yet super-youthful, with red and black fruit, raw red meat, blood oranges, and hints of road tar and mint. Clean, ripe red-fruit palate, balanced and generous, with a long, lively finish. Needs time. | **93**

AJ | Deep scarlet red, right to the rim. Fresh, warm, and softly tarry aromas, with plush plum fruits beneath: very soft-folded, but very attractive, too. A lovely tobacco finesse behind: grand fruit handling and beautiful aging, too. Super aromatics here. On the palate, this is deep-fruited and grand, with vivid, echoing plum and pomegranate fruits, ringing tannins, and the same kind of aromatic complexities as were evident on the aromas singing out right through the palate. Magnificent and accomplished wine, with the huge aromatic resonance impressing almost more than the actual sum of flavors on the finish. | **96**

MP | Red fruit, and slightly more diffuse aromas with raspberry, cherry, and Seville orange to center stage. This commune has contributed some absolutely stunning wines to this tasting but sadly this is not one of them. The finish lacks conviction and the fruit character is muted. | **89**

Casa E di Mirafiore Barolo Lazzarito Serralunga d'Alba (14% ABV) | **93**

BB | Pale garnet to tawny. Super-refined, intense, complex nose, with tobacco, rosewater, road tar, mint, redcurrants, prunes, wild strawberries, cinnamon, and cloves. Weightless palate, superb complexity, refined, almost already resolved tannins, super-complex, cigars and sweet-prunes finish. A world-class wine for long-term aging. | **95**

AJ | Clear dark black-red, shading to garnet at the rim. The aromas here are slightly oversweet, almost jammy: plum and strawberry. Not unattractive, but not quite classical. There is some wood resin, too. Sweet and tangy on the palate but saved by its quiver of tannins. Despite the sweetness, the flavor of tannins pulls the finish back to graphite-related seriousness, so while not a top contender, it is still a very satisfying wine. | **87**

MP | Licorice, dried honey, violets, rose hips, cranberry—this really has it all, spanning floral, red fruit, black fruit, and herbal. The palate is similarly convincing, with ultra-fine tannins, appropriate acidity, astonishing length, and a complex mix of red and black fruit. There's little not to like in the kaleidoscope of flavors. | **98**

Pecchenino Barolo San Giuseppe Monforte d'Alba (14% ABV) | **93**

BB | Ruby to pink. Open, mature, complex black-and-red-fruits nose, with impenetrable road tar,

blood oranges, and forest-floor character. Full body and a ripe palate, with big yet ripe tannins and high-tone acidity. Long and clean black-cherries finish. | **93**

AJ | Deep, dark black-red, though clear. Warm, earthy, glowing, serene fruits: a pure bath of plum, damson, redcurrant, and pomegranate, all swimming together in contented refinement. Very alluring and seamless. Rich, vivid, deep, searching, generously contoured, with deep fruits and terrific rippling tannins. Grand, chunky, knife-and-fork Barolo just crying out for a grand meal or two, though it could also happily see out a decade. Not the ultimate polish, perhaps, but super stuff in exuberant, one-from-the-heart style. | **92**

MP | Gosh, that smells divine! Huge nose of stewed fruit, potpourri, cherry, and plum. Palate is fully resolved, with the fine tannins and lively acidity leading to a finish with blackberry, tomato, plum, cherry, and pepper, with an attractive herbal edge. The 2016 vintage delivers pretty much across the board, and this is no exception. | **94**

Paolo Scavino Barolo Bric dël Fiasc Castiglione Faleto (15% ABV) | **93**

BB | Deep ruby to garnet. Mature, clean, youthful, black and red fruit, with an intense floral character, prunes and blackcurrants, and hints of road tar and fresh and dried herbs. Full body, with a layered black-fruit palate, big, refined tannins, and a long, balanced, slightly exuberant finish. Needs time to show a more gentle side. | **93**

AJ | Deep black-red, and scarlet right to the rim. Sweet, warm, with lots of bubbling red fruits, but there is craft and nuance even in the sweetness; despite its beguiling sheen, there is a lot to discover and reward in this wine. Some tarry wealth and wildflower hay fragrance, too. Very pretty and charming. On the palate, the wine is dense, close-textured, full, and intricate. Beautiful, stealthy, softly expressed ripeness, pert tannins, exquisite gathered force, and the aromatic finesse is effortless, duplicated in the mouth, too. An outstanding Barolo of great classicism but great generosity, too. Warm tar and warm stones on the finish strike all the right notes, and the tannins are very flavory, as well as textured. | **94**

MP | Super-ripe nose, with pronounced aromas of bramble, blackberry, and tea. Some VA that detracts from the purity of the aromas

ULTRA-FINE TANNINS, APPROPRIATE ACIDITY, ASTONISHING LENGTH, AND A COMPLEX MIX OF RED AND BLACK FRUIT. THERE'S LITTLE NOT TO LIKE IN THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF FLAVORS

and suggests a more traditional vinification. The palate, however, forgives much, since the concentration of fruit and poised acidity and tannins work in concert to provide a framework for the fruit. Surprising length and freshness suggest this has the potential to develop. | **93**

