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# Decanter

## Insiders' Italy

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### Man of the Year

The Englishman upholding  
a wine, a region, a legacy...



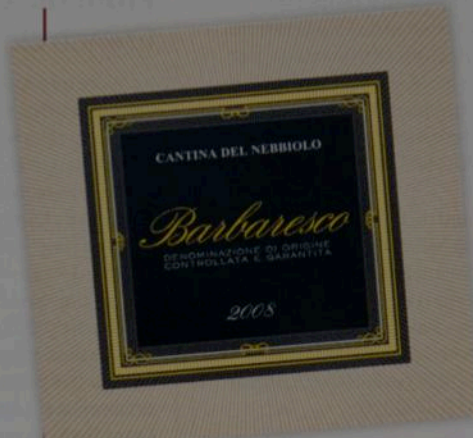
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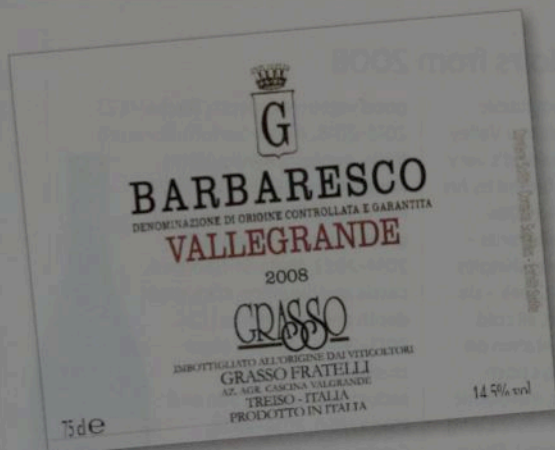
# BARBARESCO RECOMMENDED WINES



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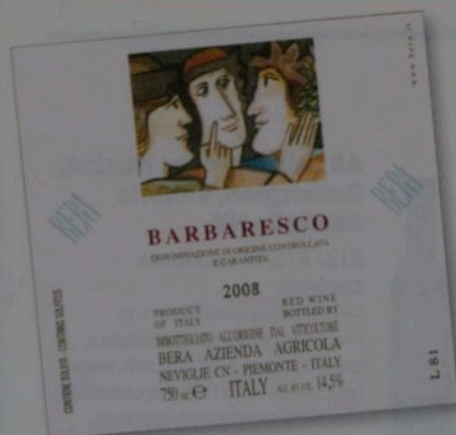
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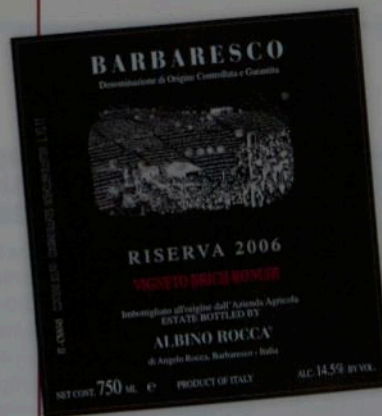
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# Barbaresco 2008 and riserva 2006

More than an understudy to Barolo, these powerful, elegant wines are stars in their own right, says Kerin O'Keefe – especially now that vineyard areas better highlight terroir

BARBARESCO, LONG SEEN as Barolo's junior partner, has stepped out of the long shadow cast by its far larger, more famous neighbour by turning out structured wines that balance finesse and power. Like Barolo, Barbaresco is made with 100% Nebbiolo and can be produced in two versions – normale and riserva. While the normale must age for at least two years before release, riserva must age for four, and even though both versions are obliged to spend a minimum of nine months in wood, most producers barrel age their normales and riservas for considerably longer, often 18 and 30 months respectively.

While a number of Barbaresco producers continue to age their wines in barriques (which, when new, can strangle Nebbiolo's subtle nuances with invasive oak and impart bitter wood tannins to wines that are already naturally tannic), the latest vintages demonstrate more restraint across the board (although at the 2008 vintage debut in Alba last May many tasters commented on the number of heavily oaked wines from Neive). Many Barbaresco producers now use seasoned barriques, while others have switched over entirely to the traditional Slavonian casks, or *botti*, with an increasing number of estates preferring a combination of the two barrels. Taking into account individual winemaking styles, a quintessential Barbaresco should boast Nebbiolo's hallmark floral, wild cherry, mineral and earthy sensations, with a full-bodied yet elegant structure. Riservas, on the other hand, should have more depth, complexity and ageworthy structure, cellaring well for 20 years or more in outstanding vintages.

## Vintage variation

Barbaresco's growing zone, on the opposite side of the city of Alba from Barolo, spans the villages of Barbaresco, Neive and Treiso, and a sliver of Alba's hamlet of San Rocco Seno d'Elvio. Generally speaking, the wine's namesake village yields structured but graceful wines, Neive the most tannic and powerful, and Treiso the most elegant. Barbaresco producers appreciate the crucial role individual vineyards play in great Nebbiolo and, after years of careful evaluation, have officially delimited all their vineyard areas. Starting with the 2007 vintage, producers can only add one of 65 authorised geographic mentions to their labels.

The 2008 Barbarescos aptly demonstrate the region's status as a maker of world-class wines. Although much of 2008 was marred by cool, damp conditions, late-ripening Nebbiolo benefited from warm, dry weather between mid-August and early October. Most of the 2008s are lovely, if not overly complex, with higher acidity levels than the preceding three vintages, balanced by succulent fruit. Most will benefit from a few more years in bottle.

The 2006 riservas are from a lauded vintage that, at the outset, promised classic wines of impressive complexity and longevity. While some have lived up to expectations, there have been reports of others being unbalanced and more evolved than anticipated. A mixed bag if you will, so if you have any in the cellar, best to start tasting a bottle every now and again to judge cellaring time.

