

Top 40 Barbera d'Asti

Barbera d'Asti originates from Monferrato or "Munfrà", as it is called in local dialect, a region that spans the hills of Asti and Alessandria and is the prime production area for this Piedmontese wine.

Swathes of vineyards as far as the eye can see, given their shape over the centuries by vine-dressers, offer a unique spectacle of light and colour. Farmhouses, ancient hamlets and medieval castles sprout up here and there. Woods and hazel groves make up the background. This is a wine-producing area to visit and discover, so full of traditions, history and foodie wonders, that it was given its own UNESCO World Heritage Site recognition in 2014, together with the nearby Langhe and Roero zones.

Having taken our fill of so much beauty, we come to the soul of these lands: Barbera d'Asti. The lady in red, as they call it around here, finds its best expression among these soft Asti hills because nature selected it a long time ago and the terrains that have the best exposure have been identified for its cultivation.

Existence of Barbera in Asti has been documented since the late sixteenth century, though the vine has probably been cultivated here since Carolingian times. The late Luigi Veronelli, one of Italy's most famous food and wine experts, defined Barbera as a female wine and Giosué Carducci, one of Italy's most famous poets, described its power and generosity: "Drinking it is like being alone at sea, battling a storm."

Courageous and sometimes a little too exuberant, Barbera also knows how to be convivial and empathetic. Easy to drink, yet with a strongly defined character, it's a food friendly wine that delights the palate at every sip and instils a desire to continue eating and drinking.

The typical freshness of Barbera d'Asti makes it pleasant to drink even between meals, perhaps at a slightly cooler

Barbera - the name probably derives from the Latin "barbarus", meaning both foreigner and wild, untamed, impetuous. Some context:

- **DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita)** - the highest Italian denomination - since 2008
- Grown on 5,425 hectares in 167 municipalities
- Over 21,000 bottles produced per year and 50% exported.

temperature than normal - certainly in the summer when it's a great treat if drunk cellar-cool. In any case, its versatility and approachability make it easy to drink, and makes the contents of a bottle disappear in double quick time.

Barbera wine

Grapes are naturally high in sugar, which means significant alcohol levels are possible; there's a good total acidity (7-12 g/L), which gives the wine freshness and a lively boost; there are plentiful polyphenols and anthocyanins and an average quantity of tannins. Barbera therefore can take lengthy fermentation without ever becoming astringent or tannic and can also remain for long periods in the barrel without oxidizing. The Superiore version is aged for a minimum of 14 months, of which at least six must be in barrel (of any size). Two Barbera d'Asti Superiore sub-zones, Tinella and Colli Astiani, require two years' ageing with at least six months in wood.

Barbera vines like warm and sunny exposures and the typical soils of the Asti and Alessandria countryside, which are chalky and rich in silt, clay and calcium carbonate. The cultivation area coincides with the hilly district known as the Tertiary Piedmont Basin that formed as the seabed rose (fossilized shells are a common find in the vineyards).

THE TASTING

The following wines were tasted by journalist **Alessandra Piubello**, a regular judge for Decanter World Wine Awards, on location in Asti, in November 2020.

BARBERA D'ASTI DOCG 2019

Roberto Ferraris Barbera d'Asti DOCG Nobbio 2019 92

£12 www.robtoferraris.com

Roberto Ferraris passionately continues his family's century-old dedication to Barbera. This fantastic Barbera, a paeon to tradition, comes from the eponymous Nobbio vineyard with its 80-year-old vines. Crunchy fruit, juiciness and vibrant acidity make it deliciously drinkable. **Alc** 15.5%

Carussin, Barbera d'Asti DOCG Asinoini 2019 92

£11.70 **Passione Vino; Berry & Bros.**

www.carussin.it

A family firm since 1927. In the 1990s, Bruna Ferro introduced organic, then biodynamic, methods. Passionate about Barbera, she highlights its versatility. 'Asinoini', named after her donkeys, is emblematic of this varietal: well-focused fruit, a fresh, tasty and vibrant palate. **Alc** 12%