Castello di Verduno Barolo Massara Verduno (14% ABV) | **93**

BB | Pale garnet to tawny. Refined, a touch closed, small red fruit and orange-peel nose, with rosewater, cedarwood, and dried flowers and herbs. Balanced, inviting, clean, weightless palate, with clean red fruit, balanced acidity, and a long finish. Nebbiolo of considerable refinement. | **94**

AJ | Clear, bright garnet; translucent and glowing. Sweet, fresh, with subtly articulated plum and redcurrant fruits, rose petals, and the sweetest tar you might imagine, but this is all sketched very faintly—a wine of maximum understatement and intrinsic refinement and class. In the mouth, this is a slightly dryer, slightly more slender wine than its Verduno peer, but very grave and refined and concentrated, too: commanding dignity in wine form, if you can imagine such a thing. (And slightly tighter tannins.) This vintage really suits Verduno, since these sometimes overslender wines have just been inched and nudged toward a sensuality they can lack in cooler years. Perfect truth to place, and perfect tailoring, too, even if in this case it means something between cowl and tunic. I find it hard to split the two Verduno wines, though they are very different. Buy them both and compare for yourself! | **92**

MP | The nose on this is reminiscent of Alto Piemonte, with mineral notes, menthol, camphor, strawberry, and red currant. The tannins are perfectly ripe and the telltale acidity of Nebbiolo is providing support to the fruit. The intensity on the finish is perhaps lacking slightly, which prevents a higher score. | **93**

Vietti Barolo Lazzarito Serralunga d'Alba (15% ABV) | **93**

BB | Garnet to pink. Complex nose: petrol, tar, red and black cherries, truffles, mint, violets, rose water, blood oranges, and smoked meat. Full body, layered, muscular palate, with pristine black-and-red fruit and a long, mint and cherries finish. A wine of considerable presence and concentration for long-term aging. | **96**

AJ | Deep, dark scarlet red, with just a hint of garnet at the rim. Sweet, warm, and fragrant aromas, with a perfumed note to them: peels and aromatic grasses as well as fresh redcurrant and plum. Complex and enticing, drawing the drinker into the glass. There's a touch of tar behind; subtle and finely crafted. On the palate, the wine is dense, concentrated, and long, and very full and satisfying. All that it lacks is the vivacity and electricity of the very best of its peers. Perhaps some may find it a touch clumsy, but there is huge resource in here and much to linger over and enjoy. Fine tannins and a ringing vinosity to the fruits, too, as well as a fine fruit core. More intricate aromatic work would have pushed it up into the low to mid-90s. | **90**

MP | Surprisingly elegant Barolo, with the

MICHAEL PALIJ MW'S VERDICT

A year ago, when we looked at the 2015s, it was clear that the vintage was excellent: lots of generous fruit, with warming alcohol and a big-hearted nature. This tasting, on the other hand, shows 2016 to be a more linear vintage with compact structure, vibrant aromas, and exceptional concentration. It is superior to 2015 in every way. I can't remember a tasting when 90 points seemed low, but then again, this is a truly remarkable year in the Langhe.

The weather was ideal for Nebbiolo: warm but not excessively so, with sufficient but not immoderate rainfall and the elusive cool nights and low humidity necessary to keep acidity elevated and disease pressure low. In most communes, the harvest did not start until mid-October, a full two weeks later than in 2015. I remember tasting these wines many times from cask (everyone was always so keen to show them off), and they were impressive even from infancy. They've certainly delivered on that early promise.

The word that crops up again and again in my notes is "elegant," though "classic" is just as

appropriate. The aromatics are focused firmly on red fruit rather than black, and the tertiary notes of hay, licorice, and flowers, often muffled by override fruit, are allowed to strut their stuff. As a Nebbiophile it's difficult to keep the feedback balanced: These are ravishing wines with an incredibly bright future ahead of them.

A couple had VA (possibly from a low-sulfur regime), and occasionally the purity of fruit was obscured by new oak. In the main, however, it's heartening to see that the use of barrique is on the wane, as the radical enthusiasm of 20 years ago gives way to a more measured approach to oak. If ever there were a vintage to convince the few, die-hard barriquistas that less can, indeed, be more, then the delicate and often haunting 2016 must be it.

In summary, I can't remember tasting a more impressive range of young wines from this appellation. It's a vintage to buy with confidence. Commune differences are clearly delineated, the aromas are exquisitely etched, and the structure is poised and ready to support a lengthy sojourn in bottle.

