

Bruno Nada

By Tom Hyland

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At the Fiorenzo Nada estate located in Treiso, Bruno Nada produces two beautifully structured examples of Barbaresco as well as other Langhe reds that have been receiving notable critical acclaim for several years now. But this situation is quite different today than it was in 1982, when he began to bottle the wine from grapes grown by his father that was then sold on the market for *vino sfuso* or bulk wine. “Twenty-five years ago, people here were more interested in growing as many grapes as possible. They weren’t interested in making the best wine.”

Though the son of a grape grower in the Barbaresco district, Nada has taken a slightly different path than most of his fellow winemakers in the area. From 1982 to 2002, he also taught classes in electronics at a secondary school in Alba, working part time at the winery. Little by little, wine became a bigger part of his life, so in 1994, his teaching became a part-time job and then six years ago, he decided to stop teaching to devote full time work as a vintner.

Today, Nada produces two bottlings of Barbaresco, one from the Manzola cru next to his estate and the other from the Rombone vineyard on his property. He also produces Dolcetto, Barbera and a Langhe Rosso named Seifile, a blend of Barbera and Nebbiolo. The name Seifile means “six rows”, a nod to the origins of the estate, when the family had only six rows of vines.

His Dolcetto d’Alba is quite impressive, a wine that like many examples from Treiso, has a bit more weight to it than the typical Dolcetto of the Langhe. There are delicious fruit flavors of black plum and mulberry backed by medium-weight tannins that while not overbearing, do give the wine a slight edge that will soften in another year or two. Nada describes the wine as “a strong Dolcetto with rich fruit. It can be a difficult wine for people to understand.” When I asked him about the quality of his Dolcetto and of the Dolcettos from Treiso in general, he replied, “Treiso is home to the finest Dolcetto. Some people would say Dolcetto from Treiso is great while Barbaresco from Treiso is good, but I am sure the Barbaresco is better! We have to show Barbaresco first and then Dolcetto!”

As for Barbaresco, Nada produces about 8500 bottles from the Manzola vineyard and roughly 4000 bottles from Rombone. As the former site is more of a sandy soil, this is the lighter of the two bottlings of Barbaresco. There are aromas of red cherry, tar and orange tea with cherry and plum flavors on the palate and a finish of black mint with balanced tannins. The 2004 should be at its peak in another 5-7 years.

As for the Rombone, this is the signature wine from Nada, from a vineyard that is now 45 years old (as compared to 12 years for the Manzola). The 2004 offers a lovely deep garnet color with attractive aromas of persimmon, red currant, tar and a note of cinnamon and flavors of cherry and wild strawberry on the palate. The fruit is ripe, but not flashy and there is excellent concentration and persistence in the finish. This will round out and be at its best in 7-10 years.

I also tasted the 2005 examples of these two Barbaresco with Bruno; these however were barrel samples and the wines had not been bottled as of mid-May, 2008. The wines are more delicate on the palate, but offer lively acidity and good bright fruit. Nada describes 2005 as, “a very typical Piemontese vintage with great structure. The tannins are full and the wines will be slow

to develop.” Comparing 2005 and 2004, he remarks that, “2004 is a very powerful vintage with great harmony. They (the 2004s) are more approachable now.”

Getting back to the varying philosophies of the area’s vintners two decades ago versus today, Nada notes that there were only a few great producers of Barbaresco in the early 1980s, such as Gaja, Bruno Giacosa and Pio Cesare, as the majority of the growers then were selling their grapes on the marketplace. “Nobody cared as to the individual berries or the soil or the position of the vineyards, whether they faced north or south,” he recalls.

He remembers the thinking that set the best producers apart back then. “Only a few such as Gaja were saying, ‘this is my vineyard, this is my wine.’ Today there are many more that are producing top quality wines, but many of these producers are not that well known. The problem is getting the word out about our story,” Nada states. “We produce wines that are not young in age, but from vineyards that are young in the history of the area. Gaja and a few others produce wine from vineyards that have a long history.”

Nada also knows that his fellow winemakers in Barbaresco and also their finest wines face the challenge of not being as famous as those from Barolo. He believes that the area’s vintners must not worry about this. “The best thing we can do is produce Barbaresco that tells our story and presents our terroir. This is possible only if the Barbaresco producers work together to promote our wines.”

Nada is critical of some Barbaresco producers that try to emulate the style of Barolo by making a more intense version of their own wines. “We must continue to make Barbaresco and not try and copy Barolo.” Referring to the wine press, he says, “Important people say that Barolo is more important than Barbaresco, but we don’t work for them. It is important that we work for ourselves. We can’t work with the idea that we will receive 95 or 96 points. We have to work to express the territory.”

All of Bruno Nada’s wines do articulate the terroir of their origins. He remains true to himself and true to his land. And he refuses to believe that Barbaresco is not as good as Barolo. “Barbaresco is a different wine from Barolo; it is not a lesser wine. I don’t agree that Barbaresco has to be less expensive than Barolo. For me, that is not right. But again, my first concern – and one that should be that of every Barbaresco producer – is to make the best wine. Then you can worry about price.”

WINE NOTES

2006 Dolcetto d’Alba

Bright purple with aromas of black plum, mulberry and black licorice. Medium-full with very good concentration. Medium tannins and very good acidity. Light hint of menthol on the finish. Best in 1-2 years. Excellent.

2006 Barbera d’Alba

Bright purple with aromas of menthol, black plum and black licorice. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Forward and ripe, but well balanced. Modest tannins and lively

acidity. Lengthy finish with excellent fruit persistence. Very good freshness – this is quite tasty! Excellent.

2004 Barbaresco “Manzola”

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, orange pekoe tea and tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe with balanced tannins and very good acidity. Very nice fruit persistence and quite well balanced. Best in 5-7 years. Very Good to Excellent.

2004 Barbaresco “Rombone”

Deep garnet with beautiful aromas of persimmon, red currant, tar and a hint of cinnamon. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Flavors of red cherry, mint and wild strawberry on the palate. Long, long finish with excellent fruit persistence, lively acidity and beautifully refined tannins. Best in 10-12 years. Outstanding.

2005 Barbaresco “Manzola” (barrel sample)

Deep garnet/light ruby red with aromas of cedar, red cherry and myrtle. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, nicely integrated oak and very good fruit persistence. Nicely balanced tannins- give this some time to round out. Best in 5-7 years. Very Good.

2005 Barbaresco “Rombone” (barrel sample)

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, persimmon and orange pekoe tea. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Flavors of dark chocolate and mandarin orange on the palate. Excellent structure for aging. Lively acidity and nicely styled tannins. This should be at its best in 10-12 years. This wine and the 2005 Manzola will be on the market in January 2009. Excellent to Outstanding.

2004 Seifile (Langhe Rosso)

A blend of 80% Barbera and 20% Nebbiolo. Bright purple with aromas of black plum, myrtle, purple iris and cacao. Medium-full with very good concentration. Modern, forward wine with more noticeable oak than the other reds. Very good acidity with moderate tannins. Give some time to settle down- best in 5-7 years. Very Good to Excellent.

