

On the Wine Trail in Italy

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Friday, March 07, 2014

Why Young Wine is as Good as Puppy Love

Born to be Delectable

There are so many wines available in today's world that just weren't around 10 or 20 years ago. In our flatter world, access to good, dependable wine is greater than it has ever been. And Italy has contributed some excellent examples: wines that are tasty, friendly and good values. And wines you can have often. Most of these wines come to the stores and the restaurants relatively young. And they are built to go, not for show, or to stow. These are casual wines, flings, if you will. This is as good as puppy love. But, while you wait for your true love to mature, in the cellar or the wine vault, what is one to do? Live life as an ascetic? Abstain? Wait? Absolutely not.

Whether you are a modernist or a traditionalist, when a wine is young, the baby fat can sometimes overshadow the style or the winemaking philosophy. Point in case is Produttori del Barbaresco. While not a hairy-armpit dung-slinging naturalist, the wines are made in a straightforward, simple and basically non-interventionist way. The wines can age beautifully; all one need to do is [peruse Ken Vastola's web site](#) and drool over the many ancient bottles of Barbaresco he and his merry pranksters have enjoyed over the years.

About Me

**Alfonso Cevola**

Writing about Italian wine and culture. Moving between Italy and America. Passionate about both of my countries. Fed by the energy of Italy, California and Texas. Drawn to the open spaces of America and the small vineyards of Italy.

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2013 Vinality International Awardee

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For those of us who can't wait or don't have access to those wines, **Produttori del Barbaresco's Langhe Nebbiolo 2012** is a great foray into the lovely charms of Barbaresco-land. I crave this wine. It has rich fruit and it's not shy to show it. In Texas back-country BBQ shacks, we have a term for the first fatty slice of brisket: moist cut. This is the moist cut of the Produttori product range. It sells for about \$20. Git ya' some puppy love tonight.

Aglianico is a darling for wine geeks. I think more people have [written about tasting bottles of the 1968 Mastroberardino](#) than were actually made. It was, and is, a great wine. But that's 40+ years in waiting for those special moments. Today's youth doesn't have the patience and the old boomers don't have the time. So we strike a deal.



The **Terredora Di Paolo** (another Mastroberardino family) winery offers their **Aglianico**, which falls under the **Campania IGT** appellation. While not as traditional and stiff shouldered as the iconic Taurasi wines that both sides of the family have made, this Aglianico offers some early joy. The wine has a deep red, spicy quality. It has fruit and acid and an agreeable punch of alcohol. Tasting on its own one might surmise it is pretty modern in style. I tried it last week with another Aglianico, a Beneventano IGT from the Valentino Group, and the Terredora Aglianico was decidedly the restrained of the two. It's about \$17 and the 2010 or 2011 are available in various markets. Not a wine to keep. Lap it up and come back for more. Bow wow wow.

I was digging around Jimmy's in Dallas this week and saw a Petite Verdot from Lazio. It was a special order so I couldn't pick up a bottle of it. But I was intrigued. Several weeks before at a dinner for the wine judges at the Dallas Morning News wine competition, we all brought bottles of wine to share. I brought some old stuff, but thought we needed a wine or two in which we could warm our palates up with. Tenuta San Leonardo is famous for their eponymous wine, which has been awarded the Gambero Rosso Tre Bicchieri 15 times that I am aware of. It's also north of \$ 50 as well. After the Wall Street/ Main Street worldwide meltdown, folks went looking for alternatives to the high ticket items. The wise folks at Vias and San Leonardo came up with the Terre di San Leonardo, which is a red blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Carmenere.



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Accolades



The **2008 Terre di San Leonardo** is the shy one of this group. Understated and underplayed, just like the family that makes it. But a pretty elegant wine. It played well with a plate of steak and frites that night. Juicy, dry, nice fruit, a wine for the Bordeaux lover, the Napa Cab lover or the Ornellaia-phile. It can be found for less than \$20. One could buy a case of this for what you'd pay for a bottle of one of the aforementioned wines. Nice little pupper.

I've [written about Ripasso wines](#) before on these pages. Love 'em or hate 'em, they have an audience and a following. When I occasionally work the floor, people gravitate to them. I understand why. They're friendly, fruity and informal. **Tenuta San Antonio's 2010 Monte Garbi** is a Valpolicella Superiore in the Ripasso style. Grown in vineyards at 1000 feet, the grapes are Corvina and Corvinone 70% - Rondinella 20% - Croatina and Oseleta 10%.



