

# ODDERO

# Decanter

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## Vintage report

# Barolo 2012 & Barbaresco 2013

Contrasting fortunes in the home of the world's finest Nebbiolo wines, says Ian D'Agata: Barolo lovers will need to tread carefully with the 2012s, whereas 2013 has produced a showcase vintage of compelling quality for neighbouring Barbaresco

THERE IS NO escaping the fact that, thanks to nature's all-important role, some vintages are better than others, and therein lies the beauty of wine and wine collecting. In this light, focusing on Piedmont, it's clear Barbaresco's 2013 vintage falls into the 'better' category, while Barolo 2012 will be remembered as one of the 'other' vintages.

Simply put, while 2013 was a very good to outstanding vintage in both Barolo and Barbaresco, 2012 was not. The former year delivered plenty of delicious and age-worthy red wines, while the wines from 2012 in Piedmont are generally very uneven in quality. The best 2012 Barolos are easily accessible and offer plenty of early appeal, but less successful wines can be dilute, fruit-challenged and marred by tough, green tannins.

### The 2012 Barolos

A look at the weather during the grapevine's growth cycle tells you a great deal about what the wines will be like that year, and it's no ➤

*'Rich and cellarworthy, the 2013 Barbarescos will prove lovely, complex wines'*



## VINTAGE REPORT: PIEDMONT

### D'Agata's picks: Barolo 2012 & Barbaresco 2013

Some wines listed N/A UK may still be shipped to the UK. Contact the winery/importer for details

#### Barolo 2012



**Giacomo Conterno, Cascina Francia 93**  
£133-£180 Asset Wines, Brunswick Fine Wines, Corney & Barrow, Harrods, Justerini & Brooks

A knockout wine: powerful yet light on its feet. Textbook Barolo aromas and flavours in a vintage when no Monfortino will be made, so this is even better than usual. Still an infant, like its stablemate Barolo Ceretta – another grandiose wine. **Drink 2020-2034 Alc 14%**



**Giuseppe Rinaldi, Brunate 93**  
£167 (2011) Asset Wines, Atlas Fine Wines, Capital Vintners

Outstanding, penetrating perfume of sour red cherries and roses. Very clean and magically balanced, this precise, dense Barolo is more powerful than most in 2012. **Drink 2020-2032 Alc 14%**

**Cogno, Vigna Elena Riserva 2010 93**  
POA, Asset Wines  
Always a late-released riserva, this unique 100% Nebbiolo rosé always goes on sale later than most; it's also more perfumed and piercing, with lifted red rose, violet and spicy cinnamon notes. Lighter structure but offers a haunting personality. **Drink 2019-2030 Alc 14%**



**GD Vajra, Bricco delle Viole 92**  
£69.99 Hedonism, Highbury Vintners, Lay & Wheeler, Wholefoods

I could have recommended Vajra's Ravera Barolo which is the Bricco delle Viole, but this has an amazing perfume and delicacy of flavour that are hard to forget. **Drink 2020-2032 Alc 14%**

**Bartolo Mascarello 92**  
£500-£600 Asset Wines, Brunswick Fine Wines  
Silkier than most in 2012, with lovely minty nuances to the red cherry aromas and flavours. **Drink 2019-2029 Alc 14%** ➤



## VINTAGE REPORT: PIEDMONT

**E Pira, Chiara Boschis, Cannubi 92**  
 £50-£70 Asset Wines, Excel Wines, GB Brands, Lay & Wheeler  
 Deep, powerful Cannubi, with a longer life ahead than most 2012s. A very spicy, minty, magically mouthcoating Barolo. **Drink 2020-2034 Alc 14%**



**Giovanni Canonica, Palegiallo 91**  
 £50 Noble Fine Liquor  
 Rich and ripe, with not as much alcohol as the 2011, but less likely to be a long-term keeper too. Still, this lovely Barolo offers everything that great Nebbiolo is about – and then some. It's long and suave, with fine sweetness. **Drink 2018-2026 Alc 14%**

