

## New Italian releases 2022 – the north

Tipologia: Short

Topic: Wine

# New Italian releases 2022 – the north



*Walter takes us on a tour of what he has been tasting in northern Italy. Tomorrow he takes us south. Pictured above is Romagna pioneer Cristina Geminiani.*

Fired up by Barolo and Barbaresco, **Piemonte** has firmly established itself as Italy's quality powerhouse, and the excellent forthcoming vintages, 2019 for Barolo and 2020 for Barbaresco, merely reinforce this. But the world's interest in the region has begun to expand beyond Nebbiolo to include some of Piemonte's other unique, indigenous varieties.

Freisa is one example which, especially in the hands of able producers such as Paitin in Barbaresco, will give Langhe Nebbiolo a run for its money. It has the same tannic bite combined with plenty of freshness but comes in at a lower alcohol level.

Ovada is practically the last remaining traditional refuge for Dolcetto now that Dogliani has succumbed to the much more lucrative Nebbiolo, which it can now legally label 'Langhe'. In an ever-expanding sea of Langhe Nebbiolo, quality will diminish and prices fall. Dolcetto could be the antidote, especially the Ovadas made by the historic producer Tacchino, in whose hands Dolcetto, often misleadingly described as 'simple', becomes a world-class grape variety.

Ruchè, at home in Monferrato in the north of Piemonte, makes voluminous and strikingly perfumed dry reds. It may make your head spin but once you get past the opulent aromas, you see its depth and ageworthiness. In Opera Prima, a passito wine made from [dried grapes](#), Luca Ferraris produces the absolute top wine – imagine a cross between port and Valtellina's Sfurzat – and it's much more compelling than the majority of Amarones.

When it comes to white wines, Piemonte produces its fair share, not least from what I consider a top-class grape variety,

Cortese, especially [in its Gavi guise](#), but the cheaper wines are often insipid. Neighbouring Timorasso, nowadays everybody's darling, is not (yet) suffering this fate because plantings are still modest (apparently some 200 ha/494 acres) and the limited quantities of wine exchange hands for relatively high prices. Those of La Colombera's offerings are completely justified, and tasting older vintages shows that the wines grow in complexity and stature with age. Timorasso's taste is unique and I cannot think of any other white variety you could compare it with. All in all, lots of USPs for this relatively obscure variety.

Before leaving Piemonte, I must, however return to Nebbiolo to mention the stunning Nebbiolo d'Albas from Hilberg Pasquero. Technically from Roero, they are labelled Langhe to increase market recognition. They are on a par with many Barolos and should be sought out by any lover of the Langhe.

Talking of Barolo, Einaudi celebrate their 125th anniversary with the first vintage of Monvigliero, the 2018, from a 1.5-ha plot acquired in that same year. The challenging vintage has left its mark on the wine, but I also get the impression that Einaudi still have to come to grips with this top-class vineyard, which they need to know intimately before the fireworks start.

Over in **Trentino**, Toblino shows that a co-op truly can deliver quality but wine lovers need to be willing to pay accordingly. With the new 2019 vintage of its ageworthy whites, it contributes to the restoration of Trentino's quality image, which has, ironically, been lowered by, you've guessed it, many a co-op. Largiller, made from the white Nosiola variety, grown in a pergola-trained centenarian vineyard and aged for six years in large oak, puts to bed the fully mistaken belief that [pergola is a source of low quality](#). This monumental wine is easily one of Italy's best. Its price, around €25 in Italy, is laughably modest.

**Friuli Venezia Giulia** in the very north-east of Italy needs a thorough shake-up. In pockets here and there, producers deviate from the conventional international varieties, which are still the norm here. Amphorae and indigenous varieties have attracted the attention of a new generation of producers, while [Gravner's](#) hard-won success – and particularly this visionary's new releases, Ribolla from the 2013 and 2014 vintages – strengthens their spines. Although skin-fermented, these cannot be considered orange wines, rather they are incarnations of Gravner's vision of this traditional variety. I tasted the Ribollas side by side from a conventional wine glass and Gravner's own glass 'cup', modelled on the historic clay cups still used in Georgia to pull out and taste wine from [qvevri](#). Of course, there was bound to be a difference, but the Gravner cup showed complexity and depth the conventional glass didn't. So much for your expensive Zaltos ...



