

Barolo 2013: 133 wines tasted

The 2013 vintage was very strong for Barolo despite variable conditions across the region, and while the wines continue to evolve, most are drinking extremely well now. Stephen Brook reports on his tasting of 133 wines.



Stephen Brook
July 2, 2021



Borgogno's vineyards in the Liste MGA, in the commune of Barolo

Scroll down to see Stephen Brook's top 20 Barolo 2013 wines to seek out

2013 in Barolo

The **Barolo** region is notorious for its climatic variability, and 2013 was no exception. The layout of its vineyards, with multiple elevations and expositions, means that quality and nuance can vary hugely from site to site.

Nonetheless, 2013 was a very good vintage in Barolo. The early spring was cool and it rained copiously in May. The weather improved in June, with good flowering conditions, and July was fine. August was hot – but not excessively so.

There were few summer days with very high temperatures, and mildew and downy mildew continued to strike, but their effect could be minimised by timely leaf removal and green-harvesting. Most of September into early October saw a stretch of sunny days and cool nights that meant there was no rush to pick. Most growers, therefore, picked relatively late, until temperatures dropped in mid-October.

View all 133 Barolo 2013 wines from the tasting

The upshot of the growing season was that the wines, while structured, were more marked by perfume and finesse than by power, and the tannins were usually delicate and fine-grained.

Although weather conditions were fairly uniform across the region, variations from village to village were discernible, though in some cases the characteristics of a wine may be due as much to the skill of the producers as to local microclimates or the best terroirs.

Many village Barolos – those without a cru name on the label – had charm and brightness, and showed that a label showing a cru name (or MGA: *Menzione Geografica Aggiuntiva* – specified sites of quality rather than individual vineyards, so closer to the French ‘*climat*’) isn’t a guarantee of superior quality.

It’s not an easy vintage to compare with its predecessors.

There is less grip and tension than in the magnificent 2010s, but more freshness and zest than the fleshier 2011s, and more structure and complexity than in 2012.

Although some wines seem quite forward, I suspect many, including some that may seem disappointing now, will blossom after more time in bottle. Overall, 2013 is a vintage to be enjoyed over the next 10 years, although some wines will power on beyond.

This tasting confirmed that while the top vintages such as 2010 and 2016 will age brilliantly, less stellar years such as 2011, 2013 and 2014 can give great pleasure just a few years after release.

Barolo 2013: my must-have wines

- Cavallotto, San Giuseppe Bricco Boschis Riserva 95pts
- Michele Chiarlo, Cerequio Riserva 95pts
- Mirafiore, Lazzarito 95pts
- Brezza, Cannubi 94pts
- Ceretto, Brunate 94pts
- Palladino, San Bernardo Riserva 94pts

always try to make the best wine possible from the grapes available. Anything not up to standard can always be declassified to protect the estate’s reputation.

This is not to say that there aren’t magnificent Barolo Riservas from this vintage, as from most others, but longer ageing doesn’t necessarily translate into a superior wine. Some of that ageing can, legally, take place in bottle rather than oak.

In general, however, a Barolo Riserva will spend far longer in wood – as long as five or even seven years. The result can be superb, or it can be leathery, super-tannic and tired.

I’ve been surprised by how many Riservas were produced in this very good, if not exceptional, vintage, and some of those wines did not come across as intrinsically superior to the estate’s regular bottling.

Given the premium charged for a Riserva, a Barolo lover might find that two bottles of a winery’s Cannubi may be a better (and better value) purchase

The Riservas

This is not the first occasion that I have raised doubts about the usefulness of the Riserva category. The main criterion is additional ageing of the wine, and the assumption is that only the very best grapes have been selected to produce it.

It’s a concept that’s popular in Italy and Spain, but scarce elsewhere.

In **Bordeaux**, for example, you wouldn’t expect to find both Château Palmer and Château Palmer Réserve; you’d hope that the estate would

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Vite Colte, Essenze, Barolo, Serralunga d'Alba, Piedmont, 2013



PANEL

D

Blind tasted by **Stephen Brook** (at London, 10 Mar 2021)



This is another of the three Essenze bottlings created for this top label of the Terra da Vino since 2012. Rich and opulent on the nose, it has generous fruit with a hint of vanilla. It's full-bodied and rounded, with a velvety texture, integrated tannins, and good if not exceptional acidity, leading to a long, chewy finish.

Drinking Window 2021 - 2034



Vite Colte, Essenze, Barolo, Monforte d'Alba, 2013



PANEL

D

Blind tasted by **Stephen Brook** (at London, 10 Mar 2021)



This project, initiated in 2012 by the Terra da Vino cooperative, draws on grapes grown by the 180 members who agree to adhere to stringent farming practices. There are separate Essenze bottlings for the communes of Barolo and Serralunga. This Monforte blend is plump, generous, rich and mouthfilling, and although accessible now it has firm, ripe tannins to give structure and grip. The finish is spicy, lively and long.

Drinking Window 2021 - 2032

