

# The Wine Corner

## Italy's best new wines

By Pierre DuMont

One of the more interesting wine events of the year in San Francisco is the annual Tre Bicchieri Tasting put on by the Slow Food consortium and Gambero Rosso, considered the “Bible” of Italian wines.



**Pecorino is not just the name of a cheese – it's also a grape.**

Every year they taste most of the major vine producers in the country and rate and describe the wines. The highest rating you can get is tre bicchieri – three glasses. Less than 1% or 2% of the wines produced earn this honor. That's why it's a big deal when the Gambero Rosso tasting rolls into town. The only wineries that are invited to present their wines are the ones that have won the coveted Tre Bicchieri award.

The other reason I look forward to this tasting is that these Italian tasting events have an entirely different feeling than the American ones. At American tasting events there is an earnest air of important business going on. There is a real effort to impress people with your wine.

When the Italians breeze into town it seems they are more on a holiday than a business trip. And after an hour or two of staffing their post you can see them wandering off to taste the other wines or talk to friends, leaving their bottles on the table, allowing you to help yourself. (Of course some of the tables are staffed by American distributors who take their job very seriously.)

You gotta love the joie de vie.

I really think Americans would benefit by getting better acquainted with Italian wines. I find they are one of the best accompaniments to food in the entire wine world. Most of them have a clean, brisk acidity that helps cut through the fat and flavors in food and get the palate ready for the next bite.

On the other hand, be forewarned that for many Americans these wines tasted without food can seem thin and astringent. Many a night I have opened a bottle of Italian wine before dinner and drank a glass with a feeling of disappointment. But that same wine served with dinner seems something altogether different – a complex, beautiful mate to the food.

So dust off your old Italian cookbook or order the pizza; here are the outstanding wines of the Gambero Rosso tasting.

- **2009 Pio Cesare Barolo Ornato**

The tiny Barolo appellation in Italy's Piemonte region produces some of the country's finest wines. The difficult Nebbiolo grape, which seems to do well nowhere else in the world, in the hands of wineries like Pio Cesare produces amazingly beautiful wines. Barolo is usually light red, almost brick in color with a perfumed nose of roses and earth. This wine is medium bodied but with a firm intensity sometimes described as an “iron hand in a velvet glove.” This wine needs at least five years of age to show its best and will improve for two decades. Imported by Maison Marques & Domaines,

- **2012 Cantina Tollo Colle Secco Pecorino (Great Value)**

This rare wine comes from the Abruzzo region of central eastern Italy, a region known for its hearty reds. This, however, is a lovely white wine made from the obscure Pecorino grape. It is clean and refreshing on the nose with citrus notes. On the palate it is busting with peach and apricot fruit followed by bracing acidity. Great as an aperitif or with fish or shellfish. \$15 suggested retail. Imported by Beverage Group International.

- **Villa Sandi Cartizze V. La Rivetta Prosecco**

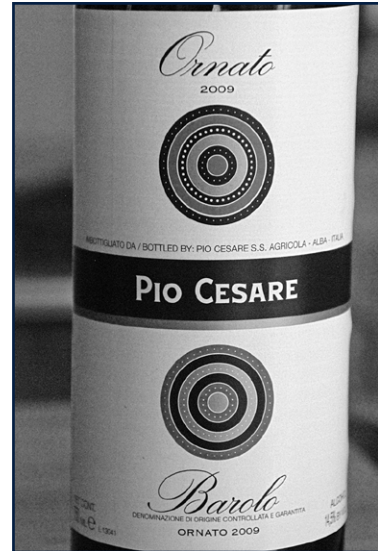
If all you have ever experienced are bland, dull, cheap Proseccos, then I have something for you to try. This beautifully crafted Prosecco will not leave you pining for Bollinger. It has a sweet perfumed floral bouquet and intense citrus and apple flavors on the palate and a crisp tingling finish. Ideal with oysters, fish, pate, anything you would serve champagne with. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners.

- **2009 Nicodemi Termane Neromoro Riserva Montepulciano d'Abruzzo** is

sometimes seen as a rustic simple wine to wash down a pizza or pasta, but this producer shows the great potential of the grape. An opulent nose of blackberries and a big mouthful of fruit on the palate, this luscious wine is one of the rare Italians offerings that goes well by itself. It's big and bombastic and ready to drink right now. Imported by Regal Wine Imports.

- **2009 Tedeschi Amarone della Valpolicella**

I was pleased to learn that Amarone is one of fastest growing Italian wines in terms of U.S. sales.



**Barolo is one of Italy's finest wines, as Pio Cesare proves.**

The wine needs to be discovered big time. Amarone is made in the Vento from a variety of obscure grapes. The secret to the wine is the process. The grapes are carefully dried in warehouses under close monitoring of temperature and humidity. This intensifies the flavors in the wine. This delicious wine has a huge mouthful of plum, raisin and cherry flavors mixed with a touch of tobacco and earth. It's a great wine to have after dinner with some cheese and almonds, preferably seated by a roaring fire. Imported by Dreyfus Ashby & Co.

- **2008 Fattoria Le Corti Chianti Classico Don Tommaso**

Beautifully ripe fruit of plum, berry, and dried flowers. Full bodied with supple tannins and a long finish. This wine is big, powerful, and layered – the Sangiovese grape at its finest. Delicious now, but even better in a few years. [www.henriot.com](http://www.henriot.com)

- **2009 Cantina Tolle Secco Montepulciano D'Abruzzo Riserva (Great Value)**

This well crafted medium bodied wine offers up aromas of cherries and strawberries then in the mouth it explodes with luscious berry fruit with a hint of earthiness for complexity. It is round and full but has the acid and tannin to stand up to hearty tomato based pasta sauces. Imported by Beverage Group International