Kerin O'Keefe is a wine writer and the author of *Brunello di Montalcino* (2012, University of California Press)



## Barbaresco: The facts

**Grape** 100% Nebbiolo

**Under vine** 685ha

**Villages** Barbaresco, Neive, Treiso and a bit of Alba

**Ageing** For normale wines: 26 months before release, including at least nine months in wood; For riservas, 50 months before release, including at least nine months in wood

**Annual production** 4.24m bottles

## Barbaresco: know your vintages

**2010** Uneven weather prolonged the growing season, but in the end yielded good quality fruit. Not as rich and ripe as previous vintages. Promise classic wines that will need time.

**2009** Very hot, dry summer yielded grapes with high sugar. Look to be structured, tannic wines high in alcohol, but may not have enough acidity for long cellaring.

**2008** Cold, wet spring then a warm, dry ripening season. Classic vintage with good fruit, firm structure and lovely aromas that need time to develop. Drink: 2013–2025.

**2007** Round, ripe and warm with succulent fruit, although less than ideal acidity for lengthy ageing. Drink: 2012–2017.

**2006** Tight, tannic and complex. The best wines come from top producers with well-known vineyards. Drink: 2013–2026.

**2005** Elegant and approachable, but rain and cool temperatures compromised ageworthy structure and complexity. Drink: 2012–2015.

**2004** Superb, classic vintage of structure and approachability. Drink: 2012–2024.



## The results

In *Decanter's* first Barbaresco panel tasting since 1999, Christelle Guibert finds great enthusiasm among our expert panel, who praised the wines' well-judged oak and their consistency and price over Barolo

### Often described as the poor cousin of Barolo, is Barbaresco still perceived that way?

Barbaresco may have the shorter history, but retailers are seeing an increased interest in Barbaresco with consumers seeking it out at all levels. 'The poor cousin reputation is definitely changing; I'm not sure how, and I'm not sure who is driving it, but it's happening,' said Greg Sherwood MW. Kate Mollet, Waitrose's Italian buyer, added: 'We are seeing sales of Barbaresco increasing steadily and we carry an equal number of Barolo and Barbaresco lines in our stores.'

### How did the two vintages compare?

The panel was unanimous: even though there were only 16 entries, the 2006 riservas were the star of the show. Walter Speller couldn't contain his excitement: 'I love 2006. Though a bit impenetrable now, they have a fantastic tannic structure which is muscular and rough, with a fragrance on the finish.' Sergio de Luca described them as 'classic, rich, and youthful' while Sherwood found them powerful, full bodied and concentrated, for long-term drinking. Margaret Rand admitted to finding the 2006s more difficult to taste: 'They were good but they were not invigorating, and tannins seem to dominate. But I'm sure they will develop and become absolutely marvellous.'

### But the single Decanter Award went to a 2008?

Rand was certainly a fan of the 08s, praising their deliciousness and stylistic variety: 'Nebbiolo is like Pinot Noir in that respect - it flourishes on individuality.' Others on the panel were dubious. Speller was 'disappointed not to see more acidity and that crunchiness of tannins in the 2008s.' De Luca shared the same view: 'I don't think it has the quality of other vintages; it's a lean and mean vintage.' Stephen Brook was more diplomatic: 'I think the best is yet to come. We tasted the first release of the 2008s, and we are probably seeing the lighter end of the spectrum.' He went on to add: 'These were wines of fragrant charm, quite easygoing and accessible, but I wanted a bit more structure and a bit more grip.'

### Barbaresco is generally characterised as 'feminine' next to the more 'masculine' Barolo. Is this changing?

'I don't really buy this differentiation as feminine and masculine,' said Speller. 'Every year, when I visit the region to taste the new vintage, I see less and less distinction

## The scores

96 wines tasted

1

★★★★★

Decanter Award

38

★★★★★

Highly recommended

50

★★★★

Recommended

7

★★★

Fair

0

★

Poor

0

Faulty

14

£ Good value (under £25)

between Barolo and Barbaresco.' Steven Spurrier summed it up: 'Barbaresco has a lean style but almost every wine is individual. They are very vigorous and personal and the whole idea is very Burgundian, but a totally different style.'

### So can we say Barbaresco offers good value for money?

Yes, yes and yes. As Speller pointed out, 'Barbaresco is less pricey than Barolo so this is a real opportunity for consumers to get a top-quality wine at an accessible price.' Brook went a step further: 'If I was going into a good wine shop and didn't know the producers, I would probably go for Barbaresco rather than Barolo, as there are many good-value wines to be found in Barbaresco.' Rand added: 'I think Burgundy lovers should look at young Nebbiolo - the wines have a similar quality to young Burgundy and can be absolutely delicious when young.'

### That's encouraging. So are you saying Barbaresco is more reliable than Barolo?

As a generalisation, the experts agreed that Barbaresco tends to be more consistent. 'Barolo is much larger,' explained Brook. 'You have six important communes of different styles. But only La Morra in Barolo for me seems to be close to Barbaresco in style and fragrance.' He went on: 'Barbaresco in my experience always shows well at tastings because there are many very good producers; even the co-op makes excellent wines in a traditional style.'

### So which communes should Barbaresco lovers look for?

Not an easy question to answer, as none of the panelists felt they could confidently recognise one commune over another. Most judges supported Rand's view: 'I didn't taste a great deal of difference between the communes; I thought there were greater differences between the producers.' That said, both Sherwood and Speller felt they could note distinctions between Treiso and Neive. Walter preferred the Treiso wines, which to him 'seemed to be more extracted and had better acidity'.