Cascina Castlèt, Barbera d'Asti DOCG 2019 92

£12 www.cascinacastlet.com

The Borio family has lived in the Costigliole hills since the 12th century. Mariuccia began making quintessential Barberas like this one in 1970 on her 30 hectares of vineyards. Floral, crunchy, fresh-tasting and engaging; juicy with focused fruit. **Alc** 14%

Cascina Rey, Barbera d'Asti DOCG 2019 92

£11 www.viniscasinarey.com

The Monticone family has been working on this farm, with 6 hectares of vines, since 1911. They produce this slightly

spicy, extremely drinkable Barbera with crisp fruit, produced from low-yield, fifty-year-old vines on a plot of half a hectare. **Alc** 13.5%

Franco Roero, Barbera d'Asti DOCG Carbiné 2019 91

£13 www.francoeroero.com

Barbera devotee Franco Roero produces six versions of the varietal, all forthright and archetypal. Carbiné comes from a single, 45-year-old vineyard on clayey-chalk soil. Notes of sour cherry and liquorice with a structured yet dynamic body. Characterful and true to type. **Alc** 15%

Tenuta Olim Bauda, Barbera d'Asti DOCG La Villa 2019 91

£14 www.tenutaolimbauda.it

Fourth generation siblings, Dino, Diana and Giovanni turned the estate around when they joined in 1998. This is one of the first wines they produced. Intense aromas with notes of aromatic herbs; on the palate, superb balance and finesse. **Alc** 14%

Dario Ivaldi, Barbera d'Asti DOCG Piccona 2019 90

£8 www.vinivaldi.it

Twelve hectares, now managed by Andrea Ivaldi (fourth generation). Hard, chalky soil for this wine ('piccona' alludes to the 'pick'), the only 2019 Barbera to age in concrete (most go into steel). A fragrant combination of fruity pulp and vivid, sustained panache. **Alc** 14%

Domenico Serra, Barbera d'Asti DOCG La Padrona 2019 89

£6.30 www.serradomenicovini.it

Now in their seventh generation with Lorenzo, the Serra family are devotees of the Barbera which covers most of their eleven hectares. Five-decade-old vines produce this frank Barbera: violet and red fruit aromas, with enticing vibrant acidity in the mouth. **Alc** 14%

Dogliotti 1870, Barbera d'Asti DOCG 2019 89

£15 www.dogliotti1870.com

The three Dogliotti cousins continue 150 years of tradition on their 16 ha vineyards. The fruit unfolds with cherry and plum flavours over a background of rose petals. In the mouth, its lively and textured expressiveness harmonises with a thirst-quenching acidity. **Alc** 13.5%

Cascina Gilli, Barbera d'Asti DOCG Le More 2019 89

£13 www.cascinagilli.it

A winery with distinctive soils: greyish-blue marly, clayey. Hence the wines produced by Gianni Vergano (he founded it in 1983) are generally quite structured, like this Barbera with blackberry notes and a soft, enveloping texture with a long, savoury finish. **Alc** 14.5%

Franco Ivaldi, Barbera d'Asti DOCG La Guerinotta 2019 89

£8 www.francoivaldivini.com

Born into a family of winegrowers, Franco founded his own winery with his son Giorgio, an oenologist. Seven lovingly tended hectares, on chalky soil. The nose is bursting with berries and spices, with a palate of delicious, characteristic pure fruit. **Alc** 14%

Paolo Berta, Barbera d'Asti DOCG Evolution 2019 89

£8 www.viniberta.com

Paolo is a seventh-generation Berta – the family began making Barbera wine in 1842. The only 2019 Barbera to age in barriques, it is bound to unfold over time, drawing out its thick, pulpy texture. **Alc** 14%

