

# Piedmont Wine Region, Home Of Italian Royalty And More



**Michelle Williams** Contributor ⓘ

Spirits

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The countryside landscape of Langhe, Piedmont, Italy. Hilltops and fog among them, the Castle of ... [+] GETTY

Nestled in northwest Italy, between the foothills of the western Alps and Apennines, lies the country's second largest region: Piedmont, or *Piemonte*, in Italian. Home to the House of Savoy, Italy's ruling dynasty until 1946, it's no surprise this area birthed the king of Italian wines.

While Barolo reigns supreme, an array of indigenous grapes call Piedmont home. "Part of the greatness of this region is its diversity and the high level of quality of its wines," shares Nadine Brown, sommelier and former wine director of Charlie Palmer Steakhouse in Washington D. C.. However, this article is focused on three wines: Barolo, Barbaresco, and Barbera.

Piedmont's mountainous terrain juxtaposed with its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea create a unique continental climate. Foggy mornings give way to sunny days and cool nights, a wide diurnal shift ideal for the region's most coveted grape—Nebbiolo.

Compared to Pinot Noir for its heightened ability to express terroir, Nebbiolo offers an alternative to the ever-rising prices of Burgundy. Resemblances of the two regions don't stop there. "As a student of the region, it's helpful to think of the similarities between Burgundy and Piedmonte," explains Brown. Both regions are built on the foundation of small multi-generational family wineries with an emphasis on small vineyards and grand cru systems.

Equally finicky as Pinot Noir to location, the early budding but late-ripening Nebbiolo rarely finds growing success outside Piedmont. Within the region it's cultivated in Barolo, Barbaresco, and across the Tanaro River in Roero, as well as two Nebbiolo based DOCG's, Nebbiolo delle Langhe and Nebbiolo d'Alba.

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Barolo is often regarded as Italy's finest wine. It leads with dark fruit, red flowers, tar, spice, and mushroom. High acidity, alcohol, and tannins result in long aging in both large oak casks (or sometimes barriques) and bottle, prior to release. Extended bottle age after purchase, potentially up to 50 years in the best vintages, further aid in the wines pleasure and mystique.

The Barolo DOCG region, an UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to eleven notable villages: Barolo, Castiglione Falletto, Cherasco, Diano d'Alba, Grinzane Cavour, La Morra, Monforte d'Alba, Novello, Roddi, Serralunga d'Alba, and Verduno. Soil, location, and elevation differences enable each village to create distinctly different expressions of Barolo DOCG.

While slightly less concentrated, Barbaresco wines are equally robust and elegant as Barolo. To see it as a lesser wine is erroneous. For many, its subtlety proves more alluring. The main distinction in the wine styles is due to location.

Located northwest of Alba near the Tanaro River, Barbaresco is comprised of limestone soil (as opposed to Barolo's blue marl). Furthermore, the warmer location results in thinner grape skin (less tannins), earlier ripening, and a more fruit-forward wine.

Also an UNESCO World Heritage Site, four villages comprise this DOCG: Barbaresco, Neive, San Rocco Seno d'Elvio and Treiso.

The fog of Langhe is believed to aid in prolonging Nebbiolo's ripening season. "Nebbiolo Lange are the most 'ready to drink and easiest on the wallet,'" shares Brown. "Equally delicious and can be a good intro to Nebbiolo."

Barbera, known as the work horse grape, is the most widely planted red grape in Piedmont, with Barbera d'Asti DOCG and Barbera d'Alba DOC as the region's most well-known appellations. This dark-skinned, high acid grape thrives in warm climates. Fresh cherry notes take the lead and the wine can be crafted in a wide range of styles from light and rustic to bold and powerful.

Many Piemonte winemakers embrace Barolo for its exquisite site expression, Barbaresco for its elegant restraint, and Barbera for its ease of drinkability. "I grew up drinking Barbera," explains, Daniele Gaia, winemaker of Réva Winery,



typical Italian pasta with truffle slices and parmesan cheese GETTY

Brown believes these wines are true food wines, and offers an array of pairing recommendations. “A mature Barolo with steak and potatoes is magic.” She recently paired a [Scarpetta Barbera del Monferrato](#) with an Asian ox tail noodle dish for a virtual event that was “perfect.” Some other favorites for Brown include “Pizza, duck with foie gras, cured meats, alpine cheeses... Truffles with scrambled eggs.”