### How was the use of oak?

With some wines aged for 48 months in traditional *botti* and others aged for 15 months in small barrels, Barbaresco producers know all about oak. Most of the panel felt the oak was very well managed. Speller said: 'We saw a difference in style between the *botti*- and *barrique*-aged



“Barbaresco's reputation as the poor cousin of Barolo is definitely changing”

Greg Sherwood MW



“The 2006 wines have a fantastic tannic structure, with a fragrance on the finish”

Walter Speller



# Barbaresco 2008 and riserva 2006

## The tasters

**Sergio de Luca** is director of buying for Italian wine at UK importer Enotria where he has worked for 26 years

**Margaret Rand** is a regular contributor to *Decanter* and general editor of *Hugh Johnson's Pocket Wine Book*

**Stephen Brook** is a *Decanter* contributing editor and author who has been writing on wine for almost 30 years

**Greg Sherwood MW** is a senior wine buyer for Handford Wines in London's South Kensington



**Walter Speller** has been a sommelier and wine buyer, and now runs his own wine consultancy for Italian producers

**Katie Mollet** is a buyer for Waitrose supermarkets, responsible for Italian wine

**Steven Spurrier** is *Decanter's* consultant editor. Author of several books, he is also a wine consultant

**Also tasting:** Emily O'Hare has been a sommelier at London's River Café since 2007, following a stint at Fifteen, London

wines but I didn't find the wines overoaked,' Brook added: 'I can't say that I prefer the modern style – the small barrique-aged wines – but I liked an awful lot of them here. I thought they were very stylish – the tannins were not excessive and the oak was integrated.' De Luca was less enthusiastic: 'I don't like it when Nebbiolo is too rich in oak and I marked down a few wines because of that; they could have come from another country but not Barbaresco.'

### And finally, when should consumers drink them?

2008 was described as a mid-term drinking vintage by our experts, while the 2006s were still very young and could go on for another 10 to 15 years – both vintages ideal partners with food. But how many consumers had the opportunity to try older vintages, asked Sherwood. 'Piedmont is one of the world's great wine regions but while we can still buy and enjoy some old Bordeaux and Burgundy, it's impossible to taste older vintages of Barbaresco and Barolo – we never see them in shops.' De Luca explained: 'Italy hasn't got the history of selling old vintages because they sell the young vintages so easily. Selling mature wines is not in their mentality.'



*“Burgundy lovers should look at young Nebbiolo; the wines have a similar quality to them”*

Margaret Rand



## Decanter Award

18.5–20pts



### Col dei Venti, Tufo Blu 2008 18.75pts/20

N/A UK [www.coldeiventi.com](http://www.coldeiventi.com)

A sweet and stalky bouquet of red fruit, bitter cherry, earth, plum confit, polished oak and savoury notes. Cool fruited, with fine, fresh acidity and massive concentration, it is both delicate and classy. Very delicious and drinkable. **Drink:** 2013–2017. **Alcohol:** 14%



## Highly recommended

16.5–18.49pts



### Bruno Giacosa, Santo Stefano Albesani di Neive 2008 17.5

£93–£145 Armit, Fine & Rare, Harvey Nichols, Justerini & Brooks, WoodWinters

Pretty blueberry, black cherry, jam and liquorice on the nose. Slightly earthy palate with a good structure of natural acidity and tannins at the end. It has a delicate tar and liquorice finish. **Elegant. Drink:** 2012–2017. **Alc:** 14%



### Ugo Lequio, Gallina 2008 17.5

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

Cranberry, leather, raisined cherry, new oak spice and cinnamon aromas. Very soft and accessible with quite a bit of oak influence that will end up as complexity rather than drying out. Powerful, classy, sleek and precise with a long length. **Drink:** 2013–2018. **Alc:** 14%



### Piero Busso, San Stunet, 2008 17.38

POA Marc Fine Wines

Elegant and perfumed toast, cherry, tar, rose and oregano notes. Delightful pronounced and vibrant dried red cherry fruit and mouth-coating tannins. Young, elegant and classy, with a great future. **Drink:** From 2014. **Alc:** 14.5%

**ENTRY CRITERIA:** producers were invited to submit either or both of their Barbaresco normale 2008 and Barbaresco riserva 2006, both of which are the latest-released vintages.



# Decanter PANEL TASTING



## Highly recommended (continued) 16.5–18.49pts



### Albino Rocca, Brich Ronchi, Riserva 2006 17.25

£35 L'Assemblage, Theatre of Wine

Lush, heady aromas of tar, spice, flowers, toffee, smoky oak and burnt caramel. Rich, suave and very concentrated with huge but ripe tannins. Old fashioned but magnificent and ethereal.

**Drink:** From 2015. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Castello di Neive, Santo Stefano, Riserva 2006 17.25

£50.10 Fortyfive 10

Tar, dried fruit, crushed red berry, rosehip, cherry liqueur, sweet vanilla, wood spice and fresh orange peel on the nose. Grippy, with a vivid perfume, it is very classy with super terroir and style about it. **Drink:** 2013–2022. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Pasquale Pelissero, Bricco San Giuliano 2008 17.19

N/A UK [www.pasqualepelissero.com](http://www.pasqualepelissero.com)

Intensely fruity aromas of vanilla, raspberry, blackberry, dried red cherry and coffee. Firm tannins and good acidity provide a powerful structure, showing off lovely fruit definition and some gamey notes. Good classic style with warmth and class. **Drink:** 2013–2020. **Alc:** 14%



### Marchesi di Barolo, Riserva 2006 17.17

£24.50 Try Wines

Ethereal and sweet aromas of boiled plum, flowers, tar, smoke, cherry, undergrowth and mushrooms. Needs food as it has hefty, ripe tannins and a good weight of fruit. Assertive and youthful with integrated oak. Old fashioned but imposing. **Drink:** From 2014. **Alc:** 13.5%



