

**BAROLO 2006: A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE UPCOMING VINTAGE**

---



**BAROLO 2006:  
A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE  
UPCOMING VINTAGE**

*By Ian D'Agata*

In my view, there is no greater Italian wine than Barolo from a good vintage. There may be instances of “first among equals”, when a great Barbaresco, Aglianico or Brunello vintage comes along, but I don’t really believe that the best of Barolo can be surpassed by any other wine from Italy. In fact, there aren’t too many other wines made anywhere else that can compete with it. That said, wine lovers everywhere ought to be happy to know that following on the heels of a very great 2005 vintage, we now have the great wines of 2006, absurdly underrated by many wine “experts”.

The following notes concern a number of 2006 Barolos tasted recently last October in Piedmont. These wines were not tasted blind, but rather in flights divided per producer, just like the article reads. The notes are meant to give you an idea of the upcoming wines that will be shortly released on the market, but my definitive notes and updated thoughts and impressions will be out in print in the may 2010 edition of my website.

Overall, the tasting confirms 2006 to be a great year, much better than 2004, with more precise, higher yet balanced acidities that nonetheless –and this may be the only caveat- considerable (enough?) flesh. When the estate has gotten the wine right, it turns out to be a pretty unique combination and typical of the better wines from better years. That said, don’t overlook the 2005s, a splendidly perfumed bunch of Barolos, and that make up, along with these 2006s, the best pair of Barolo vintages since the 1989-1990 combination.

If there is one advantage of 2006 over 2005 is that the overall quality level is more consistent, with more good wines from more producers: as the vintage was less marred by rains , there are more fleshy, chewy wines for you to pick from; but the magical nebbiolo perfume of 2005 is reason enough to like, and buy, those wines.

**AZELIA**

Lorenzo Scavino is doing strong work from the steep hillsides of San Rocco and Margheria, and this is an extremely impressive line-up of wines you shouldn’t miss out on. This is one estate where, in my view, the 2006 wines ought to turn out better than the ‘05s.

**Barolo 2006:** Medium ruby. Ripe red cherry, spicy licorice and black pepper nose, spicier and a bit more leathery than the ‘05. Much deeper really than that wine. Fresher and longer too, and finishes with a pleasant touch of camphor and suavely tannic, though with bite.

**Barolo Bracco Fiasco 2006:** Medium full red. Earthy, spicy, almost medicinal nose with redcurrant, red cherries and spicy plum aromas. Still very youthfully imploded, it finishes with a trace of heat.

**BAROLO 2006: A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE UPCOMING VINTAGE**

---

Comes across as a little austere and quite tannic, but with very good precision and cut to its smoky plum and black cherry flavours.

**Barolo Margheria 2006:** Dark red. More closed on the deep, almost brooding nose, but hints at considerable depth. Long and fresh and sweet on entry, but chalky finish, leaving the mouth coated with tannins. Nice acids and good lift; will improve with time and needs some!!!

**Barolo San Rocco 2006:** Dark red with a pale rim. Spicy, almost musky nose, raspberries that are almost liqueur-like, marzipan. This is very deep and complex, by far the most accomplished of this bunch of wines. Very suave, fresh and rich without being syrupy, with substantial but fine tannins. Nice sweetness and a broad mouth-feel; long, but with a trace of finishing heat. Still, outstanding wine.

### **PAOLO SCAVINO**

This is one estate where the '05s were absolutely fantastic, and so the quality of the 2006 wines, just as high, doesn't stick out as much from the rest of the pack. Still, Scavino has rarely been in better form.

**Barolo 2006:** Bright deep red. Perfumed nose with floral and sour red cherry aromas, plus hints of menthol. Enters sweet then turns a little dry and astringent, with more menthol along with licorice and red fruit flavours. Though it's not short, it doesn't have the persistence of the crus. Still, it's a lovely wine that is better than most entry level Barolos; needs a little time in the bottle to develop more flesh.