Piero Bussi, Barbera d'Asti DOCG 2019 89

£11 www.bussipierovini.it

This cask-aged Barbera comes from a single plot of one hectare, Vigna Boidi. At nearly 400 metres above sea level, the vines are 50 years old. Balsamic and herbal notes mingle with spices. Fine, vivid, flavourful in the mouth. **Alc** 14%

Marco Bianco, Barbera d'Asti DOCG Helianthus 2019 89

£10 www.biancovini.it

From a 40-year-old 2-ha vineyard where granny planted sunflowers (hence the Greek name), Paolo and Marco Bianco produce several thousand bottles of this characterful Barbera, which is easy-drinking with a balanced progression. **Alc** 13.5%

Poggio Ridente, Barbera d'Asti DOCG Vallia 2019 88

£9.50 www.poggioridente.it

Cecilia Zucca and her oenologist husband Luigi Mezzani, have been tending their 10 ha of vines since 1997, planted on a hilltop at an altitude of around 450 metres, and organically managed. Clear red fruit notes and good tension, with remarkable length. **Alc** 14% ➤



BARBERA D'ASTI SUPERIORE DOCG 2016

**Marchesi Alfieri, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Alfiera 2016** 95
£30 **Decorum Vintners**. www.marchesialfieri.it

The three San Martino di San Germano sisters have managed their historic, medieval castle winery for 37 years. The Alfiera vineyard, planted in 1937, conveys their love of Barbera – exemplified by this thrilling masterpiece with the class of a great wine. **Alc** 14.5%

**Antica Casa Vinicola Scarpa, Barbera
d'Asti Superiore DOCG La Bogliona
2016** 94

£65 **Carson & Carnevale**. www.scarpawine.com
Founded in 1854, a star of the Nizza terroir (well-suited to Barbera). This legendary label comes from La Bogliona vineyard, 400 metres high. Clear fruit introduces rose and subtle spices. Energetic, authentic personality with vibrant tension making it ageworthy. **Alc** 14.5%

**Villa Giada, Barbera d'Asti Superiore
DOCG Quercia 2016** 93

£17.85 **Bat and Bottle**. www.villagiada.wine
After two centuries of winegrowing, the estate gained in prestige when Andrea Faccio took over in 1991. Notes of liquorice, plum and dried rose. On the palate, a dynamic, pulpy structure with incisive sapidity, and a delicately orchestrated finish. **Alc** 14.5%

**Tenuta Montemagno, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Mysterium 2016** 93
£30 **www.tenutamontemagno.it**

About fifteen years ago the Barea siblings bought an old 15th-century farmhouse along with its vineyards. The oldest vineyard on the estate (average age, 85) produces this Barbera: astoundingly harmonious, and supported by a clear, vital energy. **Alc** 14.5%

**Tenuta Santa Caterina, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Setecàpita 2016** 93
£22 **TryWines Experties**.

www.tenuta-santa-caterina.it
This 18th-century estate was revived in the noughties by Guido Carlo Alleva, who took great care in replanting the vineyards, following careful zoning. An intense Barbera, complex on the nose, and remarkably structured in the mouth, with its characteristic freshness boosting drinkability. **Alc** 14.5%



**Franco Mondo, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Il Salice 2016** 92

£15 **www.francomondo.net**
Mondo, a family of artisan winemakers, is led by Valerio Mondo, with his father Franco and daughter Beatrice. This wine comes from the 36 year-old 'Vigna del Salice' and is aged in concrete and wood. A quintessential Barbera, with fine, delightful balance. **Alc** 14.5%

**La Gironda, Barbera d'Asti Superiore
DOCG La Gena 2016 Luca Wine** 92

£22.60 **www.lagironda.com**
This 50-year-old vineyard that is the source of the Galandrino family's first ever Barbera is stunningly situated on Bricco di Nizza. The estate's ethos is to respect the land and the grape, which expresses itself with complexity, style and elegance. **Alc** 15%