**Vietti, Lazzarito 91**  
 £134 Asset Wines  
 A very powerful, deep, almost austere wine as is typical of this site – long lived, with pretty and lively notes of pomegranate, rose and tar. **Drink 2021-2036 Alc 14%**



**Azelia, San Rocco 17**  
 £39-£54 Capital Vintners, Crump Richards & Shaw, Justerini & Brooks, VinGalen  
 Creamy chocolate and coffee notes are enlivened by balsamic hints, but this is lighter styled and readier to drink than most recent vintages of this wine. **Drink 2021-2030 Alc 14%**



**Cavallotto, Brico Boschis 17**  
 £40 (in bond) Asset Wines, Lay & Wheeler  
 Light and poitely styled, but with a sneaky tannic backbone and spicy concentration. Orange peel, camphor and fruit red fruit in spades. **Drink 2019-2026 Alc 14%**

**Ciabetto, Berton 90**  
 N/A UK [www.ciabetto.com](http://www.ciabetto.com)  
 Rich and racy, with a lively touch to the creamy black fruit and spicy aromas and flavours. Readier than most. **Drink 2019-2028 Alc 14%**

**Ettore Germano, Ceretta 90**  
 £46 (2010) Astrum Wine  
 Always hard to choose between Germano's many crus, but this offers complex leather, liquorice and tar flavours that have a spicy kick for added depth and complexity. **Drink 2019-2028 Alc 14%**

Photographs: Massimo Sestini/Corbis, David La Camera/Imago, Massimo Sestini/Imago



Above: the Chiara Boschis, Cannubi 2012 will live longer than most Barolos this vintage, says D'Agata

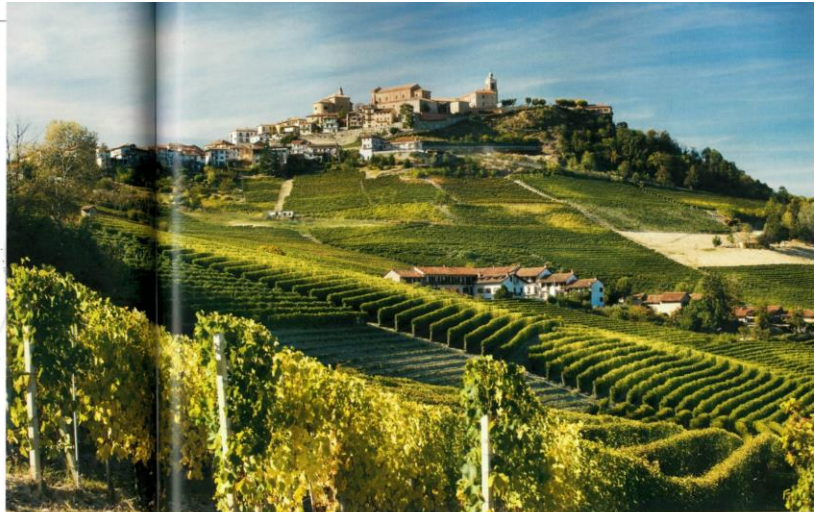
different in Barolo in 2012. Things didn't start off auspiciously, with a brutally cold winter segueing into a rainy and cool spring. April was especially cool – so much so that it even snowed briefly, which is a rare occurrence in Italy, even in a northern region like Piedmont.

May was characterised by alternating warm and cool days, but the generally poor weather delayed the vines' flowering, resulting in an irregular fruit set, and leading to bunches of grapes with different and uneven ripeness levels and lower potential yields.

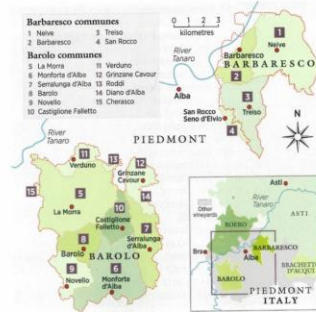
By contrast, June and July were noteworthy for almost extreme heat, but 2012's topsy-turvy weather came to the fore once again that summer with not one but two hailstorms damaging vines in July and August (the towns of Barolo and La Morra were hit hardest). Damage was less than initially feared; clearly, quality-conscious producers who worked extra hard to remove damaged grapes fared best.