**Barolo Bric del Fiasc 2006:** Bright red. Perfumed red cherry and hints of balsamic, mineral and menthol even. Linear, high acid with good precision to the fruit and licorice flavours that will develop more generosity with three to five years of bottle age; this is still very much an infant. Long, pleasant with just a hint of finishing bitterness. Needs a lot more time but will be most likely an outstanding Barolo: maybe no a 95 pointer now, but may turn out to be.

**Barolo Carobric 2006:** Dark red with a rim. Menthol note and hint of herbs, but not very fruity. Linear and a touch austere with rigid tannins, finishes dry; lacks the lift and fruit of the other wines in this group. Needs food.

**Barolo Bricco Ambrogio 2006:** Dark saturated ruby-red. Dense rich nose with a black cherry liqueur quality and hints of chocolate. Enters sweet but then rigid again due to tough as nails tannins on the medium-long finish of only average complexity. A very typical wine of Roddi with a certain austere nature. Still, this is, by far, the best Bricco Ambrogio ever and a very good Barolo, that will prove considerably better with food.

**Barolo Cannubi 2006:** Medium deep ruby-red. Perfumed floral wine, with rose petals and minerals. Beautifully seamless on the palate very long and smooth still closed and full of black cherry and plum with hints of coffee and dark cocoa. Very long and lively, floral finish; completely different from the Bric del Fiasc but just as good.

### **GIACOMO GRIMALDI**

As good as these wines are, I think the '05s were actually better, with greater purity and precision of fruit. Still, this is an up and coming estate in Barolo, one the wines have never been better than in 2005 and 2006. In particular, this estate's wines are a real example of just how much better the wines of 2005 and 2006 are than 2004: though their Le Coste '04 is a good wine, it's very rich and overripe, almost cooked, in its aroma profile and has a lot more in common with a southern Rhone grenache or a similarly rich, sweetly ripe wine than it does with a fragrant, refined nebbiolo.

**Barolo Sotto il Castello di Novello 2006:** Medium deep red. A little nutty, almost volatile on the nose with rather oak-dominated overripe black plum and balsamic aromas. Very sweet and fresh on

**BAROLO 2006: A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE UPCOMING VINTAGE**

---

entry, with more black plum present, balsamic again, and a hint of camphor. Long, but finishes with drying tannins. I liked this one more than Steve (Stephen Tanzer, with whom I was tasting) who felt the VA was too high and didn't like the nutty oak note on the nose. Still, it seems acceptably fresh and sweet to me, and finishes with a pretty blackberry syrup note on the slightly warm finish. Probably won't make old bones though. This wine had just been bottled when I tasted it.

**Barolo Le Coste 2006:** Dark, almost deep red. High toned rich raspberry, black cherry aromas, very rich and ripe, in a wine-style that many people will like (a little volatile as well, but here it's a good thing, for added freshness). Plum liqueur, spicy blackberry and balsamic black cherries with a hint of chocolate. Long finish with mounting but balanced tannins. Those who enjoy plush, big, downright fat Barolos may like this more than the '05, but that's not the case for me. Also just been bottled when I tasted it.

**GIOVANNI MANZONE** (cask samples)

This producer is always a late bottler because of lack of space in his cellar, but that will change now with completion of the new facility that he has been building over the last year. A solid source of well made wines from a particular, rather unique part of Monforte that deserves to be better known. They're also very fairly priced and I think better than many more famous, well known names out there.

**Barolo Le Gramolere 2006:** Slightly darker, but still a light, bright red, than the '05. Alluring fruit bomb on both nose with plenty of raspberry, strawberry and red rose petals on the nose. Similarly fruity and fresh on the palate with a sweet medium long finish and a trace of warmth. Beautifully silky tannins with juicy red quality.

**Barolo Bricat 2006:** Dark red. Deep nose with noticeable oak, vanilla, cedar and spices. Enters supple then chewy with lively tannins. Very pretty coffee and spicy finish with plenty of depth. Somewhat austere at present on the aftertaste, and needs time to let the fruit emerge.

**Barolo Castelletto 2006:** Deep red, almost ruby, with a pale rim. Very complex nose of Oriental spices, musk, and just the faintest hint of earth (brett?). Enters warm and juicy, then high in acid diminishes the overall sweetness of the wine. Still, lovely wine with good length and very fine tannins. I like this one quite a bit.

