

Wine Spectator Insider

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INSIDER SPECIAL REPORT: PIEDMONT

NEBBIOLO freaks are going to be surprised how close in quality many of the top wines of Piedmont are in 2005 and 2004. It's accepted wisdom that 2004 is superior to 2005, but I have found that after tasting dozens of Barolos and Barbarescos from the two vintages, they are very close.

The 2004 vintage could have been an extraordinary year, but many growers produced too many grapes, which diluted some of the inherent quality of the vintage. Meanwhile, 2005 was also excellent, but top producers had to deal with rains during the late growing season as well as during the harvest. In both cases, it was a question of offsetting some of the diluting effects of the year through careful vineyard management and grape selection during the harvest. All the wineries in this report seemed to do just that.

Stylistically, the 2004s are a little more aromatic than the 2005s. But both years produced Nebbiolos with bright and fruity palates and polished tannins. Stick to the top names and top vineyard sites in either vintage.

—James Suckling

Italy Piedmont

CERETTO

Barbaresco Asili 2005

95 points | \$135 | 50 cases imported | Red

A wonderful nose of crushed raspberry and flowers follows through to a full body, with lots of subtle yet classy fruit and tannins. So long and beautiful. Gorgeous. This is powerful but refined. Best after 2013.—J.S.

GAJA

Langhe Sori San Lorenzo 2005

95 points | \$445 | 200 cases imported | Red

Very pretty plum and strawberry aromas follow through to a full body, with ultrafine tannins and a long finish. A reserved, almost delicate style. But with air this gives you loads of luscious and beautiful fruit. Best after 2011.—J.S.

CERETTO

Barbaresco Bernardot 2005

94 points | \$70 | 100 cases imported | Red

What a beautiful wine, with crushed berries, rose and cedar. Full-bodied, with velvety tannins and plenty of fruit. Features vanilla and ripe fruit on the finish. Give this plenty of time. I love the balance in this wine. Best after 2013.—J.S.

PIO CESARE

Barbaresco Il Bricco 2004

94 points | \$112 | 100 cases imported | Red

Wonderfully floral and fruity on the nose. Full-bodied, with super-silky tannins and a long, long finish. Chewy yet polished. Plenty of ripe blackberry, light toasty oak and vanilla on the finish. Best after 2011.—J.S.

PIO CESARE

Barolo 2004

94 points | \$62 | 2,700 cases imported | Red

Extremely attractive aromas of blackberry, fresh mushroom and mahogany. Full-bodied, with lovely fruit, soft tannins and a long finish. Chewy, yet balanced and pretty. Builds on the palate. Big and juicy. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

BRUNO GIACOSA

Barbaresco Rabajà 2004

94 points | \$250 | 200 cases imported | Red

Very pretty aromas of strawberry and rose follow through to a full body that builds on the palate, with mushroom, berries and hints of cedar. Long and chewy, yet layered and beautiful. Very tight and reserved. Wonderfully crafted. Best after 2013.—*J.S.*

MOCCAGATTA

Barbaresco Cole 2005

94 points | \$85 | 30 cases imported | Red

The nose is so beautiful, offering plum, cherry and blackberry aromas, with just a hint of fresh flowers. Full-bodied, with superpure fruit and a racy, silky and polished tannin texture. Very long. Best after 2013.—*J.S.*

SEBASTE

Barolo Brunate 2004

94 points | \$85 | 120 cases imported | Red

There's fabulous richness on the nose, with blackberry, flowers, cedar, dried mushroom and fresh meat. Full-bodied, with wonderful fruit and supersilky tannins. Long and caressing. Very close to the classic 1997. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

SEBASTE

Barolo Monvigliero 2004

94 points | \$65 | 175 cases imported | Red

A wine with wonderful purity of fruit, from plum to sliced orange, yet there's an underlying mineral character to this as well. Full-bodied and superracy, with chewy tannins and a long, long finish. Powerful. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

LA SPINETTA

Barbaresco Vigneto Gallina 2005

94 points | \$135 | 450 cases imported | Red

Complex aromas of plum, citrus fruit and dried mushroom follow through to a full body, with ripe and velvety tannins and a long, fruity finish. It's tannic too. So give this some bottle age. Has impressive concentration. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

VIETTI

Barbaresco Masseria 2005

94 points | \$103 | 130 cases imported | Red

There is such purity of fruit in this. Has a fabulous nose, with aromas of blackberry, raspberry and flowers. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and a long finish. Structured. Best after 2013.—*J.S.*