### **Producers to try:**

[Tenute Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Grésy](#), home to four vineyards in Langhe and Monferrato, has been owned by the di Grésy family since 1797. Of their 111 acres of vineyards, Martinenga stands above the rest. Elevations of 820 to 918 feet, blue marl soil, and southern exposure allows Nebbiolo to ripen to perfection.

Barbaresco lovers take note: the **Martinenga Barbaresco DOCG** is a beauty to behold.

Located in the heart of Piemonte, Vite Colte is a winery within a winery. Created in 2010, the project involves 180 winemakers and 300 hectares of vineyards, coming together to take advantage of the strict quality criteria of the Terre da Vino cooperative. A portion of each vineyard is dedicated to the project, creating a team with an eye to sustainable vineyard practices in crafting high quality wines at affordable prices. The wide portfolio includes their flagship **Spezie**

**Barbaresco DOCG**, and four expressions of **Essenze**, **Riserva**, **Barolo**,

**Serralunga D'Alba**, and **Monforte D'Alba**.

**Renato Ratti** bought his first Barolo vineyard, **Marcenasco**, in 1965. Today the winery owns 35 hectares of vineyards spread across **La Morra**, **Mango**, and **Costigliote d'Asti**. While crafting many expressions of **Nebbiolo**, as well as **Barbera**, **Dolcetto**, and more, it's the **Rocche dell'Annunziata Barolo DOCG** that steals the show. Not surprising, since historical documents date **Nebbiolo** production to the **Marcenascum** area to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A stunning wine.

Founded in 2013 by the **Gussalli Beretta Group**, **Forte Masso** is located in the heart of **Langhe**, in the municipality of **Monforte d'Alba**. Its vineyards are located on the **Monforte** side of the **Castelletto**. Five of the six hectares of vineyards are dedicated to **Nebbiolo** for the production of **Barolo** from the historical vineyard, **Pressenda**, within the **Castelletto** cru. While the **Barolo Castelletto Riserva DOCG** demonstrates the depth and structure of the cru, **the Langhe Nebbiolo DOC** exhibits freshness and approachability.

Founded in 1973, **Pertinace** is a small winegrowing cooperative with seventeen members and 90 hectares of vines. Located in the town of **Treiso**, they focus crafting cru **Barbaresco** from **Castellizzano**, **Marcarini** and **Nervo**, using the same vinification method for each wine, to highlight the region's terroir. Additionally, they produce **Barolo**, **Barbera**, and more.

Founded by **Carlo Vietti** in the late 1800's, the classic **Vietti** winery is located in heart of the **Langhe Hills**, at the top of the village **Castiglione Falletto**. Production of one of the first **Barolo** crus, **Rocche di Castiglione DOCG** in 1961, and single-variety vinification of **Arneis** in 1967, **Vietti's** artist labels are some of the most recognized wines in the region. Today, **Luca Currado** and his wife **Elena**, continue pursuit of world-class **Barbera**, **Barbaresco**, **Barolo**, and more in **Piedmont**.

**Réva Winery** launched in 2013 by Czech businessman, **Miro Lokes** with the vision of blending the traditions of the region with modern winemaking techniques. Home to 23 hectares of organic vineyards in six different **Piedmont** appellations, **Réva's** winemaker, **Daniele Gaia** says, "All I dream is for people to remember us for freshness and purity of wine." Their winemaking philosophy is to simply guide to the bottle what was made in the vineyard with as little intervention as possible. In a portfolio of exceptional wines, the **Barolo Ravera DOCG** stands out for its

depth of elegance and balance with layers of aromas and complexity. A close second is **Barolo Cannubi DOCG**, which Gaia says is a “big responsibility” because it must always be the best wine possible.

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**Michelle Williams**

Michelle Williams is an award-winning wine writer for consumer, B2B, and B2C platforms. Her work appears in numerous publications, including Wine-Searcher, Wine Enthusiast Magazine, The Buyer, Wine Business Monthly. She passionately explores the globe through the lens of a wine glass—preferably full—celebrating the communal experience of wine and illuminating the stories beyond the bottle. She is a member of the Circle of Wine Writers and holds an advanced certification from the Wine & Spirits Education Trust. In addition to writing, Michelle is a wine educator, speaker, and judge. **Read Less**

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