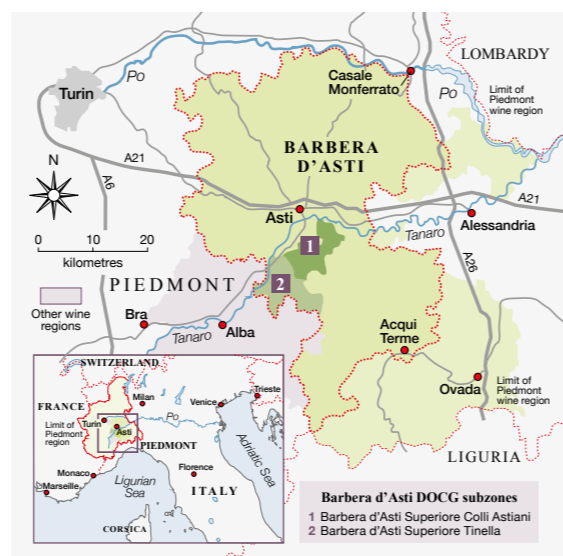
**Dacapo, Barbera d'Asti Superiore
DOCG Valrionda 2016** 92

£24.50 **Vinothentic**. www.dacapo.it
A small 8-ha winery, in the Agliano area that's ideal for Barbera. The 2ha used for this are part of forty-year-old vineyards with a very low yield. Notes of undergrowth and tobacco; stunningly drinkable, balanced and pulpy on the palate. **Alc** 14.5%

**Dario Cocito, Barbera d'Asti Superiore
DOCG Sole d'Estate 2016** 92

£12 **www.cocitodario.it**
This family estate founded in 1868 is situated on the hill of Crena, considered a cru. The 'Sole d'Estate' vineyard, planted more than 40 years ago, produces this Barbera with intense varietal notes and a juicy, structured, forthright palate. **Alc** 15%

**Agostino Pavia & Figli, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG La Marescialla 2016** 92



£30 **Thorman Hunt**. www.agostinopavia.it
Mauro and Giuseppe inherited their family's close bond with Barbera, and produce 4 versions. This Barbera, from one of their oldest vineyards, on clayey soil, comes with balsamic notes, charismatic mettle, smooth freshness and a spicy finish. **Alc** 15%

**Ca' Mariuccia, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG La Nina 2016** 92

£16.35 **www.camariuccia.it**
Andrea Pirollo founded this young farmstead, focusing on eco-sustainability, agricultural and social ethics. Thirty-year-old vineyards produce a Barbera bursting with fruit flanked by dried flower notes. A fine balance of structure and acidity, with a pleasantly long, sapid finish. **Alc** 15.5%

**Gianni Doglia, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Genio 2016** 92

£20 **Vinarius London**. www.giannidoglia.it
A small family winery in its third generation. Gianni Doglia's five Barberas

embody the terroir, like this one named after his grandfather Genio: iris and rose, then undergrowth and blackberry, generous yet graceful in character, balsamic with a lingering finish. **Alc** 15%

**Cascina Garitina, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Caranti 2016** 92

£22 **www.cascinagaritina.it**
Garitina was the nickname of Gianluca Morino's great-grandmother. Gianluca is so devoted to Barbera that he has preserved vineyards planted in 1947 and 1958. Caranti shows a rich, complex nose, leading to a full yet taut palate with soft tannins. **Alc** 16%

**Fabrizia Caldera, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Balmè 2016** 92

£20 **www.vinicaldera.it**
Fabrizia Caldera continues a century-old tradition, helped by her husband Roberto and son Fabio. This Barbera comes from a vineyard in Agliano (average age, 50). With liquorice and undergrowth notes, it has a fine, balanced texture and a lasting finish. **Alc** 14.5%

**Pico Maccario, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Epico 2016** 92

£25 **Mondial Wine**. www.picomaccario.it
A modern, international style for this Barbera from brothers Pico and Vitaliano Maccario. The winery was founded in 1997, focusing specifically on this varietal. Black fruit, quinine and spice lead into a soft, rich, velvety palate. **Alc** 15%