FONTANABIANCA

Barbaresco Sorì Burdin 2005

93 points | \$70 | 300 cases imported | Red

This has a wonderful nose of crushed strawberry and plum. Full-bodied, with loads of ripe fruit and velvety tannins. Long and chewy. A big, generous Barbaresco. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

BRUNO GIACOSA

Barbaresco Santo Stefano di Neive 2004

93 points | \$250 | 200 cases imported | Red

Delivers subtle and focused aromas of crushed ripe strawberry, with hints of dried mushroom and dried flowers. Full-bodied, with big, juicy, velvety tannins and loads of ripe, sweet fruit. Needs time to come together. Voluptuous. Open. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

MOCCAGATTA

Barbaresco Bric Balin 2005

93 points | \$70 | 800 cases imported | Red

A superfruity red, with strawberry and milk chocolate aromas that follow through to a full body, with very soft tannins and a long, long finish. Very balanced and fruity. Juicy as well. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

ALBINO ROCCA

Barbaresco Vigneto Loreto 2005

93 points | \$90 | 100 cases imported | Red

Ripe red fruit aromas, such as plum and blackberry, follow through to a full body, with chewy tannins and a long finish. Tarry. A little mouthpuckering now. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

SOTTIMANO

Barbaresco Fausoni 2005

93 points | \$82 | 140 cases imported | Red

There's very ripe strawberry on the nose, almost overripe. Full-bodied and very concentrated, with layers of chewy tannins and a long finish. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

CA' ROMÉ DI ROMANO MARENGO

Barbaresco Sorì Rio Sordo 2005

92 points | \$102 | 150 cases imported | Red

This has a wonderful nose of crushed strawberry and raspberry. Full-bodied, with round, soft tannins and a long, long finish. Concentrated. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

PIO CESARE

Barbaresco 2004

92 points | \$62 | 500 cases imported | Red

Bright and fruity, with plum, flowers and fresh mushroom on the nose. Full-bodied, with soft, round tannins and lots of stylish fruit. Pretty and refined. Has wonderful balance and richness. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

GIANNI GAGLIARDO

Barolo Serre 2004

92 points | \$67 | 300 cases imported | Red

Crushed blackberry, ripe strawberry and raspberry follow through to a full body, with fine yet chewy tannins and a long, focused and fruity finish. A well-crafted red. One of the best wines from this producer in a long time. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

GAJA

Barbaresco 2005

92 points | \$210 | 800 cases imported | Red

Subtle aromas of rose and blackberry follow through to a full body, with fine tannins and a fresh finish. Chewy. Unfolds on the palate. Layered and beautiful. Refined yet structured. Best after 2013.—*J.S.*

GAJA

Langhe Conteisa 2004

92 points | \$225 | 1,000 cases made | Red

Pronounced aromas of blackberry, with hints of rose, follow through to a full body, with fine tannins and a fruity, silky-textured finish. All together and balanced. Surprisingly attractive now. Best after 2010.—*J.S.*

ALBINO ROCCA

Barbaresco Vigneto Brich Ronchi 2005

92 points | \$82 | 600 cases imported | Red

Shows loads of strawberry jam on the nose. Full-bodied, with chewy tannins and lots of ripe fruit and oak. Slightly mouthpuckering. Needs time to come around. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

SOTTIMANO

Barbaresco Cottà 2005

92 points | \$82 | 350 cases imported | Red

Wonderful aromas of plum and rose follow through to a full body, with refined tannins and lots of pretty fruit. Very delicate for the vintage. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

SOTTIMANO

Barbaresco Pajoré 2005

92 points | \$82 | 100 cases imported | Red

Very pure aromas of strawberry, flowers and berries follow through to a full body, with refined tannins and a fruity, balanced finish. Has really well-integrated tannins. Creeps up on you. Very structured. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

LA SPINETTA

Barbaresco Vigneto Staderi 2005

92 points | \$135 | 540 cases imported | Red

Plum and berry aromas, with hints of fresh herbs. Full, round and smooth, showing lots of berry and toasty oak and cappuccino, with a long finish. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

MARCO & VITTORIO ADRIANO

Barbaresco Basarin 2005

91 points | \$35 | 1,000 cases imported | Red

Plum, berry and chocolate aromas follow through to a full body, with ripe, round tannins and a chewy finish. Concentrated and rich. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

