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18 February 2014 - + Brezza Tasting: Barolo Sarmassa Vertical 2003-2010

Brezza Tasting: Barolo Sarmassa Vertical 2003-2010

We have seen a surge of interest in Barolo over the past year and it is one of the markets that we are focussing on. In terms of quality and value for money, Barolo remains one of the few regions that is 'undiscovered': one can find exceptional quality in the region and we believe that now is the time to be buying these wines before the secret is out. So when Enzo Brezza invited us to taste a vertical of the brilliant Barolo Sarmassa from 2003 to 2010, everyone leapt to the tasting room.



The Brezza estate is one of several producers that our Fine Wine Director, Joss Fowler and Fine Wine Buyer Camilla Bowler, are visiting this week on an intense buying trip to Piedmont. They will be tweeting about who they are visiting and what they're tasting regularly, so check out our [Twitter](#) page to keep updated.

Barolo Brezza is a true family-run estate. Now managed by fourth generation Brezzas, this private estate covering 22ha near the town of Barolo, is home to one of the original farming families of the region. The 'Brezza' name is synonymous with quality – their 16.5ha of vineyards, some of which date to 1885, in the communes of Barolo, Monforte, Novello and Alba, produce an average of just 80,000 bottles annually. This small production is a product of winemaker, Enzo Brezza's strict low-intervention philosophy and cherry-picking only the very best fruit to create wines typical of the region.

Barolo Sarmassa is one of the top vineyards in Barolo and is one of the Brezza's favoured plots. Their vines, some of which are over 70 years old, are grown on blue silt clay-rich soil, which retains a lot of water. It is the larger proportion of clay in the soil, than say Cannubi, which lends depth and richness to the wine and gives it its unique structure. The soft tannins allow for a longer maceration, before fermentation in temperature-controlled stainless steel and ageing in large, old 50hl Slavonian oak 'botti'. What was evident from the vertical tasting is that Barolo Sarmassa has a very distinctive style: fresh, elegant, with juicy red fruit with that sweet spot typical of Barolo, minerality and soft tannins. This is top-quality Barolo, combining an enticing complexity with a rare approachability, even in youth.



2003

A little closed with sweet red fruit and a subtle floral note. Similar on the palate, but more open and the warmth of the vintage shows with ripe, sweet dark and red fruit. Ripe, sweet tannin gives the wine a great structure. This is one to drink now.

2004

Clear and precise. Fresh red cherries and plums with more oak on the palate. This is very elegant and feminine with a vibrancy and poise. On the finish there is more typical tar, earthy, chocolate notes. The tannins are chewy, but approachable.

2005*

Slight cork taint which affected the vibrancy of fruit, however, a pleasant subtle liquorice note came out, as did more sweet spice amidst the muted dark stoned fruit. Chewy tannins lend structure to what quite clearly should be a top-class, multi-layered wine.

2006*

Beautiful fresh, vibrant nose – cherries, plums, roses and raspberry leaf leap from the glass. The palate is similarly abounding with sweet red fruit, floral perfume and an underlying earthy tar and balsamic. This is a very generous wine with layers upon layers of aromatic complexity and firm tannins.

2007

A brighter, more youthful colour. Much more pronounced on the nose – dark and red stoned fruit with rose and blossom. On the palate there is a little more weight and power than those on the line up so far. The fruit is juicy and rich with a distinct minerality and there is menthol, tar, leather and sweet spice all converging in this open and generous Sarmassa.

2008

Dark red fruit and a sweet almond note which follows to the palate with lots of perfumed spicy, floral notes. This one has a really pronounced sweet spot, which is incredibly satisfying with riper tannins.

2009*

Fresh and open. Red cherries with rose and violets and more of an herbaceous nature than the others with earthy tobacco, menthol and sweet spice. Chewy tannins and slightly crunchy. The finish is long with rose lingering.

2010*

Lovely, pronounced nose: dark, red and sour cherries with marzipan and rose. A similar palate with a little more distinct smoky oak. Not quite knitted together yet, but lots of firm tannins in place for cellaring.

*The best fruit went into the Barolo Sarmassa as their top Barolo, Bricco Sarmassa wasn't produced.

Our Fine Wine Buying team will be tweeting live from Piedmont, so please see our [Twitter](#) page to keep updated and comment using [#Barolo2010](#)

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