The **Veneto** is Italy's largest wine producer, mostly of bulk wares and the ubiquitous Glera for the often completely

unremarkable Prosecco (not to be confused with [Conegliano-Valdobbiadene](#)), for which the UK in particular has developed an enduring thirst. It is much less known for Raboso, a tart red variety which, when the grapes are dried, can be turned into a full-bodied red. Ca' di Rajo's Sangue del Diavolo shows that the Amarone recipe doesn't have to lead to boring wines.

And to continue my [Amarone-bashing](#), a much more contemporary and elegant style can be achieved with the once so scorned Valpolicella, reduced to a supermarket wine after producers themselves eviscerated it by focusing exclusively on the cuckoo in the nest, Amarone.

As always in Italy, a young and fearless generation with new ideas comes to the rescue, like Alessandro Lonardi, who, in 2007, took over the estate in Marano right in the middle of Valpolicella Classico, renaming it Ca' Matta (*matta* meaning 'crazy'). He doesn't shun grape-drying, as evidenced by his gorgeous I Mostacci, a Valpolicella Classico Superiore from pergola-grown grapes dried for 40 days, but the method doesn't determine the wines. With Ca' Matta a new Valpolicella generation has arrived, and not a moment too soon.

Following the *autostrada* from Verona to Bologna and further south to Faenza, you will arrive in the beautiful hills bordering Tuscany. Here Sangiovese in its **Romagna** guise is produced. It would be easy to recall all the gallons of insipid co-op Sangiovese but that would be to overlook the [enormous quality changes](#) this huge DOC, now intelligently divided in smaller subzones, has seen, especially in the enclave of Modigliana.

But Romagna Sangiovese also needed a visionary fighting for decades in the pursuit of quality, to change perceptions and to encourage a new generation. [Cristina Geminiani](#) (pictured above) is that person. On her La Zerbina estate she began improving her family's vineyards, planting a part *ad albarello* (bush vines) and at high density at the beginning of the 1990s.

From the beginning, Geminiani's focus has been Sangiovese for reds and the equally scorned Albana for whites. It is rare that a producer is talented in dealing with two radically different varieties but La Zerbina's Bianco di Ceparano, a taut, linear and laser-sharp Albana shows enormous class and it will definitely appeal to Riesling fans, while with Monografia/2 Sangiovese Riserva, Geminiani has erected a monument to both Marzeno, a Romagna subzone she fought for and made famous, as well as to La Zerbina, as a pioneer of quality Romagna Sangiovese.

The 136 tasting notes below are grouped by region and subregion, approximately north to south and from north-west to north-east. (The subregion typically refers to the location of the producer not necessarily to the what is on the label.) The order within the regions is from IGT up to the grandest of DOCs and DOCGs. Within the groups you can also order by producer (sur)name, appellation, vintage or score.

### Vite Colte, Tra Donne Sole Sauvignon Blanc 2021 Piemonte 16

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Pale straw yellow. Tropical fruit with the typical gooseberry notes of Sauvignon Blanc. A tad technical but still with plenty of appeal. Cool palate of sweet white fruit and lemon and what I suspect is a tiny bit of RS, but there is also a mineral hint. Well made and vying for the NZ crown, so buyers take note.

(WS) 14%

Drink 2022 – 2025

### Vite Colte, La Luna e i Falò Superiore 2020 Barbera d'Asti 15.5

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Deep crimson. A peppery, medicinal black-fruit nose and chalky, supple black- and blueberry-fruit palate with a tangy finish. Easy to like and with plenty of tangy, ripe black fruit on the finish lined with powdery tannins. (WS) 14.5%

Drink 2022 – 2026

## Vite Colte, Cinquecento Brut 2018 Alta Langa

16

*Full bottle 1,644 g. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from vineyards at between 500 m and 600 m elevation. Temperature-controlled fermentation after which the wine stays on the lees until the following spring at which point both wines are blended and bottled. Aged for 30 months. Disgorged in 2021.*

Pale straw. Very slow beads resurface. Fresh, ripe nose of white fruit and when you try really hard the merest suggestion of breadcrumb. White fruit, apple and lemon on the palate with silky CO<sub>2</sub>. Very easy to like; you'll finish the bottle before you know it. (WS 12.5%

Drink 2022 – 2026

## Vite Colte, Villata Arneis 2021 Roero

16

Straw yellow. Rich, concentrated and with great lift on the nose. Orange pith, grapefruit and lime. Viscous white fruit and quite full-bodied. Ticks all boxes.

(WS) 13.5%

Drink 2022 – 2024

di **Walter Speller** - 27/12/2022

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Fonte: <https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/new-italian-releases-2022-north>