**SEGHESSIO**

This producer is on a roll, with an outstanding '06 wine following close on the heels of an almost as good '05. Another name to watch before prices catch up to quality.

**Barolo La Villa 2006:** Medium deep red. Beautifully complex nose with violet, ripe red cherry, mineral, and sexy oak. Ripe red cherry, balsamic, raspberry syrup flavours follow-up on the palate. Full-bodied, suave, very rich and pure, with good balancing acidity, and will improve further, aging beautifully. Best ever La Villa at a similarly young stage of development.

**CLERICO**

The old master is still aging wine after wine, especially Barolo. You can't find much better around than these two beauties.

**Barolo Pajana 2006:** Bright, full red. Open, riper, very showy nose (more than the '05) with pretty ripe red cherry and orange zest aromas, along dried flowers, musk and a hint of leather. Fresh and sweet, supple, with ripe fruit flavours and hint of tobacco and dried flowers, though it finishes a little warm. I have no doubts it'll turn out to be a stellar Pajana, and as it is it warrants well in

**BAROLO 2006: A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE UPCOMING VINTAGE**

---

excess of 90 points. This was already the fourth time I've tasted this wine over the past two years, and it has developed splendidly.

**Barolo Ciabot Mentin Ginestra 2006:** Deep ruby. Brooding wine with intense balsamic black cherry and spicy aromas, lifted by fresher raspberry and floral nuances. Fleshy and sweet, then more balsamic and minty with a strong red berry and red cherry presence. Lively tannins, lush and long with terrific energy and depth. Big wine with real potential and with some finishing warmth. Outstanding wine.

**LUIGI PIRA**

As good as this producer is, I'm not sure he does as well in warm vintages as cooler ones: for example, the 2000s were not some of my favourite Pira wines. The '06 wines reviewed below may yet pan out better than my initial impressions would seem to point to, as young Barolo is a treacherous beast and can modify completely over eighteen months or so. It'll be interesting to see how these develop in the bottle, and I look forward to trying them again in the first few months of 2010. Still, the wines are very well made and are very fairly priced, and astute wine lovers know to look for them, especially on restaurant wine lists.

**Barolo Margheria 2006:** Medium deep red with a surprising amount of amber rim. Ripe red cherry has a considerable leathery and earthy note. Enters sweet and plump, then turns harsh and dry. Ripe red cherry and citrus peel flavours, then wet earth and tobacco flavours on the medium finish.

**Barolo Marenga 2006:** Dark-deep red. Coffee and leather at first, then red cherry and watermelon. Enters sweet, then building tannins and finishes a little dry and nutty, with a hint of animal gaminess. May be better in a couple of years: interestingly, I find the Marenga made here often surpasses their Rionda, a much more famous vineyard, but this year's version is different than any other I have tasted at a similar stage of development.

**Barolo Vigna Rionda 2006:** Deep red. Sweet aromas of red cherry, red plum and a hint of leather. Full bodied, rich and complex, finishes with hints of earth and leather. Once again the tannins turn dry on the finish, but the fruit here is the juiciest of the three wines in the line-up. Needs a little time in the bottle, say 1-2 years to come around fully and show all it's got, and ought to improve for another ten years after that.

**ELIO ALTARE**

Best set of wines I recall at a similar stage of development in quite some time from Altare. Well done and a compendium of everything great Barolo ought to be.

**Barolo 2006:** Dark ruby. Sweet lush nose of red cherry syrup, plum jam, marzipan and a hint of underbrush. Fleshy, balanced, long, though the tannins pick up a bit of an edge on the finish. This is virtually all Arborina and you can tell from the wine's much greater depth than usual. No Brunate was made as well because Marengo, who got hailed upon, didn't have any grapes to give to Altare. One of the best entry level Barolos I have tasted in the last ten years at a similar stage of development. If there was one Barolo to buy by the pallet in 2006, this is it!