### Sottimano, Pajoré 2008 17.17

£41.50 Lea & Sandeman

Sweet ripe cherry, cranberry, herb and berry notes on the nose. Powerful and tannic with a great body and a lot of liquorice and red cherry fruit. Good acidity with tannins that need time to soften. Balanced and long. **Drink:** From 2014. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Marchesi di Barolo, 2008 17.13

£19.85 Try Wines

Warm, red fruit, good oak, oregano and thyme bouquet. The palate shows a sumptuous, dried cherry fruit core with layers of tannin and good, sharp acidity. Very good structure and use of oak. Fine vineyard character. **Drink:** 2012–2018. **Alc:** 14%



### Bruno Rocca, Coparossa 2008 17.06

£60 Fine & Rare, Liberty Wines, WoodWinters

Aromas of brooding fruit overlaid by oak, black pepper, smoke, mint and cloves. Rich and structured with good appeal. Oak notes dominate but it has the stuffing for mid-term ageing. Very easy to drink. Needs time.

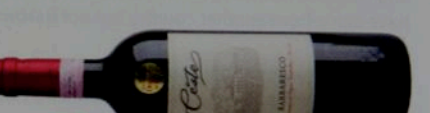
**Drink:** 2012–2018. **Alc:** 14%



### Bruno Rocca, Rabajà, 2008 17

£60–£80 Fine & Rare, Liberty Wines, Swig

Sweet fleshy aromas of red apple, spice, complex oak, rose, tar, herb and liquorice. A hugely energetic wine with lots of power coiled up inside. Precise, elegant and very, very good. It has super-chewy, gripping tannins and a long, red fruit finish. **Drink:** 2012–2018. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Ceste, 2008 17

POA Philglass & Swiggot

Flowers, dried red cherry, vanilla, blackberry and strawberry aromas. Fantastic, lively, chunky fruit with grippy, fine-grained tannic framing. Very good and easy-going with a long length. Fun to drink. **Drink:** 2012–2017. **Alc:** 14%



### Giovanni Negro, Cascinotta 2008 17

£26 Enotria

Sweet, stylish aroma of raspberry, elegant oak, vanilla and plum. Modern style which is rich, suave, juicy and concentrated with luminous, fine-grained tannins. Spicy and perky, it has some complexity. Sweet, tannic and young.

**Drink:** From 2013. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Produttori del Barbaresco 2008 17

£23.65–£29 Astrum, WoodWinters

Intense violet, dried cherry, medicinal notes and herb liqueur on the nose. Good balance of fruit and tannins with much more flavour and character than expected. Dried red fruit, flowers and spice notes all intertwine in the mouth. Good, classic wine. **Drink:** 2012–2017. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Sottimano, Cottá 2008 17

£41.50 Lea & Sandeman

Very ripe nose of raspberry, dried cranberry, herb, tar, roses and violets. Robust and almost earthy on the palate. Tannins are quite high but integrated and fine-grained. A bit austere but there's freshness and lift too. **Drink:** From 2015. **Alc:** 14.5%



# Barbaresco 2008 and riserva 2006



## Highly recommended (continued) 16.5-18.49pts



**Albino Rocca, Ovello Vigna Loreto, 2008** 16.88

N/A UK [www.roccealbino.com](http://www.roccealbino.com)

Dark, brooding black cherry, graphite, tar, minerals, spice and autumnal fruit on the nose. Good ripeness and oak well blended in with sweet and stalky mineral tannins. Plush and full in the mouth. Excellent balance. **Drink:** 2013-2018. **Alc:** 14.5%



**Gigi Bianco, Ovello 2008** 16.88

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

Fine, soft nose of red fruit, oak, red apple, wood spice and tar. Vibrant, rich, plush and sweet with good extraction and sweet tannins. A very appealing wine with dense, creamy liquorice fruit and an almost silky texture. Long and balanced. **Drink:** 2012-2019. **Alc:** 15%



**La Contea, San Cristoforo, Riserva 2006** 16.88

£29 (2005) Laithwaites, Sunday Times Wine Club  
Chocolate, red baking apples, waxy incense, spice and red berry fruit bouquet. Robust, warm and rich palate with good zesty, juicy acidity and fine ageing. A very good wine. Complex and powerful. **Drink:** 2013-2020. **Alc:** 15%



**Socré 2008** 16.88

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

Aromas of iron, sweet fruit, aniseed and dried red cherry. An interesting palate with drying tannins and typical Nebbiolo fruit character. It has natural sweetness plus some toasty oak. Good now but has a great future. Has finesse. **Drink:** 2012-2017. **Alc:** 14%



**Albino Rocca, Duemilaotto 2008** 16.83

£28.50 Theatre of Wine

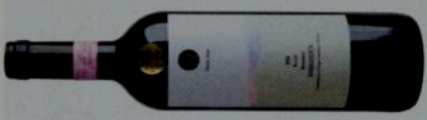
Smoke, tar, cherry, toast and rosemary bouquet. Quite complex palate: structured with sweet yet gripping tannins and acidity on the finish. Rich, juicy and concentrated, with jammy blackberry fruit combining with flowers and herbs. **Drink:** From 2013. **Alc:** 14.5%



**Carlo Giacosa, Montefico 2008** 16.83

POA William Baber

Delicate cherry, dried cranberry, thyme, berry, plum and floral perfume. Elegant, with a good structure. Beautiful dried cranberry and cherry fruit surrounded by fine grained tannins. Classy. **Drink:** From 2014. **Alc:** 14.5%



**Abrigo Orlando, Vigna Rongalio Meruzzano 2008** 16.75

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

Modern aromas of fruit cake, wild roses, caramelised cherry, black plum, leather and vanilla oak spice. It shows good definition and grip thanks to muscular tannins. The fruit is dense and opulent with good complexity. **Drink:** 2012-2019. **Alc:** 14%