I tried not to like this one, but it's all there. Fruit, balance, peace, love, happiness. It's good. This is an easy one to love, even if it is just puppy love. As Bow Wow raps, "This pup's off the chains." About \$15.

Ok, those are the reds. I have a rosé and a white to go...



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 - Why Young Wine is as Good as Puppy Love
 - Looking for La Morra in All the Wrong Places
- ▶ February (8)
- ▶ January (9)
- ▶ 2013 (114)
- ▶ 2012 (140)
- ▶ 2011 (140)
- ▶ 2010 (163)
- ▶ 2009 (121)
- ▶ 2008 (157)
- ▶ 2007 (155)
- ▶ 2006 (112)
- ▶ 2005 (1)

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Soon it will be Spring. And then Summer. And we will want rosé. I had one recently in Napa Valley, from the **Masseria Li Veli** winery in Apulia. Technically a **Salento IGT**, this is a **rosato** from the Negroamaro grape (See [Jeremy Parzen's latest treatise on Negroamaro](#)). Li Veli's 2013 was brand new, still wet behind the ears, but so cute and energetic. We were having an outdoor meeting, and drinking Negroamaro rosé in Napa Valley seemed so natural. I reckon we'll be drinking a lot more of this wine in the coming months. About \$14.

I was visiting wine shops this week with some very high powered wine folks from California, who are just getting into the Italian wine business in a big way. One of the gents asked me what I thought was the next big thing in Italian white wine. While I mentioned it could possibly be the comeback of Soave, I suggested what might be more logical would be for the Dry Moscato wines to surge. Following on the heels of the sweeter Moscato from Piedmont, the Sicilians love the gloppy, raisiny passitos from Pantelleria to accompany their Baroque desserts. But when it's August and hotter than hell, a crisp dry Zibbibo is hard to beat. **Donnafugata's 2012 Lighea** is a perfect choice. It's a light, dry, Sicilian; crisp, good acid, great fruit, and so darn delicious. You can find it for about \$13; not gonna set you back a lot of biscuits. The only throwback, according to my chums from Modesto? Zibbibo probably isn't going to become a household word in America. Maybe better to stick to calling it Moscato.



In closing, there are a lot more wines to love than to hate. The eno-blogosphere has gone a little crazy lately; a theatre of the absurd has just popped up in the higher echelons of wine criticism. Normal wine drinkers aren't being served by the surface to air intercontinental word missiles being lobbed on the chat rooms and the blogs. Spring is in the air. Now is time to shrug off the ice of winter and all the negativity and open up something delectable to enjoy. Wine is about pleasure, and celebration. Even if it's just puppy love, as Paul sang to Annette (and a very young America), "I guess they'll never know, how a young heart really feels." put yourself in a sunny place and revel in all the wet kisses these friendly little guys are lavishing.

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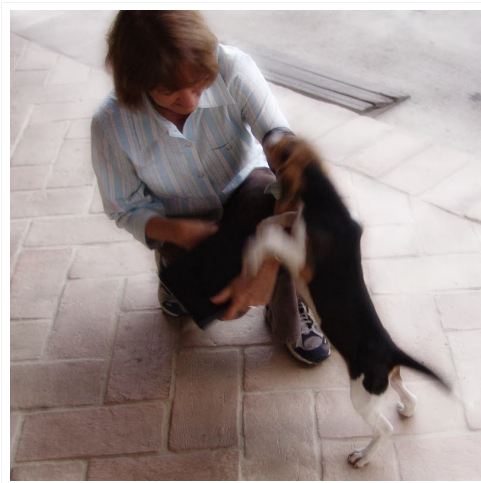


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Posted by Alfonso Cevola at 7:00 AM 

4 comments:



Do Bianchi said...

I really liked the entry-tier Aglianico in Daniela's line-up and I love the Monte Garbi... such a great value...

PdB always in the house!

March 7, 2014 at 10:17 AM

Wine Curmudgeon said...

Liveli!

March 8, 2014 at 7:59 AM



Tasting Rome said...

Puppies are the best. Great wines. I wonder if the Lazio Petit Verdot was from Casale del Giglio? If so you didn't miss much, if not, I would be interested to know more.

Sarah (Antiqua Tours)

March 10, 2014 at 7:35 AM



Alfonso Cevola said...

yes Sarah, that was the one...

March 10, 2014 at 7:51 AM

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