**Barolo Cerretta 2006:** Light medium red. Ripe red cherry, sweet spices, bread pudding and Christmas cake. Supple and luscious, finishes long and creamy with similar flavours to the aromas, with a touch more of mint and dried herbs, though perhaps just a tinge short for a truly mesmerizing wine and a 95-100 score. Thus, same score as the entry level wine, but this comes in a totally different style.

**BAROLO 2006: A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE UPCOMING VINTAGE**

---

**MARIO MARENGO**

I've written it before and I'll say it again: I think Marco Marengo (Mario is his father) is one of the most talented, if not the most talented, of the new wave of young Barolo producers today. Every wine he makes is graceful yet powerfully concentrated, and a testament to what Barolo is all about.

**Barolo 2006:** Medium deep red. Very floral, then sour red cherry, raspberry, truffle, and dried flowers on the nose, that is very pretty. Supple, light and balanced. Lots of concentration to the red fruit and licorice flavours yet lightweight. Excellent entry level wine with a broad sweet appeal. Some who find it too light would score it lower than I.

**Barolo Bricco Violo 2006:** Medium full red. Very pretty floral nose with a minty edge. Enters bright and fresh, with violet, dark berry, licorice and tea leaf flavours. Lively acids and less sweet than the base wine, with good spicy flavours of red fruit, though in a somewhat youthfully restrained manner. Will probably develop more fruit over time: its current astringency is only a sign of how youthful it is. I'd buy at least a case of this and leave it alone for eight years, then enjoy over the next twenty.

**Barolo Brunate 2006:** Deeper ruby-red. Fresh floral aromas of redcurrants, sour red cherries, marzipan and orange peel; has a slightly leafy, but not unpleasant, quality (an effect of the hail, I think). Bright and easygoing with slightly shrill acids and noticeable tannins but has good volume and fruit and very good density. Finishes with a hint of the archetypal Brunate brown spices. This ought to fatten out even more with another 12 months in the bottle.

**Barolo Vecchia Vigna di Brunate 2006** (70-80 year old vines): Bright dark red-ruby with an amber rim. Very deep nose with ripe black cherry, cedar, cassis and underbrush, all complicated by a mesmerizing flinty minerality. Enters sweet and complex, then very oaky and tannic on the finish (24 months in oak of which 40% is new). Does it really need this much oak, I wonder? Still, very pure and long. Archetypal Barolo, where the well integrated acidity gives clarity and cut. Potentially a fantastic wine provided the fruit outlives the tannins, which is likely, given Marengo's track record for excellence.

**FLLI. REVELLO**

This estate is on a roll, and the wines have never been better. Very good '06s after likewise very good '05s. Keep the good times rollin'!

**Barolo 2006:** Deep red. Fresh violet, blackcurrant, blackberry and a hint of balsamic marzipan. Lively acids, integrated, rich fresh pure flinty, balsamic, red and black fruit. Only 20% new oak and 100% barrique used here, this is a very very good entry level Barolo that displays a nice silky finish.

**Barolo Gattera 2006:** Deep red. Perfumed but still closed because it has just been bottled; black cherry, blackberry, and minerals on the nose. Dense, ripe long and mineral, plus very fresh menthol note at the back. Classic wine. Note that this vineyard's parcel south-east exposure makes it much better in these increasingly warmer and warmer years. Denser than the '05, and the only cru of the estate that sees large oak.

**Barolo Giachini 2006:** Deep full red. Sexy ripe nose with chocolate and coffee and balsamic aromas, then picks up a strong herbal component; rich ripe on entry, chocolate and balsamic long some wine people will love it, but I find this too oak dominated with excessive wood tannins. Then again, it is so young that the tannins will likely resolve over time, but I'd adopt a doubting-Thomas approach here.

**Barolo Conca 2006:** Dark red. Juicy riper black cherry and plums with a whiff of smoke and licorice. Plush and soft, with riper and less obvious tannins than the Giachini and a delicate earthy, almost truffled note at the end. Well made and great food wine. Just what to look for on a restaurant wine list.