TOP WINES

Ciabot Berton Barolo Roggeri La Morra 98	Podere Luigi Einaudi Barolo Cannubi Barolo 94
Casa E di Mirafiore Barolo Lazzarito Serralunga d'Alba 98	Fontanafredda Barolo Vigna La Rosa Serralunga d'Alba 94
Ascheri Barolo Pisapola Verduno 97	Pecchenino Barolo San Giuseppe Barolo 94
Chiara Boschis Barolo Mosconi Monforte d'Alba 97	Damilano Barolo Lecinquevigne (pan-DOCG blend) 93
Paolo Conterno Barolo Ginestra Monforte d'Alba 97	Rivetto Barolo del Comune di Serralunga d'Alba Serralunga d'Alba 93
Corino Barolo Arborina La Morra 97	Paolo Scavino Barolo Bric dël Fiasc Castiglione Faleto 93
Crissante Barolo del Comune di La Morra La Morra 96	Castello di Verduno Barolo Massara Verduno 93
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Luigi Baudana GD Vajra Barolo Baudana Serralunga d'Alba 95	Figli Luigi Oddero Barolo (village blend) 92
Giacomo Conterno Barolo Francia Serralunga d'Alba 95	Pecchenino Barolo Bussia Monforte d'Alba 92
Bruna Grimaldi Barolo Camilla (village blend) 95	Rocche Costamagna Barolo Rocche dell'Annunziata La Morra 92
Enzo Boglietti Barolo Arione Serralunga d'Alba 94	Vietti Barolo Lazzarito Serralunga d'Alba 92

perfume of red fruit (cranberry and currant), black fruit (blackberry and blueberry), and dried herbs (oregano and thyme) that make this such an irresistible red. The palate stirs up the fruit, with high levels of acidity and tannin required for further aging. Hard to resist. | **92**

Fratelli Alessandria Barolo [pan-DOCG blend] (14.5% ABV) | 92

BB | Lively garnet to tawny. Intense, clean, mineral, restrained small-red-fruits nose, with iron, graphite, blood oranges, tobacco leaf, red cherries, and hints of sage and aromatic herbs. Compact, with refined tannins, sweet red fruit, and exuberant classic Nebbiolo acidity. A class act with a long life ahead. | **93**

AJ | Clear, deep scarlet. Soft, sweet notes of cherry, even raspberry—a fresher and more primary fruit style than many, but very enjoyable and enticing. Fresh, artless, frank, and open: wonderfully ripened yet poised fruits from which the vintage qualities sing. It's not a wine of dense concentration, but very well judged and realized, and that purity and harmony will give it excellent aging potential, even though it's delicious now. Red fruits right to the last: singing purity. Seemingly artless, yet so very good! | **93**
MP | More obvious nose, with damson, blackberry, cedar, and woodsmoke. Rich and concentrated fruit, but the tannins here are marginally more aggressive and drying, particularly on the finish, which is also a little hot. | **90**

Cavallotto Barolo Bricco Boschis Castiglione Faleto (14.5% ABV) | 92

BB | Garnet to pink. Open, complex, mature, almost petrol-like nose, with intense geranium and rose-water undertones, offering red and black cherries, hints of tobacco, and an inviting rustic edge. Full body, with sweet fruit, big yet refined tannins, and lively, high-tone acidity. Long and generous, if lacking just a bit of finesse for now. | **93**

AJ | Dark, translucent black-red. Warm, succulent cherry fruits: ample, almost furry, lush, and rich. Ultra-ripe, but it works: very sensually enticing, too. There is tar and incense and darker notes as well; some vanilla; and an almost brusque earthiness. Very deep, generous, and resourceful on the palate, with ample concentration and hugely generous tannins. This intricate, finely cogged and geared wine has a long future ahead of it. It's very commanding and layered already, but time will add to that. It's ripe, but not overripe, and the vigor and vitality of both acidity and tannin will keep it in fine shape. Grand work here, though it is just a little bit gruff still at this stage. | **92**

MP | Bright, confident, obvious, elegant, aromas of red currant, cranberry, wet stone, tobacco, hay, dill, and cinnamon. Perfumed and elegant, with structural tannins and acidity supporting the fruit. Criticisms? Possibly too ripe and missing some of the vibrancy seen elsewhere. | **91**

Guido Porro Barolo Vigna Lazzairasco Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | 92

BB | Garnet to tawny. Refined, classic Nebbiolo nose of rosewater, orange peel, road tar, sweet tobacco, mint, small red fruits, prunes, and white truffles. Medium- to full-bodied palate, with clean red and yellow fruit, oranges, peaches, wild strawberries, and fresh mint. Long and clean. For medium-term cellaring. | **93**

AJ | Clear, bright garnet through and through. Delicate, refined, and subtle, though sweet-toned, with strawberry flesh, as well as sweet plum. Sweet grasses, too: very attractive, though we are perhaps hoping for a bit more bottom on the palate. It is, in fact, very much as the aromas sketch out, with lots of sweet, intense fruits and, in the way of these things, a bit of a dry squeeze on the finish. Good but not great in context. | **86**

MP | Pale garnet and showing complex aromatics across a broad spectrum of red fruit, including wild strawberry, raspberry, redcurrant, truffle, damp earth, and new-mown hay. The palate shows perfect integration between the acidity and the alcohol, with the fruit just where you want it. This is another exceptional wine from this commune in 2016. | **96**

