

## Tom Hyland's Values from Piemonte

I'm fortunate that in my travels, I have the opportunity to try so many excellent wines from Italy and other countries. Many of these wines are limited and priced above \$50, so believe me, I appreciate the chance to sample these wines. But I'm always excited to try wines that combine excellence with an honest price. I'm even more excited when these wines are from a region where values are not commonplace. Evidence of that are two new bottlings from **Giacosa Fratelli**, a small producer in Neive in the province of Cuneo in Piemonte. Giacosa is known most of all for their bottlings of Barbaresco, as the town of Neive is one of three where this Nebbiolo-based wine can be produced. I tasted two bottlings of theirs from the newly released 2007 vintage: the "Basarin" and the "Basarin Vigna Gianmate", both of which I have rated as excellent (4 out of 5 stars). Each offers impressive depth of fruit, lovely aromatics and gentle, silky tannins (especially the Gianmate bottling). These are among the finest bottlings of Barbaresco from the notable 2007 vintage; both should be at their best in 10-12 years.

Like most producers, Giacosa Fratelli also produces other local wines and these are the ones I'd like to focus on in this post. The 2009 Roero Arneis is a lovely dry white made from grapes grown in the Roero zone, across the Tanaro River from the Barbaresco zone. This is medium-full with typical pine and pear aromas with a nicely balanced finish with very good acidity. This is a tasty, refreshing dry white that is ideal with risotto with vegetables or lighter seafood. 2009 was a brilliant vintage in Piemonte, so there's a bit more depth of fruit than in other years, meaning this wine could hold for another two years (though it's so appealing now, so why wait?). Best of all, it's priced at \$17 retail; as Arneis has become quite a sensation in America over the past few years, this is quite a value.

The winery's 2007 Barbera d'Alba from the Bussia vineyard in Monforte d'Alba is another wonderful success. Rich with the spice so typical of the Barbera grape, this has a nice zesty, tangy quality to it that makes it perfect for grilled chicken, ribs or pork or pastas such as *tajarin* with beef and tomatoes. Barbera has very light tannins for a red wine, so that makes this wine quite drinkable now, even though 2007 was a year that resulted in deeply concentrated red wines in this area. Stylistically, I love this bottling as the winemaker decided to age this wine in large oak casks instead of barriques, thus keeping the focus on the tantalizing black cherry and blackberry fruit. It's a real pleasure to taste this wine, especially when you consider that you are getting a Barbera from a single vineyard from an excellent vintage and you only have to shell out \$17 for the wine - a remarkable value!

For me, there is no other region in Italy that produces as many outstanding wines as does Piemonte, but let's face it, you usually have to pay for that quality. So how nice that these two wines, from a very consistent, quality driven producer such as Giacosa Fratelli are so good and so affordable! Here's hoping that more producers from this area follow suit!

The wines of Giacosa Fratelli are imported by **Bedford International**, Larchmont, NY

Tom Hyland – August 23, 2010

<http://thylandviews.blogspot.com/2010/08/values-from-piemonte.html>