**BAROLO 2006: A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE UPCOMING VINTAGE**

---

**Barolo Rocche dell'Annunziata 2006:** Almost ruby. Perfumed extremely complex nose, with black cherry, floral, balsamic, and spicy sweet aromas; even a touch of soy sauce here. Similar flavours on the palate, very fine grained texture and plenty of development ahead, a real beauty! Don't miss out on this one.

**MAURO MOLINO**

This is one estate where I think the '06 wines were definitely less successful than the '05s. Though perfectly fine, Molino can do better. Then again, I may just have tasted these at an awkward stage and so look forward to retasting them again soon, as a couple of more months in the bottle may be all they really needed.

**Barolo Gancia 2006:** Bright red. Initially sweet and then earthy, leathery. Red cherry licorice but leathery and finishes with very dry tannins. Uhm....need to retaste this one in about three months, and hopefully it will surprise me.

**Barolo Conca 2006:** Dark saturated red. Ripe red cherry, sweet spices, earthy and leathery, but less so than the Gancia. Sweet on entry, pleasant, then earthy and leathery again. Tarry quality and dried flowers on the long finish.

**GIOVANNI CORINO**

Solid wines as always in 2006, though I don't think there was a true superstar in the line-up here. Still, it's hard to find better made, more solid wines than those of this Corino.

**Barolo 2006:** Deep-dark ruby. Pretty rose, ripe red cherry and mineral aromas. Fresh pleasant ripe red cherry and raspberry jam flavours have a luscious mouth-feel. Then tannic on the finish but balanced overall. Very solid very good entry level Barolo and with a sexy finishing note of vanilla and cinnamon.

**Barolo Arborina 2006:** Deep ruby. Very pretty, perfumed nose has real depth with black cherry and plums, and chocolate. Balsamic sweetness, prunes, blackberry jam flavours finishes mounting tannins leave your mouth dry.

**Barolo Giachini 2006:** Deep ruby almost purple. Knockout nose is redolent with ripe plum, chocolate, coffee liqueur and richer and less intrusive oak than in the Arborina. Very long and very great Barolo

**Barolo Vecchia Vigna (Giachini) 2006:** Purple ruby. Very oaky nose and palate; though it's sexy new oak, with cinnamon and ripe plum and red cherry aromas with balsamic hints, it dries on the finish. Though there's considerable density here, I think it's a little dominated by the oak presently and the fruit has trouble shining through. Should improve over the next three months: promises to be a real keeper and ought to be an outstanding Barolo.

**RENATO CORINO**

Very successful wines here: along with the very good '05s, some of the best in recent memory. I think this estate is making better and better wines all the time, and prices are reasonable for the level of quality.

**Barolo 2006:** Deep red. Fresh cranberry and red licorice aromas with a hint of strawberry jam. Fresher and higher acids, perfumed, long but a little shrill on the finish. It's a captivating, sexy wine, with a truly lovely nebbiolo nose, and plenty of floral red rose aromas and typical nebbiolo grip and flavours.

**Barolo Rocche 2006:** Medium deep ruby with a pale rim. Sweet plum, with riper aromas but also more oak than the normale, with minerally accented red plum and raspberry flavours. Then turns a

**BAROLO 2006: A PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE WINES FROM THE UPCOMING VINTAGE**

---

little tannic (oak tannins) on the finish. The fruit ought to outlive the tannins, and it will be an outstanding value.

**SILVIO GRASSO**

Another estate where the '06 wines are showing to be in need of a little more time: always a late bottler, I'm catching these wines at a muted stage. I am sure they'll be much better in only three to six months time, as Federico Grasso is a talented winemaker. Also makes an outstanding Barbera you shouldn't miss out on.

**Barolo Bricco Luciani 2006:** Deep ruby. Sexy, exotic nose offers chocolate, plums and blackberry, and is really very fresh. Soft and ripe on entry, this slightly high toned palate is still youthfully tough and clenched, but finishes long and pure.

**Barolo Ciabot Manzoni 2006:** Deep ruby-red. Fresh balsamic mineral and youthfully unevolved, but a little too oaky for me at the moment with dryish wood tannins duking it out with the fruit-derived ones presently. Needs time to come around fully and show what it's got. Put this away and forget it for another five years, then enjoy for ten years after that.