**Bera 2008** 16.75

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

Balsamic notes, chocolate, black cherry, berry fruit, tobacco, thyme and tar bouquet. Rustic, broad tannins framing sweet mid-palate fruit, with oak softening the acidity. Broad flavoured with good depth. Not typical but well balanced. **Drink:** 2012-2017. **Alc:** N/A



**Ca' Rome' di Giuseppe Marengo, Rio Sordo, Riserva 2006** 16.75

N/A UK [www.carome.com](http://www.carome.com)

Cooked dark cherry and red apple fruit, cinnamon spice and melted tarmac bouquet. Exotic and very fine fruit mixes with a suave texture and grippy, crunchy tannins. Great balance. You can see the class of the vineyard behind this. **Drink:** 2014-2021. **Alc:** 14%



**Dante Rivetti, Bricco, Riserva 2006** 16.67

N/A UK [www.danterivetti.com](http://www.danterivetti.com)

Ripe rose petal, raspberry, tea, raisin, caramel and mushroom aromas. Intense, warm fruit combines with balanced tannins and a long length. It has weight, spice and some complexity. **Drink:** From 2014. **Alc:** 14%



**Negro Giuseppe, Pian Cavallo 2008** 16.67

N/A UK [www.negrogiuseppe.com](http://www.negrogiuseppe.com)

Burly red fruit, floral charm, vanilla and coffee bouquet. Rich, juicy, concentrated palate which is solid and powerful. Good tannins and acidic bite support the sweet mint and plum fruit. **Drink:** From 2014. **Alc:** 14.5%



**Rizzi 2008** 16.67

POA Vinexus

Aromas of spice, leather, tar, dried black cherry, raspberry, rosemary and sage. A classy wine with good integration of oak. Nice drinkability. Mint, orange and black cherry fruit melds with fine-grained tannins and fresh acidity. **Drink:** From 2012. **Alc:** 14%



# Barbaresco 2008 and riserva 2006



## Highly recommended (continued) 16.5-18.49pts



### Castello di Neive, Santo Stefano 2008 16.63

£37.85 Fortyfive 10

Attractive, sweet rosehip fruit, leather, spice, cherry and dried orange peel bouquet. Pronounced sweet, dried fruit melds with ripe tannins. A tactile palate; classical and restrained with fine concentration and intense acidity. Just delicious. **Drink:** 2013-2017. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Pietro Rinaldi, San Cristoforo 2008 16.63

£18.50 Puro Food

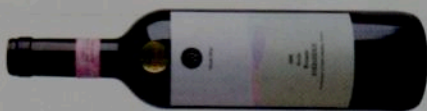
Wood spice, cherry, dried orange peel and earthy bouquet. Broad and robust with good extraction. A bit of a blockbuster with a super balance, delicacy and concentration. It has very fine tannins and a multi-layered finish. A wine to keep. Complex. **Drink:** 2013-2019. **Alc:** 14%



### Villadoria 2008 16.63

£18.39 Alfie Fiandaca

Old fashioned aromas of balsamic notes, crushed berry, wild rose, wood spice and burnt orange. Super sweet plush fruit, sweet, rustic tannins and a smooth texture. Has a precise focus and a lot of finesse. This one's a keeper. **Drink:** 2013-2017. **Alc:** 14%



### Abrigo Orlando, Rocche Meruzzano 2008 16.58

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

Lush aromas of smoke, raspberry and cranberry. Tannic and structured but it has good drinkability. A well-made wine with elegant, dried red cherry and cranberry fruit. Tannins need a little time. Complex and well balanced. **Drink:** From 2013. **Alc:** 14%

*“A lot of the  
barrique-aged  
wines were very  
stylish with  
the oak very  
well-integrated”*

Stephen Brook



### Bruno Giacosa, Falletto, Asili 2008 16.56

£80-£107 Armit, Corney & Barrow, Fine & Rare, Justerini & Brooks, WoodWinters

Savoury aromas as well as mint, berry, cherry fruit and vanilla. Beautiful purity on the palate with a good structure, integrated acidity and good, rustic tannins. Fine vineyard character. Will develop well. **Drink:** 2012-2016. **Alc:** 14%



### Cascina Morassino, Morassino 2008 16.5

£24.95 Vinum, Valvona & Crolla

Bright, lifted aromas of red berry, boxwood and spice. Sleek and fresh entry with juicy, fine acidity and mineral tannins. Really delicious, fine and elegant with wonderful equilibrium and complexity. **Drink:** 2012-2017. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Castello di Verduno, Rabajà, Riserva 2006 16.5

£32.17 (2005) Lay & Wheeler

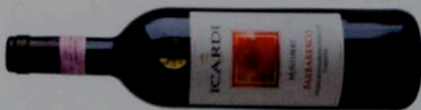
Dark, brooding blend of tar, oak spice, caramelised cherry, rose and red baking apples. Suave, soft, accessible style with complex, ripe tannins. Super classy and sexy with very good origin. **Drink:** 2013-2019. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Fratelli Grasso, Vallegrande 2008 16.5

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

Open-knit aromas of mint, tar and spice. A compact palate with good concentration, earthy vineyard expression and tannins that blend in rather than dominate. Great structure. Needs time. Classic. **Drink:** 2012-2018. **Alc:** 14.5%



### Icardi, Montubert 2008 16.5

£21.95 Profumo di Vino

Fresh crunchy red fruit, oak, herb, dried cranberry and rose bouquet. Rich, suave and juicy with dried cherry and floral notes. A broad and fleshy wine that doesn't lack elegance. Has length and balance. **Drink:** From 2013. **Alc:** 14%



