

## Verdict in for the 2012 Barolo Vintage



© Fulvio Spada | Fog shrouds the vineyards on the road between Langhe and Monforte d'Alba. Our man in Piedmont, **Tom Hyland**, tries some wines from an exceptional harvest. Posted Thursday, 09-Jun-2016

"I think overall, 2012 was a great vintage" – Pietro Ratti, speaking about the 2012 Barolos.

When a new vintage of [Barolo](#) is released – 2012 is the latest to hit the market – everyone wants to know how long the wines will age. Human nature, I suppose, and no surprise, given the nature of the beast. But, equally as important – indeed even more noteworthy in my experience – is answering this question: how typical are the wines? Do this year's Barolos from La Morra and Novello, with their floral qualities and supple tannins, display a significant difference in style than the more tightly wound examples from Serralunga and Monforte? For the 2012s, the answer is a resounding yes, which makes this vintage not only highly recommended, but quite distinctive as well.

Climatic conditions combined to make 2012 a successful growing season, as an extremely cold winter with plentiful snow (important for a good supply of water throughout the year), gave way to a cool spring followed by medium-hot temperatures in the summer months, with a brief heat spell in August. September was a bit cooler, which was "helpful for the aromatic concentration in the grapes", according to Valter Fissore of Elvio Cogno, while Alessandro Ceretto of the eponymous [family firm](#) notes the "perfect ripening conditions" in September. Ceretto remarks that the size of the crop was about "20 percent less than a normal year" – harvest of [Nebbiolo](#) for Barolo took place the first two weeks of October.

### Related stories:

[Barolo's Greatest Vineyards Ranked](#)

[Barolo Vintage Report: The Best of 2010](#)

[Galloni's Perfect Barolo Trio](#)

Producers I spoke with were thrilled with the quality of the wines. "The wines have great varietal purity, moderate acidity and exceptional balance, even now," notes Franco Massolino, of the eponymous firm in Serralunga d'Alba. For Fissore, the wines will have "great longevity, supported by excellent structure". He stresses the harmony of these wines, saying: "We can certainly speak of a classic vintage that in time will offer great expression."

Pietro Ratti, proprietor of the [Renato Ratti](#) winery in the Annunziata district of La Morra, is especially full of praise of these Barolos. "I think overall, 2012 was a great vintage. The year offered wines with delicious elegance and good power." Ceretto is also enthusiastic about the 2012 Barolos, commenting: "I think the 2012s will age really well, perfect to be drunk in 10 years, with a long life ahead of them."

Ceretto compares the 2012 Barolos to those from 2010 and 2008, "vintages that I consider classic, less ready to drink in their early years, as were the wines from 2007, 2009 and 2011", he notes. Fissore likes the 2012s to the 2008s "for similarities in the structure and elegance of the wines". For Massolino, "2012 has its own personality ... to us, it's a great mix between the purity and freshness of 2005 and the elegance and roundness

of 2007".

For Ratti, 2012 was a special vintage beyond that one harvest. "2012 is the first of the 'cool trio' of 2012, 2013 and 2014," he explains. "After many super alcoholic vintages [such as 2009 and 2011], this trio shows incredible finesse and power in a less alcoholic way, like the classic vintages from the 1980s and '90s." Ratti's comments are especially noteworthy, as he believes that for these next few vintages, harmony and restraint, and not intensity, will be the focus of the wines throughout the production zone. Great news for every Barolo lover.



© Tom Hyland | Alessandro Ceretto (L) said growing conditions were perfect, while Franco Massolino praised the "exceptional balance" of the wines.

Returning to my opening remarks about the typicity of the 2012 Barolos, comparing individual wines illustrates how special this vintage truly is. Two wines from Marcarini, a traditional producer in La Morra, display the charm of the Barolos from this commune, but the differences of the fragrant La Serra offering as opposed to the slightly more tannic Brunate are striking; clearly the vintage offered proprietor Manuel Marchetti and his winemaking team the reality of producing highly distinctive wines – made with similar cellar techniques – that ensured subtle terroir variations that do not emerge every year.

A similar situation also applies to the wines of Massolino in Serralunga d'Alba. Two of their cru Barolos from this commune, namely Parafada and Margheria, display variations on the rugged Serralunga theme. The former offers expressive floral perfumes, while for the latter, spice notes of cumin and coriander are more noticeable. Typical for Serralunga, both offerings need years to round out – longer for the Margheria – yet, thanks to the distinctiveness of this vintage, the wines, from vineyards only a few kilometers apart, offer vastly different flavor profiles.

Notes on a few special wines. The 2012 Brunate from Ceretto is among the finest I tasted for this report. I have long admired the richness and complexities of this producer's wines, but over the past few years, the wines have also displayed a greater sense of control. This 2012 offers distinctive spiciness on the nose and in the finish along with a rich, layered mid-palate, but it is also a wine of supreme harmony, a Barolo that more than anything, focuses on subtleties. Beautifully crafted and spectacularly graceful, this is a superb, understated Brunate and a great wine.

The Giacomo Fenocchio Bussia is beautifully representative of this producer's focus on bright fruit combined with expressive floral qualities. Too many examples of Bussia display the power of this Monforte site with little else; not this first-rate wine. The San Giuseppe from Pecchenino, sourced from a vineyard in Monforte d'Alba, has exceptional balance as well as delicious fruit; this producer is better known for his Dogliani wines, but this release may finally strengthen his reputation with Barolo as well.

The cru offerings from Renato Ratti show the house style, while still displaying site variations; while the Rocche dell'Annunziata is a wine that stresses the elegance of this vineyard, with supple tannins and an extremely long finish, the Conca is notable for its balsamic aromatics, sort of a "wild child" of this area. Ratti's Marcenasco bottling, a blend of vineyards from Annunziata, is approachable even now and is a fine introduction to La Morra Barolo; it is an excellent value as well. Three other impressive 2012s with an excellent price/quality relationship are the Vietti "Castiglione", a wonderfully stylish wine, and the commune offerings from Serralunga producers Luigi Pira and Paolo Manzone; this last wine delivering impressive concentration for the price.

## Recommended wines

While I have yet to taste 2012 Barolos from such notable producers as Bartolo Mascarello, Elio Grasso, Francesco Rinaldi, Paolo Scavino, Elvio Cogno and Roberto Voerzio, I was able to sample examples from several dozen producers.

*Outstanding:*

[Ceretto Brunate](#)

[Luigi Einaudi Nei Cannubi](#)

[Marcarini La Serra](#)

[Massolino Margheria](#)

[Pecchenino San Giuseppe](#)

[Renato Ratti Conca](#)

[Vietti Lazzarito](#)

*Excellent:*

[Azelia Bricco Fiasco](#)

[Conterno Fantino Sorì Ginestra](#)

[Luigi Einaudi Terlo Vigna Costa Grimaldi](#)

[Giacomo Fenocchio Bussia](#)

[Marcarini Brunate](#)

[M. Marengo Brunate](#)

[Massolino Parafada](#)

[Massolino Parussi](#)

[Mauro Molino Bricco Luciani](#)

[Renato Ratti Rocche dell'Annunziata](#)

[Vietti Brunate](#)

*Best Value:*

[Paolo Manzone "Del Comune di Serralunga d'Alba"](#)

[Luigi Pira "Del Comune di Serralunga d'Alba"](#)

[Renato Ratti Marcenasco](#)

[Vietti "Castiglione"](#)

Share this page:

[< Older Story](#)

[Newer Story >](#)