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Rivetto Barolo Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | 92

BB | Garnet to pink. A touch closed on the nose, restrained, floral, and mineral, with prunes, blackcurrants, smoked meat, and forest undergrowth. Full body, mature black fruit, slightly overripe and sweet on the palate, huge yet balanced, with a lively, clean finish. | **93**

AJ | Dark, glowing black-red, though translucent; scarlet to the rim. A touch warm and volatile on the nose, but not compromised; there's a dark, earthy, tarry substrate that gives it all ballast. The overall effect is intriguing and satisfying. This is exactly what you find on the palate: a slightly raffish Barolo, with a neckerchief around its neck, amply proportioned, generous to a fault, lacking only the urbanity and refinement of the very best. Huge enjoyment here for all that. | **89**

MP | A welcome, harder edge to these wines, with the mineral edginess and red fruit juxtaposed with the black fruit, tar, licorice, and dried herbs rather than dried fruit. Gone are the relatively soft tannins, replaced here with an elevated level of structure and therefore an obligation to look at future promise. This bodes well, with the fruit and structure all in balance. | **93**

GD Vajra Barolo Bricco delle Viole Barolo (14.5% ABV) | 92

BB | Brilliant ruby to pink. Youthful, intense, elegant, mineral, almost seasalt nose, with sour cherries, raspberries, rosewater, and oyster shells. Compact, super-clean, elegant palate, with wild strawberries, sour cherries, crushed stones, blood oranges, and a long, mineral finish. Super-refined and with very long life ahead. | **96**

AJ | Clear, deep scarlet-red: bright and attractive. Overwarm, aromatically speaking, the effect of which is to make the fruits perhaps a little more monotonous than they might otherwise be—hard to pick out the detail. But sound and enticing, nonetheless. On the palate, this is sweet-toned, gracious, expressive, and expansive, and no further qualms about overripeness or too much warmth, though it is certainly sweet-fruited. Quite delicious in that style, and a wine that is very easy to like. Maybe a year or two in the cellar will burnish the aromas, too—who knows? Once poured, you won't be disappointed. | **89**

MP | Red-fruit-dominated palate, with dried herbs, redcurrant, pomegranate, black cherry, and plum. Fruit character is fully ripe on the palate, with some notes of raisin and prune. Length is lacking some of the conviction we have seen elsewhere in this flight—everything is there but not dialed up to the same level. Delicious but not exceptional. | **90**

Cabutto Barolo [pan-DOCG blend] (15% ABV) | 91

BB | Ruby to garnet. Compact and clean nose, with some new oak. Mineral, refined with intense red-fruit character, fresh-cut herbs, blood oranges, and hints of chalk. Compact, clean, layered nose of sour cherries, high-tone acidity, sweet ripe fruit and finish. Impeccably made; needs time in the bottle. | **92**

AJ | Deep, clear black-red in color, with no bricking or browning as yet, barely even a hint of garnet. Sweet, warm, creamy fruits: lots of subtle sensual allure here. It's not the most forceful of aromas, but very classy. And in a way that is exactly what the palate delivers: smooth, harmonious, and well-aged wine of close-knit but accessible textures and glowing ripe resonance. Another very assured, wonderfully accessible yet ageworthy wine from what is a very impressive cohort of blended Barolos

COMPACT, SUPER-CLEAN, ELEGANT PALATE, WITH WILD STRAWBERRIES, SOUR CHERRIES, CRUSHED STONES, BLOOD ORANGES, AND A LONG, MINERAL FINISH. SUPER-REFINED

in this vintage. Drink now, drink later, drink in confidence. | **92**

MP | Surprisingly developed nose, with tobacco, cooked cherry, forest floor, black cherry, and clove. The palate is a little diffuse, with a stewed note of baked fruit, fig, and black tea. Medium length and angular. | **88**

Ceretto Barolo Bricco Roche Castiglione Faleto (14% ABV) | 91

BB | Pale ruby to garnet. Refined, intense, youthful, earthy, complex nose, with raspberries, sour cherries, wild strawberries, red-apple skin, infused by rosewater, with mineral salty undertones. Super-balanced palate, with clean, lively, red fruit and a long, mineral finish. A Nebbiolo of absolute refinement and complexity, for medium- to long-term aging. | **97**

AJ | Clear, light scarlet, but no garnet as yet. Warm, fragrant, and lifted: an aromatic profile of great refinement and intricacy. Oak cosp, raspberry, vellum, oil paints: many hints but nothing too obvious. Fine enticing work here in dry-toned style. The palate, too, is relatively brisk and dry, with acidity playing a more prominent role in the wine's structure than for many of its peers. A brisk and fresh choice for the vintage. | **88**

MP | Odd nose: this is overripe, stewed, slightly oxidized, dominated by empyreumatic notes of coffee, chocolate, toffee, and charred wood. Not much redemption on the palate, with the stewed fruit and obvious palate richness obfuscating any freshness and vitality. Simple and one-dimensional. | **87**