**Poderi Giovanni Rosso, Barbera
d'Asti Superiore DOCG Gioco
dell'Oca 2016** 91

£40 **www.poderirossogiovanni.it**
The Rosso family, now in its third

generation with Lionello, has a deep-rooted passion for Barbera. This one, produced from their finest vineyard (average age, 55), produced only in the best years, exhibits a varied bouquet with a textured but balanced mouthfeel. **Alc** 16%

**Alessandro Motta, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG 2016** 91

£18 **www.mottaalessandro.com**
Alessandro founded this small family-run winery as an enthusiastic young oenologist. Its fifty-year-old vineyards planted on sandstone at nearly 400 metres of altitude help create an elegant style, with the authenticity of pure fruit and an acidic backbone, for compellingly drinkable results. **Alc** 15%

**Adriano Grasso, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG 2016** 91

£27 **www.adriano-grasso.it**
A small, young winery managed by oenologist Adriano Grasso, an organic devotee (certification is coming in 2021) and Barbera lover. Sixty-year-old vines produce this Barbera: elegantly scented with bold, distinctive traits, generous length and a flavourful finish. **Alc** 15.5%

**Bersano, Barbera d'Asti Superiore
DOCG Cremosina 2016** 90

£22 **www.bersano.it**
A historic label since 1907, run by the Massimelli and Soave families' second-generation, Federica and Corrado respectively. This is one of Piedmont's largest wine producers, and Cascina Cremosina was its first estate. The vineyard produces this intense, structured, and ageworthy Barbera. **Alc** 14.5%

**Marchesi Incisa della Rocchetta,
Barbera d'Asti Superiore DOCG
Sant'Emiliano 2016** 90

£26.95 **Spiegel and Peach**,
www.marchesiincisawines.it
The Sant'Emiliano cru, with its very low-yield 50-year-old vineyard, produces the flagship wine of a noble family that has lived here since the year 1000. Chocolatey tobacco notes are the prelude to a round, full bodied, mouthfeel with soft tannins. **Alc** 15.5%

**Guasti Clemente, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Boschetto Vecchio
2016** 90

£25 **www.guasti.it**
Founded in 1946 by Clemente Guasti,

who introduced the cru concept for his Barbera; now run by his sons Andrea and Alessandro. An intense profile with hints of spice and undergrowth enveloping fruity notes. Balanced tannic texture, and soft elegance. **Alc** 14.5%

**La Montagnetta, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Piovà 2016** 90

£15 **www.lamontagnetta.com**
A small estate founded by Domenico Cappello in 1996. From thirty-year-old vines, this Barbera displays a varied bouquet: damson, blackberry, dried roses and spice. Its rich, enveloping palate is bolstered by vivid freshness, with a long, savoury, balsamic finish. **Alc** 15.5%

**Sergio Gozzelino, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Sergio 2016** 90

£28 **www.gozzelinovini.com**
A family tradition more than a century old, now carried out by Lorenzo. The Bricco Lu vineyard, in its picturesque, ideal position, produces this Barbera named after his father Sergio. An intense, complex nose segues into a broad, sapid, harmonious mouthfeel. **Alc** 14.5%

**Aleamat, Barbera d'Asti Superiore
DOCG Augusta 2016** 90

£21 **Curated Wines**. www.alemat.it
A small, young winery founded by Savio Domenici. This Barbera exhibits a complex bouquet with hints of black cherry, liquorice and juniper. Good character and structure on the palate; the acidic backbone lifts the ripe fruit, with easy-drinking, energetic results. **Alc** 15%

**Cascina Carlòt, Barbera d'Asti
Superiore DOCG Votiva 2016** 90

£9.20 **www.cascinacarlòt.it**
Claudio Mo continues his family's century-old winegrowing history and is a firm believer in biodiversity as a core value. A genuine Barbera with impressive substance, plum and cherry aromas, a taut and dynamic progression, culminating in a lingering finish. **Alc** 14.5%