### Rizzi, Pajorè 2008 16.5

POA Vinexus

Bright raspberry, black cherry, blackcurrant leaf and blackberry aromas. Sweet, ripe and juicy dried and fresh black cherry fruit, blackcurrant leaf and spicy notes. Layered, long and interesting. **Drink:** From 2012. **Alc:** 14%



### Sottimano, Fausoni 2008 16.5

£41.50 Lea & Sandeman

Compact and still tight nose with nice, lifted ripe red fruit, baking apples and spice. It has real energy - a vivid, serious wine with mineral, powdery tannins and a dry, chewy finish. Lovely extract and density. **Drink:** 2013-2019. **Alc:** 14.5%



# Decanter PANEL TASTING

## 3-STAR WINES Recommended 14.5-16.49pts

WINE	SCORE	TASTING NOTE	ALC	DRINK	PRICE	STOCKISTS
Ca' del Baio, Asili 2008	16.44	Fragrant, embryonic nose of dried cranberry. Sumptuous cherry and rose petal notes on the palate. A real charmer with lots of character and gripping tannin.	14%	2012-2017	£36	Eurowines
Rizzi, Nervo Fondetta 2008	16.44	Sweet, lifted aromas of cranberry, red apple and minerals. Smooth and deep, all in balance with natural sweetness from its red fruit. A classic and restrained style.	14%	2012-2018	POA	Vinexus
La Contea, Staderi, Riserva 2006	16.42	Earth, tar, roses, mushroom, toast, raspberry, mint and caramel nose. Rich, full, intense and concentrated, with huge tannins. Needs time to soften.	15%	From 2014	N/A UK	www.la-contea.it
Bava, Violoncello 2008	16.38	Cassis, wood spice, blackberry, herb and tar aromas. Fuller and riper palate than expected with smooth texture, fresh acidity, chewy tannins and attractive fruit.	13.5%	From 2012	N/A UK	www.bava.it
Cantina del Glicine, Currà 2008	16.38	Intense aromas of blackberry, cranberry, rose and fruit cake. Real Nebbiolo character with oak, acidity and tannins balancing. Long, floral, cranberry flavours.	14%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.cantinadelglicine.it
Cantina Tomaso Gianolio 2008	16.38	Mint, violet, smoke, black cherry and sweet berry nose. Very young and brooding with real Nebbiolo fruit and good acidity. Good structure. Elegant.	13.5%	2012-2018	N/A UK	+39 017 261 239
Ceretto, Bernardot 2008	16.38	Creamy molasses, leather, spice and oaky nose. Barrel use shows with added tannin but it has a vigour and natural fruit to rise above it. A crowd pleaser.	14.5%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.ceretto.com
Dezzani, Piemonte 2008	16.38	Pumpkin, vanilla, plum, mocha and vegetal aromas. Rich style with sweet tannins. It has good clarity, good length and depth. Robust; will age well.	13.5%	2012-2017	£16-£18	Adams Fine Wines, AP Harvey, Oxford Wine Co, That Wine Place
F.lli Cigliuti, Vigna Erte, Bricco di Nieve 2008	16.38	Aromas of clove, rose, herb, dried fruit, pepper and red berry fruit. Seems like a classic Barbaresco with a soft, almost rich palate. Elegant, with layers of fruit.	14.5%	2012-2017	£38	Fields, Morris & Verdin
Lorenzo Alutto 2008	16.38	Impressive nose of dried cherry, tea, iron, cranberry and floral perfume. Lovely sweet dried red fruit is surrounded by persistent, fine-grained tannins.	14%	2013-2019	N/A UK	+39 0173 635 016
Lorenzo Alutto, Rabajà 2008	16.38	Sweet berry, leather, game and savoury nose. Rich, structured, sweet palate with gripping, grainy tannins. Very slow and backward now but shows promise.	14%	2012-2017	N/A UK	+39 0173 635 016
Molino, Teorema 2008	16.38	Earth, mint, tar, leather, clove, fruitcake and spice nose. Sweet, concentrated fruit with quite a bit of oak but it adds complexity. Enormous richness on the finish.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.molinovini.com
Punnet, Riserva 2006	16.33	Closed nose with light, tarry red fruit, plums, herbs and dried rose notes. Light for a riserva but it has huge tannins which cut the finish short. A bit young still.	14%	From 2014	£28.75 (2004)	Waterloo Wine
Battaglio 2008	16.25	Spicy, sweet aroma of earth, briar fruit, mint, minerals, raspberry, rose and herbs. The palate shows lots of depth and flavour with acidity and tannins to hold it.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.battaglio.com
Ca' del Baio, Valgrande 2008	16.25	Pronounced nose of flowers, dried cherry, aniseed and mint. Fruit concentration buffers muscular tannins and low acidity. Well balanced with a good length.	14%	2012-2017	£27	Eurowines
Piero Busso, Mondino 2008	16.25	Closed and compact with sweet fruit, wood spice, forest floor, cedar and graphite aromas. A classic, traditional style with good acidity and extraction. Restrained.	14.5%	2013-2017	£25-£27 (2006)	Lay & Wheeler, Marc Fine Wines