Crissante Barolo La Morra 2016 (14.5% ABV) | 91

BB | Garnet to tawny. Developed, mature, complex, prune and tobacco nose, with forest floor, road tar, and yet fairly inviting spicy character. Balanced palate, with lively acidity, developed prune and plum fruit, and a decadent finish. | **90**

AJ | Clear deep garnet red, with some tile red at the meniscus. Sweet, expressive, creamy, rich, almost fatty fruits, though not quite oversweet or jammy: ample richness and ripeness, aromatically expressed. Hard to pin exact fruit allusions here, though; a warmly impressionist scent. Vivid and lively, if slightly rough-textured. There is quite an urgent streak of acidity as well, which I wasn't expecting after the overall sweetness of scent. Concentrated and drinkable,

though not as polished perhaps as the best of its peers. | **86**

MP | Utterly beguiling nose redolent of incense, raspberry, white pepper, licorice, cranberry, thyme, menthol, hay, and earth. Palate equally convincing, with the fruit unsupported by obvious winemaking interventions. Pure, elegant, subtle, long, and the balance of structure and fruit is impeccable. Etched rather than hewn. | **96**

Fontanafredda Barolo Vigna La Rosa Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | 91

BB | Deep garnet to tawny. A touch closed; very complex, leather, almost animal nose, with prunes, road tar, cedarwood, and forest undergrowth. Mature palate, with sweet black fruit, big yet fine tannins, and lively acidity. Long and muscular finish. Another one for the cellar. | **95**

AJ | Deep black-red graduating to garnet-red at the rim. The aromas here are slightly tanky and lack a little freshness. On the other hand, they are warm, sweet, and rich, and you can smell the vintage generosity. There is root spice behind. Deep and generous on the palate, though this wine lacks some aromatic finesse. | **85**

MP | Perfectly judged aromatics of redcurrant, wild strawberry, red cherry, plum, and damson. Palate is sensational, with the ripe fruit, concentration, and balance all coming to the fore in this wine. This is a classic Serralunga Barolo, with the structural components ready out of the box. | **94**

Bruna Grimaldi Barolo Camilla [pan-DOCG blend] (15% ABV) | 91

BB | Pale garnet to pink. Closed, slightly reduced nose, with a spicy, complex character, mineral, with intense, forest-floor undertones. Ripe palate, with slightly green tannins and an intense sour-cherries character. Complicated wine that probably needs time to show a more positive side to its character. | **89**

AJ | Dark, deep scarlet and garnet; translucent, but only just. Lots of scented autumn ripeness here: the bramble hedge, the orchard behind, the excitement of wasps—enticing plenty and rich fruits in a complex, allusive aroma. Still sweet-toned, though I expect the savory notes to grow with time. The palate is lively and fresh, and the fruits very vinous and transformed, relatively tannic, with the classic rich finishing bitter tones the world expects of great Italian reds. Carefully crafted wine that has yet to reach its aromatic apogee and may well score more highly when it does. | **90**

MP | Very pretty aromatics combining dried herbs with blackberry, Victoria plum, dried apricot, and licorice. Wonderful in the mouth, too, with a touch of oak adding complexity and length. Tannins are present alongside the acidity, but these, combined with the fruit, auger well for the future. | **95**

Manzone Barolo Castelletto Monforte d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | 91

BB | Ruby to garnet. Open and layered black fruit with complex earthy undertones, youthful with

mint and violets and hints of smoke and minerals. Full-bodied and ripe, with clean fruit and a long, mint-and-cherry finish. A quality Nebbiolo for medium- to long-term aging. | **94**
AJ | Dark black-red, and scarlet to the rim. Deep and youthful in appearance. Billowing, lively, and fresh raspberry and mulberry fruits; sweet in tone, lively and engaging. Deep and resonant on the palate, with ample plunging fruits backed by firm tannins; fine mouth-architecture here. This is energetic and medium-weight overall, and its energy means that it needs a lot longer to settle and open fully, but nothing is missing, and it will be a terrific wine in the longer term. Lingering pomegranate on the finish just now. | **91**
MP | Spiky notes of new oak and black fruit, with a lifted fruit profile drawing on black berry, vanilla, clove, cedar, and ink. The subtle fruit of Nebbiolo is often lost, with excessive oak and I fear that that may be true here. There is plenty going on, but little of it is related to terroir. The finish is shorter than it ought to be and dominated by woody notes. | **89**

Pecchenino Barolo Bussia Monforte d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | **91**