Unfortunately, there was no respite after that, the miserable weather continuing with late-August and early-September rains; at least late-ripening Nebbiolo (most estates picked in the first 10 days of October) weathered this setback well – whereas earlier-ripening varieties with thin skins such as Moscato Bianco and Dolcetto fared less well.

I visit Barolo and Barbaresco three to four times a month, every month. I walk in the vineyards and taste wines from barrel regularly, and so can easily grasp individual vintage character. Clearly, buying 2012 Barolos will require a little homework and extra care. For the most part, these wines reflect their cool-climate origin, showcasing bright



Above: the village of La Morra and surrounding Barolo vineyards



**Marrone, Pichemej 90**  
 N/A UK [www.agricolamarrone.com](http://www.agricolamarrone.com)  
 A blend of the best lots from La Morra, this is a big rich wine in the chocolate, fans. Offers plenty of early appeal and complex floral-tarry notes. **Drink 2018-2026 Alc 14%**

**Fratelli Revello 90**  
 N/A UK [www.revellofratelli.com](http://www.revellofratelli.com)  
 Fresh and vibrant, with enticing aromas and flavours of red berries, sweet spices and a lingering floral nuance. **Drink 2019-2026 Alc 14%**

**La Spinetta, Campé 90**  
 £120 (2011) Maestri  
 Powerful, tannic wine from Verduno, but less so than in past vintages, and offering lovely floral lift. **Drink 2020-2030 Alc 14%**

## VINTAGE REPORT: PIEDMONT



**Luciano Sandrone, Le Vigne 90**  
 £54-£77 Asset Wines, Atlas Fine Wines, Brunswick Fine Wines, Fan Vintners, Highbury Vintners  
 Sandrone's Cannubi Boschis gets all the attention, but insiders know that in many vintages it is this wine that offers greater precision and a steeper backbone. This is a long, lifted Barolo that will age better than its staminate. **Drink 2018-2027 Alc 14%**

**Marchesi di Barolo 90**  
 N/A UK [www.marchesibarolo.com](http://www.marchesibarolo.com)  
 Fresh and easygoing, light and lively with perfumed red berries and floral notes that persist nicely on its midweight frame. **Drink 2018-2027 Alc 14%**

**Masolino, Parussol 90**  
 £77 Justerini & Brooks, Liberty Wines  
 Not Masolino's best-known site (and the only one outside of Serralunga d'Alba), this showcases magical balance and thrust with bright floral notes and violet accents. Typically well-balanced Castiglione Falletto Barolo. **Drink 2019-2030 Alc 14%**

**Paolo Conterno, Ginestra 90**  
 £31 Justerini & Brooks  
 Powerful wine still folded in on itself, with Montefiore's classic hefty tannins; it will need time. Conterno will also release a riserva, that will need more still. Both are very promising. **Drink 2019-2029 Alc 14%**

**Parusio, Marilindino 90**  
 N/A UK [www.parusio.com](http://www.parusio.com)  
 Parusio has a unique knack with this site, from where he has historically made some of his greatest wines. This is dense, brooding and powerful but well balanced; give it some time. **Drink 2020-2034 Alc 14%**

**Rivetto 90**  
 N/A UK [www.rivetto.it](http://www.rivetto.it)  
 Bright and juicy, with spicy herb and red fruit nuances nicely supported by a polished tannic spine. **Drink 2018-2027 Alc 14%**

**Roberto Voerzio 90**  
 £109-£125 (03) A&B Vintners, Asset Wines, Fan Vintners, Justerini & Brooks  
 Fleshy, creamy, dense Brunate that is characterised by more red fruit notes than usual, and less of the site's signature brown spices. A big, strapping Barolo that's good to drink now but will improve greatly with a few years in bottle. **Drink 2020-2030 Alc 14%**

Photographs: Massimo Sestini/Corbis, David La Camera/Imago, Massimo Sestini/Imago

Below: Masolino's Parussol Barolo is not as well known as its Serralunga wine but has 'magical balance and thrust' in 2012



Above: Orlando Pecchenino is president of the Barolo Consorzio

acidity and easygoing, bright fruit – a combination that gives juicy, accessible wines, explaining the early appeal already mentioned.