Tenuta Carretta, Cascina Bordino 2008	16.25	Lush cherry, light toast, coffee, vanilla, spice and lots of oak on the nose. Supple, juicy and ripe with dried black cherry fruit and very drying tannins.	13.5%	From 2012	£31.50	Vinissimo
Negro Giuseppe, Gallina 2008	16.17	Aromas of ripe cherry, animal and farmyard notes. Palate shows dried cherry and floral flavours, firm, integrated tannins and sufficient acidity to give it persistence.	14.5%	From 2013	N/A UK	www.negrogiuseppe.com
Abrigo Orlando, Montersino 2008	16.13	Closed aromas of berry, cinnamon spice, baking apple and savoury notes. Well made with lovely acidity, good richness and some depth. Very slow on the finish.	14%	2013-2018	N/A UK	www.orlandoabrigio.it
Rivetti Massimo, Froi 2008	16.13	Closed nose. Mocha and bitter chocolate notes dominate the palate. A long length with a very sweet, almost jammy finish. Already showing maturity.	14%	2012-2015	£19.50	Bottle Apostle, The Salisbury
Ceretto, Bricco Asili 2008	16	Bay leaf, black cherry, oak, mint, liquorice and vanilla nose. Lively oak dominates but it has ripe tannins and the promise of cherry fruit, herb and tar. Shows charm.	14.5%	From 2014	N/A UK	www.ceretto.com
Fontanabianca, Bordini 2008	16	Spice, leather, thyme, tar, oak, raspberry, violet and rose perfume. Complex and structured with good herbal notes and tannins dominating. Quite mature.	14%	From 2013	N/A UK	+39 0173 67 195
Nada, Casot, Riserva 2006	16	Wood, mint, herb, pencil lead and raspberry bouquet. Supple, round and quite concentrated with ripe, dry tannins and a good whack of alcohol.	14%	From 2014	£21	Big Red Wine Co
Poderi Colla, Roncaglio 2008	16	Blackberry, sea breeze, herb liqueur and ripe fruit aromas. It has purity and depth with oak present but not dominating. Classic and restrained with a fine balance.	14%	2012-2016	£30	Field & Fawcett, Highbury Vintners, Swig, WoodWinters
San Silvestro, Magno 2008	16	Earth, pronounced herb liqueur, red fruit, liquorice, mint and dried cherry nose. Elegant with fine-grained tannins, good sweetness and a firm, dry finish.	14%	2012-2016	£15	Hallgarten
Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy, Camp Gros 2006	16	Violet, rose, confected red fruit and thyme perfume. Rich and suave with sweet plum and red fruit flavours, supple tannins and lots of oak. Drinking well.	N/A	From 2012	£62-£70	D Byrne & Co, Swig, Whole Foods Market, WoodWinters
Castello di Verduno, Faset 2008	15.94	Forest berries and dried cherry aroma. Good drinkability. Shows more ripeness than most with some big tannins and quite a bit of oak but this will smooth out.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.castellodiverduno.com
Giuseppe Cortese, Rabajà 2008	15.92	Tar, leather, raspberry, oak and herb bouquet. Good acidity, oak and refreshing tannins frame pretty dried cherry fruit and floral notes. Easy going and supple.	14%	From 2013	£26 (2006)	Decorum Vintners
Terra da Vito, La Casa in Collina 2008	15.88	Aromas of dried red cherry, rose petal, herb, wood and spice. Good fruit on the palate with nice freshness and good tannins. Sweet, ripe and accessible. Youthful.	13.5%	2012-2016	£17	Vinum
Bersano, Mantico 2008	15.83	Ripe aroma of tar, violets, roses, oregano and dried cherry. Delicate fruit, high acidity and integrated tannins. Atypical and relatively recessive style. Elegant.	14%	From 2012	£24	Alivini
Carlo Giacosa, Narin 2008	15.83	Subdued, stewed black cherry, dark chocolate, tobacco, violet and tar bouquet. A tannic style with good integration of oak, fresh acidity and juicy dried cherry fruit.	14.5%	From 2012	POA	William Baber
Gigi Bianco, Pora 2008	15.83	Shy nose of leaf, smoke, dried cherry, leather, herb, berry and violets. Velvety palate with oaky notes coming through. Tannins are quite drying. Elegant.	15%	From 2013	N/A UK	www.gigibianco.it
Piero Busso, Borgese 2008	15.75	Sweet spice, rosehip, cranberry, dried cherry and oaky nose. Smooth, dense and modern with nice floral notes, sweet tannins and a taut texture. Very pretty wine.	14.5%	2012-2016	£24.50 (2007)	Lay & Wheeler, Majestic
Oddero, Gallina 2008	15.69	Sweet dried fruit, leather and tobacco aromas. Warm and elegant with structure and drinkability yet is simple because of the firm tannins dominating the palate.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.oddero.it
Cascina delle Rose, Tre Stelle 2008	15.63	Closed nose of sweet berry fruit, clove, leather and black pepper. Huge tannins and moody dried black cherry fruit lurking behind. Quite low in acidity.	14.5%	2012-2016	£35	Berry Bros & Rudd