BB | Deep ruby to garnet. Clean and complex nose, mature, with an earthy, black-fruit character, road tar, black cherries, crushed stones, and hints of leather and sweet tobacco. Mature, layered palate, with rich fruit, fine tannin, and a long, clean finish. | **94**
AJ | Deep red-black, and scarlet to the rim, though now translucent. Warm, dry, refined, with softly creamy fruits, though perhaps lacks a little fruit upholstery on the aromas. Intense, deep, vivid wine, with bright acidity and relatively soft acidity; the cherry and redcurrant fruits have a rose-petal charm. Concentrated and impressive wine, though not quite the dimensions and resource of the very best. Just a little sharp and soprano toward the finish. | **88**
MP | Clean, linear, defined, black fruit, comprising blackcurrant, blackberry, mineral, cold tea, licorice, and oregano. Palate is similarly robust, with fresh acidity and elevated but focused tannins. Long length and rich fruit create a seamless profile that should evolve well. | **92**

Giuseppe Rinaldi Barolo Brunato La Morra (14% ABV) | **91**

BB | Pale garnet to tawny. Refined, fairly closed yet complex and mineral nose of small red fruits, rose water, Seville orange marmalade, and hints of dried herbs. Weightless, clean palate, with super-refined tannins, high-toned yet balanced acidity, and a complex, almost herbal finish. Another great Nebbiolo that clearly has a long life ahead. | **94**
AJ | Deep, dark black-red, though clear at the heart. Fresh, clean, attractive, and open-access scents, though without much fruit definition or secondary complexities as yet. Give the wine time, perhaps, to refine its aromatic message. On the palate, it does everything you hope honest Barolo will do from a great vintage: There is architecture of fruit from variety and site, and serious gastronomic tannins; it's a wine of length and depth. It doesn't have quite enough allusive

force for a top score, however. | **89**
MP | Finely rendered with filigree aromatics of orange peel, strawberry, meadowsweet, red currant, and baked apricot. In the mouth, this is very slightly awkward, with stewed notes of black berry, prune, and raisin. The finish is attenuated by the dried nature of the fruit. | **89**

Rocche Costamagna Barolo Rocche dell'Annunziata La Morra (14.5% ABV) | **91**

BB | Pale ruby to tawny. Refined and complex, with a clear small-red-fruits nose, inviting, mineral, floral, with rosewater, tobacco leaf, and hints of dried herbs and truffles. Medium to full body, elegant, with refined tannins and a clean strawberry and raspberry finish. A beautifully elegant Nebbiolo for mid-term aging. | **93**
AJ | Light, bright garnet red with scarlet glints. Fine, ethereal aromas curling from the glass: pomegranate and incense. Hugely attractive and classical, as well as appealingly harmonious. Smooth, light, and relatively dry on the palate; absolutely ready as bottled, with no need to wait much longer other than to tease out still more aromatic refinement. Perhaps, though, it lacks a little resource and wealth on the palate to be a long-term prospect. If you want a mature wine to broach soon, though, this is just the job. | **89**
MP | New oak nowhere to be seen in this wine, but the fruit is just slightly stewed and there is the faintest whiff of VA. Red pepper, petrol, tomato, blueberry, licorice, cinnamon, cooked plum, and raisin all conspire to create an intriguing panoply of aromas. Supporting acidity and tannins working together to keep the fruit to the fore. | **92**

Damilano Barolo Cannubi Barolo 2016 (14.5% ABV) | **90**

BB | Garnet to tawny, pink. Mature, clean, open, complex black-fruit nose, with road tar, prunes, black cherries, hints of cedarwood and dried herbs. Full body, mature, complex palate with big yet ripe, fine tannins. Long and complex with prunes and bitter orange finish. | **95**
AJ | Deep, dark scarlet-red and scarlet out toward the rim, too. Warm, boisterous, tarry fruits; a general sense of glow and earthiness, too, though this wine has a little less aromatic refinement than the best of its peers (a touch of boot-polish waxiness). Sweet-fruited on the palate and long, but a little bit one-dimensional.

IT DOES EVERYTHING YOU HOPE HONEST BAROLO WILL DO FROM A GREAT VINTAGE; THERE IS ARCHITECTURE OF FRUIT FROM VARIETY AND SITE, AND SERIOUS TANNINS

Lovely tannins for all that, and thus a wine of some resource, but for the time being it lacks harmony and contour. | **87**
MP | Delightful nose, with attractive characteristics of cooked fruit and dried herbs. Cooked plum, raisin, black olive, slightly drying, mineral. The palate is rich and overlaid with balsamic notes and supported with fine tannins. Drink now to appreciate its obvious charms. | **89**

Gagliasso Barolo Torriglione La Morra (14.5% ABV) | **90**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Clean, intense, compact, youthful small-red-fruits nose, with intense mineral character offering road tar, violets, geranium, and hints of cedar wood. Rich palate, with sweet red fruit, rich tannins, and balanced acidity. A youthful Barolo that needs a few years in the bottle to develop an extra degree of complexity. | **93**
AJ | Clear deep rose-scarlet. Boisterous and energetic red fruits and some oak, too: sweet plums. Rich and lively, with tobacco-like complexities. Vivid, driving, and full, with exuberant tannins clustering around the lively plum fruits. A lively, bouncing Labrador-like Barolo, which might be better with a year or two to calm and settle. | **88**
MP | Bold, confident, stylized, obvious, stewed black fruit, with griottes, prune, baked plum, vanilla, cedar, and clove. Palate is pronounced and full-bodied, with a ton of fruit and oak, but the tannins win the race. A bit lopsided in favor of structure rather than fruit. | **90**