CA' ROMÉ DI ROMANO MARENCO

Barbaresco 2005

91 points | \$92 | 120 cases imported | Red

Blackberry, floral and fresh mushroom aromas follow through to a full body, with silky yet slightly chewy tannins and a long, flavorful finish. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

CASCINA BRUCIATA

Barbaresco Rio Sordo 2004

91 points | \$42 | 250 cases imported | Red

Ripe strawberry and milk chocolate aromas, with hints of cedar, follow through to a full body, with lots of fruit and a velvety-textured finish. A juicy young wine. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

MICHELE CHIARLO

Barbaresco Asili 2005

91 points | \$90 | 100 cases imported | Red

Shows ripe and fruity aromas, with hints of coffee. Medium- to full-bodied, with chewy tannins and a long finish. This has loads of flavor. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

MICHELE CHIARLO

Barbaresco Reyna 2005

91 points | \$40 | 500 cases imported | Red

Wonderful aromas of sliced plum, with hints of dried flowers. This is full-bodied, with spice, truffle and berry character. Very long and rich, yet soft and beautiful. This is Chiarlo's basic Barbaresco renamed. Best after 2012.—*J.S.*

GIUSEPPE CORTESE

Barbaresco Rabajà 2005

91 points | \$57 | 500 cases imported | Red

Bright aromas of blackberry and strawberry follow through to a full body, with soft tannins and a long, caressing finish. Focused and refined. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

ALBINO ROCCA

Barbaresco 2005

91 points | \$65 | 400 cases imported | Red

Shows aromas of blueberry, with hints of strawberry and mineral. Full-bodied, with focused fruit, chewy, rich tannins and a long aftertaste of mineral and blueberry. Very long. Best after 2011.—*J.S.*

HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator Insider*. They are high-scoring, low-production wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

GAJA

Langhe Sperss 2004

99 points | \$255 | 1,500 cases made | Red

Delicate aromas of sandalwood, blackberry, licorice and cherry follow through to a full body, with very chewy tannins and loads of pretty fruit and hints of vanilla. Powerful and structured. Sneaks up on you and delivers a wine for aging. This is massive. An amazing wine. Best after 2014. *From Italy.—J.S.*

PIO CESARE

Barolo Ornato 2004

96 points | \$112 | 200 cases imported | Red

This is focused and very pretty, with lots of subtle aromas, from black cherry to freshly cut flowers. Full-bodied and powerful, with chewy tannins and a long, rich finish. All to come here. Best after 2011. *From Italy.—J.S.*

GAJA

Langhe Costa Russi 2005

96 points | \$445 | 200 cases imported | Red

There's fabulous fruit on the nose, which is very pure, with crushed blackberry and blueberry. Full-bodied, with superrefined tannins and a long, caressing finish. A very classy wine. This is so long and beautiful. Lasts for minutes on the palate. Best after 2014. *From Italy.—J.S.*

GAJA

Langhe Sorì Tildin 2005

96 points | \$445 | 200 cases imported | Red

The purity of fruit in this young Nebbiolo is impressive, with a cedar, fresh mushroom and forest undertone. Full-bodied, with masses of fruit as well as toasty oak and milk chocolate. This is a wine that gives you lots at the finish. Best after 2014. *From Italy.—J.S.*

BRUNO GIACOSA

Barbaresco Asili Riserva 2004

96 points | \$250 | 1,170 cases made | Red

Aromas of strawberry and candle wax develop to cherry and light incense. Full-bodied, with chewy tannins and lots of fruit. This is focused and very well done, but really tight at the moment. Very structured. Needs time. This is the red label, to be released in spring 2009. Best after 2014. *From Italy.—J.S.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

The Most Experienced Team of Wine Journalists in the World

Wine Spectator's tasting staff includes 15 people in four offices. They work together to review more than 15,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our seven senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind in our offices in San Francisco, Napa, New York and Tuscany, and in the vineyard regions of Europe. This is your guarantee that our reviews are fair and objective, and that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed. We score wines using the 100-point scale, explained below.

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: California

Kim Marcus Managing editor, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:

Austria, Greece, Portugal, southern France

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1997. Tasting beat: Argentina, Chile, Loire Valley, Rhône Valley, South Africa

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Alsace, Burgundy, Champagne, Germany

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat: Bordeaux, Italy, Port

Tasting staff:

Jo Cooke (Veneto),

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Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale

95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very good
80-84	Good
75-79	Mediocre
50-74	Not recommended