

REFLECTIONS ON WINE

VIEWS ON WINES FROM ITALY, CALIFORNIA, CHILE, ARGENTINA AND OTHER GREAT REGIONS OF THE WORLD FROM A FREELANCE WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

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2006 Barolo - Initial Impressions



Serralunga Vineyards with snow-covered Alps in the background

(Photo ©Tom Hyland)

Just back from tasting more than 180 bottlings of the soon-to-be-released 2006 Barolo. Here are a few initial thoughts.

The wines from 2006 are big, make no mistake about it. If you are a relative newcomer to Barolo, this may not be the vintage for you, unless you have a lot of patience. These are wines that demand time and are in some cases, rather old-fashioned, as they are not approachable now, but rather are tightly woven and unyielding. If you prefer prettier, more forward wines, wait another year for the release of the 2007 Barolos.

The wines are also inconsistent. While I tasted some very nice wines (and a few excellent examples) from the communes of La Morra and Barolo, the wines from these zones were not that impressive. Perhaps it was warm weather that yielded wines of big structure that did it, as the wines from La Morra and Barolo tend to be more feminine than other bottlings. Whatever the reason, many of these wines are a little clumsy - though admittedly, we are dealing with very young wines.

The vintage belonged to the wines from Castiglione Falletto, Monforte d'Alba and of course, Serralunga d'Alba. I say of course, as the Serralunga Barolos are always the bottlings that need the most time, given both their tannic structure (thanks to the oldest soils in the zone) and their deep concentration. The best Barolos from 2006, such as those from Cordero di Montezemolo "Enrico VI" (Castiglione Falletto), Elio Grasso "Gavarini Chinera" and "Ginestra Casa Maté" (both Monforte d'Alba) and Cascina Cucco "Cerrati Vigna Cucco", Ettore Germano "Prapo" and Azelia "San Rocco" (all from Serralunga) have the stuffing to cellar well for 20-plus years.

Here is a brief list of my favorite 2006 Barolos, tasted last week at the Nebbiolo Prima tastings in Alba and at visits to producers before and during the days of the event:

(...)

Wines from other communes (including blends from two or more communes)

Bartolo Mascarello

Francesco Rinaldi "Brunate" (La Morra, Barolo)

Elvio Cagno "Ravera" (Novello)

Claudio Alario "Riva" (Verduno)

Burlotto "Acclivi" (Verduno)