Pira Luigi Barolo Margheria Serralunga d'Alba (14.5% ABV) | **90**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Intense and exuberant floral and herbal nose, with clean red fruits, violets, geraniums, roses, mint, and a touch of sweet tobacco and leather undertones. Refined, inviting, sweet red-fruit palate, with complex, forest-floor, rose-petal delicacy. Very long and very refined. Another spectacular Nebbiolo. | **97**
AJ | Clear and bright scarlet, translucent, right to the rim. Warm, sweet aromas, though the fruits are a little bit simple here compared to the best of its peers, almost as if the fruit was shading into something estery. It's ample on the palate, with plenty of depth, but there is something awry in the handling, and the wine doesn't have the aromatic complexity and resonance of the best, though it is well constituted. | **85**
MP | Complex and easy-to-access aromas of red fruit, including pomegranate and currant, as well as tar and mineral notes. The palate shows this to great effect, with rhubarb, stewed fruit, and very high levels of alcohol. This wine is overextracted and very ripe, with high levels of alcohol and most of the fruit coming from a stewed or cooked origin, and the original freshness and vivacity are not on display. | **88**

Francesco Rinaldi Barolo Cannubi Barolo 2016 (14.5% ABV) | **90**

BB | Pale garnet to tawny. Intense, complex, mineral, refined small-red-fruits nose, with orange peel, sour cherries, fresh and dried herbs, rose water, mint, and sweet tobacco. Beautiful

sweet-fruit palate, with clean, complex red fruit, huge yet super-refined tannins, and a long mineral finish. Wow! A wine of considerable pedigree that will age gracefully for decades. | **99**
AJ | Deep, clear black-red; garnet at the rim. This seems aromatically disappointing: slightly chemical and false—or at least a lot of pressed pine and resin (oak?), which has skewed the aromatic picture somewhat. Rather similar on the palate: a distinctive style that some may like, and a generous and drinkable wine, but a long way off the aesthetic center for me, and aromatics are at the heart of that. | **84**
MP | Dilute and diffuse nose, with modeling clay, tinned strawberry, straw, thyme, and rose. Outgunned here on every front, this is competent, but in a vintage such as this, would expect more concentration, weight, and complexity. | **87**

Arnaldo Rivera Barolo Ravera Novello (14% ABV) | **90**

BB | Garnet to pink. Open, complex nose, with intense geranium and violet character, black and red fruits, blood oranges, road tar, and tobacco leaves. Mature palate, with slightly simple red and black fruits. Fairly long with a clean finish. | **91**
AJ | Deep, clear black-red. Some aromatic reserve, and the fruits have an animal side to them; a rather secondary aroma from a year whose intrinsic qualities mean most wines are just approaching the end of the primary phase in aromatic terms. Time in the glass, happily, freshens the wine. On the palate, it is serene and satisfying; a relatively quiet and unshowy expression of its commune, but with ample depth and drive. | **88**
MP | Pronounced nose, with lashings of fully ripe black fruit including plum, cherry, currant, and oak notes of clove, cedar, and vanilla. Stylish and modern, warming on the finish, with concentration and depth—this has all the hallmarks of a show-stopping red. Having said that, it's marginally too muscular to be exceptional and may have sacrificed some subtlety at the altar of hypertrophy. Less may well and truly be more. | **90**

Aurelio Settimo Barolo Rocche dell'Annunziata La Morra (14% ABV) | **90**

BB | Garnet to tawny. Mature black-fruit nose, with complex prunes, blueberries, and road tar. Full body, with layered fruit, big tannins, and slightly unbalanced acidity. A touch aggressive on the finish. Generous, but lacking a bit of elegance. | **92**
AJ | Deep, clear black-red; a sombre wine, and just off opaque. Warm and forest-fresh, but lacks a little refinement and expressive force at this stage; tamped in the glass, somehow. Nothing wrong with it nonetheless, and its broodiness suggests more is to come. On the palate, too, it is close-textured and taut, with generous tannins that are swathing and swaddling the dark plum fruits for the time being: brooding here, too. Generously constituted, and I am confident there will be more to come later, meriting a higher score at that point—but never the very highest scores, since it doesn't really have enough finesse for that, sound wine though it is. | **89**

MP | Diffuse nose with only medium intensity. Toast, stewed plum, raisin, fig, all combined with high alcohol suggest fully ripe grapes harvested when the precision and focus of Nebbiolo have been pipped to the post by obvious baked aromas. The palate supports this with warming alcohol and moderate acidity rather than genuine freshness. | **89**