Another positive is that 2012 Barolos have, due to the year's lower daily temperatures, lower alcohol levels than the 2011 Barolos, for example. Unfortunately, many 2012s are marred by tough (and at times downright green) tannins, most likely a result of uneven flowering, delayed fruit set and differing ripening times even within the sort.

For all these reasons, 2012 is not a vintage in which to look for site-specificity and to try and discern which Barolo commune fared best (seemingly every wine writer's favourite sport, but a pointless exercise in 2012). Rather, 2012 Barolos have to be thought of and bought in terms of single-estate proficiency, and only those estates that spent much elbow grease in removing damaged grapes – a tiring, time-consuming and usually manual job – did well.

### A little patience

For comparison's sake, my opinion is that the 2012 Barolos are most reminiscent of the 1998 Barolos: wines that have developed better than originally expected but that remain tannic and tough even almost 20 years later. I doubt that the 2012s will behave much differently, though I do believe that they will end up, in time, showing a little more fruit than the 1998s ever have.

Last but not least, you might also read about comparisons between the Barolos of 2012 and those of 2005 and 2008. Simply put, these are wrong, misleading and unfair, so don't be fooled by that often self-serving hype.



Above: Luca Currado of Barolo producer Vietti, whose Lazzarito cuvée is always an austere style

Though the wines of 2012 and 2005 share similarly lithe frames, the latter was a grossly underrated year from the start, and has given us many lovely, perfumed wines of infinite charm. And 2008 is one of the most classic and truly great Barolo vintages in some time, producing a plethora of simply magnificent, remarkably well-balanced wines.

Most Barolo producers I spoke with this spring and summer acknowledged that 2012 was certainly difficult, but less so than many reports in the press indicated. Orlando Pecchenino of the Pecchenino estate, and also president of the Barolo Consorzio, believes that criticism of the 2012 wines has been excessive. Personally I find many wines have ripe tannins and a long finish and offer plenty of refinement and grace.

Mariacristina Oddero of Oddero predicts: '2012 may very well turn out like other vintages that were unfairly judged at the outset, such as 1998, 2005 or 2008. What the 2012s need most is time in the bottle, as they are currently shut down and inexpressive; but I think they'll come round.'

### The 2013 Barbarescos

In a nutshell, 2013 looks to be a classic, outstanding vintage for Barbaresco. I have

'Comparing 2012 Barolos with those of 2005 and 2008 is wrong, misleading and unfair'

### Barbaresco 2013



**Bruno Rocca, Rabaja 93**  
 £53.33-£85.99 Liberty Wines, Millisima  
 More forward and less brooding than other recent vintages of this wine, as fewer

barriques and more casks are used. Less site specific than usual, but still rich. Look for Rocca's new release of an outstanding Currà Riserva 2012 in early 2017. **Drink 2019-2032 Alc 14%**

**Angelo Gaja 92**  
 £95 Bancroft, BI Wines, Justerini & Brooks, Roberson  
 For me, always Gaja's best wine in every vintage, reminding you of Nebbiolo from the first whiff and taste. This 2013 has lovely floral notes and a mineral tang. **Drink 2019-2030 Alc 14%**

**Sottimano, Pajoré 92**  
 £27 (2012) Crump Richards & Shaw  
 Much bigger and darker fruit-accented than usual. Rich, ripe, brooding and will need time. Pajoré is one of Piedmont's top dozen sites for Nebbiolo. **Drink 2018-2032 Alc 14%**

