



February 2010

Vietti: Anatomy of a Barolo

By Antonio Galloni

My annual tasting at Vietti typically encompasses 20+ Barolos from all of the vintages that are in barrel plus one or two in bottle. Year in year out, this is one of the most fascinating and educational tastings I do, as the wines are always incredibly representative of their respective vintages and terrains. The focus of this article was originally intended to be a close look at the individual component wines in the 2007 Barolo Castiglione, but all of Vietti's 2007s are so extraordinary it seemed a shame to leave them out.

I can't think of too many estates in Piedmont that have raised the bar higher than Vietti has over the last decade or so. Virtually every wine that emerges from these cellars is outstanding, and many are profound. Winemaker Luca Currado, his brother-in-law Mario Cordero and their staff have taken the early groundbreaking work of Alfredo and Lucia Currado and built upon those successes, reaching an unprecedented level of consistency and quality across their entire range.

Vietti is the only estate in Piedmont to own vineyards in all eleven of the Barolo-producing villages. Many of the parcels are located in the region's most historic and pedigreed sites. Currado crops his vineyards to low yields and is typically one of the earliest producers to harvest. All of the Nebbiolo vineyards are farmed, vinified and aged with the intent of making Barolo. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel. The wines are then racked into French oak barrels for the malolactic fermentations and finally moved into casks for aging, all of which vary from vineyard to vineyard. For example, of the single-vineyard Barolos the Brunate sees the shortest period of contact on the skins, the Rocche the longest. Similarly, the Lazzarito generally spends 3-4 months longer in French oak than the other Barolos. Prior to bottling, all of the individual lots are tasted and divided into three distinct selections according to quality.

2007 Langhe Nebbiolo Perbacco

The third and most basic selection goes into the Langhe Nebbiolo Perbacco, a wine that Luca Currado created with the intention of offering an affordable, entry-level Nebbiolo. Perbacco is a Barolo in everything but name...and price tag. All of the fruit from these Barolo-designated vineyards is vinified and aged in the same fashion as the more important parcels in the estate's collection. With just one more month in bottle prior to being released, Perbacco could be entitled to carry the Barolo DOCG. At roughly \$25 retail, it is one of the finest values readers will come across from any region.

The just-bottled **2007 Langhe Nebbiolo Perbacco** offers up generous fruit along with menthol, spices and hard candy, showing notable intensity while retaining an essentially mid-weight style. Round, suave tannins add to the long and refined finish. This is a wonderful vintage for Perbacco. In 2007 Perbacco is made from parcels in Bricco Boschis, Ginestra and Mosconi (aged together), Liste, Brunella, Crocetta, Pernanno and the youngest vines in Fossati, Ravera (planted in 2000) and Scarrone (planted in 2003). I tasted the 2007 Perbacco from tank in its final blend just prior to bottling and then a few days after it was bottled. Both times it was outstanding.

2007 Barolo Castiglione

The estate's second selection goes into the Barolo Castiglione, a wine that has shot up in quality in dramatic fashion over the last few years. Up until the 1960s Barolos were typically made from fruit sourced from multiple villages, with the goal of combining the strengths of several sites, an approach that is seldom used today. Vietti's Barolo Castiglione is one of the few remaining Barolos still made from a variety of vineyards across a number of communes. In a typical vintage the Castiglione includes fruit from Bricco Fiasco, Bricco Boschis, Ravera and Ginestra, all important vineyards in Barolo. Over the last few years, Currado has become even more selective, choosing only the best of his 'second-tier' vineyards for the Castiglione. The results are striking. Readers will note that many of the vineyards used for the Barolo Castiglione are well-known; in fact they are often bottled as single-vineyard selections by other growers. Tasting through the wines it is clear at least some of these parcels could easily stand on their own. Currado contends that while that may be true in some years, generally the vineyards selected for Perbacco and the Barolo Castiglione aren't exceptional in every vintage, whereas his grand crus Rocche, Brunate and Lazzarito almost always are. The Barolo Riserva Villero is a bit of a separate discussion, as it is only bottled when Currado feels the wine is truly special, something that has happened just seven times between 1982 and 2004. In every other vintage the Villero has gone into the Barolo Castiglione.

2007	Vietti Langhe Nebbiolo Perbacco	90+
2007	Vietti Barolo Bricco Fiasco (Lot 30)	(92-95)
2007	Vietti Barolo Ciabot Berton (Lot 15)	(90-92)
2007	Vietti Barolo Ravera (Lot 22)	(90-93)
2007	Vietti Barolo La Brunata (Lot 27)	(91-94)
2007	Vietti Barolo Lazzariasco (Lot 14)	(89-91)
2007	Vietti Barolo Bricco Ravera di Monforte (Lot 17)	(89-91)
2007	Vietti Barolo Scarrone (Lot 18)	(90-93)
2007	Vietti Barolo Fossati (Lot 29)	(89-91)
2007	Vietti Barolo Rocche	(95-98)
2007	Vietti Barolo Lazzarito	(94-97)
2007	Vietti Barolo Brunate	(93-96)
2007	Vietti Barolo Villero (probably Riserva)	(94-97)