E Pira e Figli Chiara Boschis Barolo Cannubi Barolo (14.5% ABV) | **89**

BB | Deep garnet to pink. Slightly closed yet complex and ripe black and red fruit nose, with road tar, violets, geraniums, hints of cedarwood, and a touch of new oak. Mature and balanced palate, with clean fruit yet a slightly simple finish. | **92**
AJ | Deep, dark black-red, just off opacity, with deep scarlet glints. Some sweet oak on the nose, mingling with cherry pastille fruits; a little bit obvious, in truth, for what should be a very refined DOCG—though many will love it, and there is licorice behind the vanilla cherry. Exuberant on the palate, with the same kind of charm sketched out by the aromas. Tasty and toothsome, if not exactly a classical model, and plenty of vintage pleasure here. | **88**
MP | Pronounced nose, with more than a hint of VA. Redcurrant and Parma violets to the fore, notes of sawdust and cedar. The tannins on this are ferocious and dominate the finish. Unresolved, with a surfeit of structure and an absence of fruit. | **86**

Conterno Fantino Barolo Ginestra Vigna Sori Ginestra Monforte d'Alba (15% ABV) | **89**

BB | Dark garnet to pink. Muscular, dark, a touch earthy on the nose, with road tar, cedarwood, forest undergrowth, truffles, and dried prunes. Mature and full-bodied, with huge tannins well supported by the layered, dark fruit. Long and clean. Generous but not a masterpiece of elegance. It should still age gracefully for a number of years. | **92**
AJ | Deep, dark black-red and only just off opacity; black hues out toward the rim as well. Some of the pine compost, resin, and menthol aromas I have noted in a number of the other wines (has a new supplier of oak become fashionable locally, or is it the effect of oak on the nature of 2016's fruit?), but less insistent here than elsewhere and matched by dark fruits. Tar at the finish once again, as is common in 2016. Deep and sturdy wine, though rather spoiled for me by that vanilla-y pine and menthol. | **86**
MP | Inviting nose of cooked fruit, particularly cooked plum and cherry. The intensity fades slightly over time and the palate is less impressive, with the fine tannins and striking acidity both overriding the fruit. A good wine but pipped to the post by many of the superlative alternatives in this tasting. | **89**

Silvio Grasso Barolo Annunziata Vigna Picotti La Morra (14.5% ABV) | **89**

BB | Deep ruby to garnet. Mature, black-fruit

nose, complex, with a decadent road-tar and prune character, hints of truffles, and forest-floor notes. Rich, ripe, black-fruit palate, generous and mature, with a ripe finish. Not refined but generous and clean. | **92**
AJ | This is a very deeply colored wine, though not quite opaque: dark, clear black-red with dark glints. Sweet, warm, ample, and expressive aromas in which you can see both fruit and wood, and a little more of the latter than the former. It's already beginning to move on, too, toward a secondary refinement, with notes of pine and forest floor. Ample and full on the palate, though without a lot of fruited intricacy. Perhaps a little too much wood in the end, though the spices are exciting. | **87**
MP | Atypical nose dominated by oak aromas of vanilla, clove, sawdust, and woodsmoke. Little to celebrate here other than a caricature of Nebbiolo with the subtle aromatics for which this grape is famous, desperately trying to make themselves felt in the presence of an obdurate winemaking regime. | **87**

Mauro Veglio Barolo Arborina La Morra (14.5% ABV) | **89**

BB | Quite deep ruby to pink rim. Very youthful, a touch closed on the nose, with ripe red fruits, some oak, and a fairly complex character. Compact and clean palate, with rich red fruit, refined tannins, and a long, slightly simple finish. It maybe needs a while to develop complexity—only time will tell. | **92**
AJ | Deep, clear black-red. Unusual: sweet, mentholly, pine compost, the evergreen forest as spring first warms the soil. An exotic oak at work? The vanilla and mint is not unattractive but not classical either. This is very much the style note of the palate, too, in the attractive but singular wine. | **87**
MP | Dazzling bouquet sporting notes of dried herbs, coconut, vanilla, clove, ink, pencil shaving, and prune. The tannins of this wine occlude much of the fruit on the palate, leading to a bony finish dominated by the phenolics, and it's unbalanced as a result. Disappointing after a rather opulent prelude. | **88**

Fratelli Serio & Battista Borgogno Barolo Cannubi Barolo (14% ABV) | **86**

BB | Tawny to garnet. Complex, intense, muscular nose of black and red fruits, iron and leather with road tar and cedarwood. Full body, with layered fruit, big yet refined tannins, and lively acidity. A touch aggressive on the finish, but that should tone down with aging. | **91**
AJ | Clear deep black-red with garnet glints toward the rim. Ample wealth of fruit here, but also a light kerosene note that suggests mixed or inadequate ripeness. Concentrated and deep, but rather green, alas: perplexing in this vintage. Drinkable if you don't mind this tone, and of course some will find it "fresh." | **84**
MP | Dull nose: a touch of VA and a stewed-fruit character. The palate is simple and dominated by high alcohol and clumsy fruit intermixed with poorly judged oak. There is little to like here, particularly in the context of what else we have seen. | **84** ■