# Barbaresco 2008 and Riserva 2006

## 3-STAR WINES Recommended (continued)

14.5-16.49pts

WINE	SCORE	TASTING NOTE	ALC	DRINK	PRICE	STOCKISTS
Cantina del Nebbiolo 2008	15.56	Meat, earth, tar, dense berry fruit and savoury aromas. A rustic, young, tannic style with good extract, black pepper, spice and tarry notes. More to come.	14%	2013-2019	N/A UK	www.cantinadelnebbiolo.com
Cascina delle Rose, Rio Sordo 2008	15.5	Jammy nose of sweet plum, liquorice, aniseed, dried cranberry and raisins. Accessible but has some astringent tannins. It has a nice, long, rich finish.	14.5%	2012-2015	£28.50	Berry Bros & Rudd
Cascina Morassino, Ovello 2008	15.5	Graphite, wood spice, gun smoke, new oak, dried and autumnal fruit aroma. Broad style with grippy tannins and rich, spicy fruit. More Barolo than Barbaresco.	14.5%	2012-2016	£27	Vinum, Harrods
Casetta, Riserva 2006	15.5	Sweet aromas of rose, meat, dates and intense fruit. Firm, tannic, dense and brooding palate - hard to find the fruit. Tannins take over and shorten the finish.	13.5%	From 2012	N/A UK	www.fili-casetta.it
Rivetto, Cé Vanin 2008	15.5	Fruit cake, herb liqueur, smoke and woody bouquet. Powerful tannins need time to soften and reveal the cherry and floral notes behind. Should please the masses.	14.5%	2013-2016	N/A UK	www.rivetto.it
Rivetti Massimo, Serraboella, Riserva 2006	15.44	Earth, sweet, pumpernickel and coconut aroma. Intense and brooding with broad fruit which is slightly oxidative. The acidity is good. An attractive, easy wine.	14%	2012-2017	£29	New Generation Wines
Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy, Gaiun 2006	15.38	Iron, dried fruit, liquorice, tar, red cherry and savoury aroma. Good fruit palate with oak blended in. Slightly oxidative and has rustic tannins. Starting to dry out.	N/A	2012-2015	£62-£70	D Byrne & Co, Handford, Swig, WoodWinters
Villadoria, Riserva 2006	15.38	Red berry, black fruit and mahogany spice aroma. Very ripe confit fruit palate with cool, sleek acidity and a wonderful tactile feel. Old-fashioned style.	13.5%	2012-2019	£22.99	Alfie Fiandaca
Albino Rocca, Ronchi 2008	15.33	Smoke, vanilla, herb, cherry, oak and floral bouquet. Rich, juicy and full-bodied, it has weight and substance. Tannins are drying. Accessible but not too forward.	14.5%	From 2013	N/A UK	www.roccealbino.com
Dante Rivetti, Bric' Micca 2008	15.13	Sweet bouquet of molasses, berry, oak, raisin and cranberry. Full, fleshy palate with leathery notes, freshened by good acidity. Exotic, oxidative style.	14%	2012-2014	N/A UK	www.danterivetti.com
Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy, Martinenga 2008	15.06	Herb, spice, vanilla, cough syrup and coffee nose. Oak notes dominate the palate. Mature - fruit is drying out. Very low acidity and quite a bit of tannin.	14.5%	2012-2014	£45-£46	D Byrne & Co, Handford, Swig, WoodWinters
Punset, San Cristoforo, Campo Quadro 2008	15	Mint, tar, smoke and animal aromas. Warm, autumnal fruit with depth and also quite a bit of tannin. Very young and tightly woven. A good wine with potential.	14%	2012-2016	N/A UK	www.punset.com
Ca' Rome' di Giuseppe Marengo, Chiramanti 2008	14.88	Lifted wood spice, cherry, baked apple, incense and sweet fruit cake. Simple, with good depth and oak. Dense, broad and soft, fleshy fruit with sweet tannins.	14%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.carome.com
Scarpa, Tettineve 2008	14.83	Fresh, charming nose of raspberry, herb and earth. Reasonably concentrated, it has a slightly earthy quality to the tannins. A bit rustic and already feels mature.	14%	From 2013	N/A UK	www.scarpavini.it
Nada, Casot 2008	14.5	Liquorice, tar, farmyard, plum and sweet berry fruit bouquet. Moroccan leather on the palate to start. It shows some maturity and also some leanness.	14%	2012-2015	£18 (2007)	Big Red Wine Co

### 2-STAR WINES Fair 12.5-14.49

■ Casetta, 2008 (14.17) ■ Fontanabianca, Serraboella 2008 (14.17) ■ Punset 2008 (14.13) ■ Ada Nada,

Valeirano 2008 (13.5) ■ Tenuta Carretta, Garassino 2008 (13.5) ■ Sori' Paitin 2008 (13.25) ■ Sori' Paitin, Vecchie Vigne 2006 (12.5)

For full UK stockist details, see p97

## Expert summary: Kerin O'Keefe

While the 2008s dominated this tasting and so skewed the results in their favour, it did prove even a tricky vintage can improve over time - and these will continue to do so



Kerin O'Keefe is a wine writer and the author of *Brunello di Montalcino* (2012, University of California Press)

OVERALL, THE 2008 normale Barbarescos performed as expected, receiving the only Decanter Award and 31 of the 38 four stars. That the panel recommended 91% of the 2008s (there were only 16 2006 riservas entered) shows the high standard of winemaking that now prevails here, even during initially problematic vintages like 2008. A true Nebbiolo lover's vintage, boasting good fruit, generous tannins and often nervous acidity that will tame down after a few more years of bottle ageing, it is nonetheless no surprise that there was only one Award since the wines have yet to develop complexity. It is also no surprise that Barbarescos hailing from the denomination's iconic crus, known for their quality and consistency, make up most of the highly recommendeds, including celebrated names such as Santo Stefano, Gallina, Rabajà and Rio Sordo.

Perhaps the only surprise for the '08s was that the panel gave the sole Award to a little-known winery and relative newcomer, Col dei Venti - this bested leading lights Bruno Giacosa, Bruno Rocca, Albino Rocca and Castello di Neive. Aged for 24 months in barriques, the Tufo Blu shows the tasters' overall appreciation for a more international, oaky Barbaresco, boasting very dense fruit.

The four-star and three-star wines are evenly balanced between glossy, concentrated wines aged in new and

seasoned barriques, and more classically crafted Barbarescos, albeit many made with shorter fermentation times than in previous years and aged in medium-capacity Slavonian *botti* or large French oak casks. For individual performances, it was great to see the traditionally crafted, terroir-driven Gallina from Ugo Lequio, one of Neive's most consistent producers, come joint second. And impressive indeed that Produttori del Barbaresco scored 17 points.

The results for the 16 2006s show the disappointingly uneven performance many critics are noticing from what was a highly lauded vintage, and from what is supposed to be a lofty designation. Tasters obviously felt the three-star wines in particular don't have the balance, complexity or longevity that riservas promise. Vineyard location and producer reputation, always crucial in Barbaresco, are key to finding the best riservas from this vintage.

*“That 91% of the 2008s were recommended shows the high standard of winemaking that prevails here”*