**Nada Florenzo, Rombone 92**  
 £29.16 (B) A&B Vintners  
 Big, dense and rich, with chocolate and balsamic nuances typical of the site. >



producer is just releasing his 2012s now.  
**Drink 2016-2024 Alc 13.5%**

**Cigliuti, Serraboella 92**

£42.25 **Lea & Sandeman**

Plush and seamless but closed down presently; sure to develop slowly but gorgeously. Very deep wine aged roughly two thirds in cask and one third in barriques. **Drink 2018-2030 Alc 14%**

**Oddero, Gallina 92**

N/A UK [www.oddero.it](http://www.oddero.it)

Powerful and austere, a mineral, less chocolatey and fleshy wine from Neive, which promises to age gracefully. Don't open this vintage for at least three years. **Drink 2019-2026 Alc 14%**

**Ca' del Baio, Marcarini 91**

POA **Eurowines**

Dark and deep – a Treiso Barbaresco that is more chocolatey and rich than most, but with very fine tannins, grip and thrust. A lovely wine that will age well. **Drink 2020-2035 Alc 14%**

**Pio Cesare, Il Bricco 91**

£69 **Portland Wine Co, Millésima**

Usual knockout aromas of minerals, sour red cherries, violet and rose petals. Harmonious but lively acidity heightens an austere, steely element in the wine. **Drink 2018-2030 Alc 14%**



**Castello di Neive, Santo Stefano 90**

£42.75 **Fortyfive 10**

A sexy, showy wine offering plenty of early appeal and easygoing red cherry, plum and delicate spicy aromas

and flavours. **Drink 2018-2025 Alc 14%**

**Marco e Vittorio Adriano, Sanavaide 90**

£100 (2012) **Christopher Keller**

Easygoing, very well-balanced Barbaresco with sneaky complexity and concentration of flavour, plus polished tannins that ensure a smooth mouthfeel. **Drink 2019-2026 Alc 13.5%**

**Ceretto, Bernardot 90**

£112 **Top Selection**

A pure expression of Treiso, but with noteworthy heft and size for a wine from this commune. Treiso's steely mineral style emerges on the long, vibrant finish. **Drink 2019-2030 Alc 14%**

**Michele Chiarlo, Asili 90**

£45 **Millésima**

Soft, juicy, open and easy to drink but with fine ageing potential too. **Drink 2019-2030 Alc 14%**

Photograph: MolchenPhoto

For full details of UK stockists, see p133



tasted nothing but great wines, one after another, over the past six months or so. The growing season was less uneven than in 2012, with warm, stable temperatures throughout most of the summer and a very long, ideal autumn that allowed for long hang-times – always the key to making perfumed, complex Nebbiolo wines. In fact, whenever I visited Barbaresco's wineries and vineyards, producers there kept telling me that 2013 was one of the latest October harvests they could remember.

In my opinion, the 2013 Barbarescos look to be just as good if not better than the 2010 Barbarescos (the latter was not as successful a vintage in Barbaresco as it was in Barolo). The one caveat in 2013 is lower than usual yields because of an atypically severe outbreak of downy mildew in the early spring. Those who didn't treat their vines in a timely fashion risked suffering major crop losses.

Nevertheless, in ultimate analysis, the 2013 Barbarescos are luscious, compelling wines that boast harmonious acidities and deep-seated sweetness. Rich and cellarworthy, they will prove lovely, complex wines that will be drinking best 10 to 20 years after the vintage date. **D**

Award-winning wine writer Ian D'Agata's next book, due in 2017, is on Barolo and Barbaresco. He is creative director of Collisioni, Italy's biggest wine, music and literature fair, held annually in Barolo

For more on these latest vintages of Barolo and Barbaresco, visit [Decanter.com](http://Decanter.com)

*'2012 may very well turn out like other vintages that were unfairly judged at the outset'*

**Mariacristina Oddero (above)**