

Jancis Robinson  
Jancis Robinson's scores

## Rassegna stampa

Giugno 2011

**Jancis Robinson's Web Site: Barbaresco catches up,  
Barbaresco 2008**

## Barbaresco - 2008s & 2006 Riservas

*15 Jun 2011 by Walter Speller*

*See below my introduction to this tasting of 2008 Barbarescos and 2006  
Riservas,*

*Barbaresco catches up.*

**2008 BARBARESCO**

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**Rizzi,**

**Barbaresco Pajore 2008 17**

**Drink 2014-20 Treiso.**

*Palish dark ruby with the beginning of orange tinge on the rim. Ethereal, leafy cherry nose. Juicy and very elegant round attack, mellowed out by a pinch of oak and with grainy tannin on the finish. Very young. (WS)*

**Rizzi,**

**Barbaresco Nervo Fondetta 2008 16**

**Drink 2014-18 Treiso.**

*Medium concentrated ruby with broader rim. Sweet and ripe hints of fruit cake but red fruit as well. Much more compact and fresh on the palate, but quite a contrast. Big tannic structure but fruit stands up to it. (WS)*

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## *Barbaresco catches up*

*15 Jun 2011 by Walter Speller*

*Barbaresco, which in the past may have been overshadowed by its bigger and more prestigious neighbour, seems to have caught up with Barolo in every sense, except for its size. It still is only half as large as Barolo (420 ha of vines v 948 ha) with four, rather than 11 communes within the DOCG. Unsurprisingly, Barbaresco produces only half as much wine as Barolo (4.24 million bottles v 11.98). (Mick Rock's photo shows Barbaresco vineyards with the village of Neive just visible behind.) The wines, which were traditionally considered a 'lighter expression of Nebbiolo', and were thought to age much more quickly, are therefore subjected to a shorter period of mandatory ageing compared with Barolo: 26 rather than 38 months. The grapes destined for Barbaresco are also officially allowed to be harvested at slightly lower potential alcohol than its larger sibling, 12% v 12.5%. In reality, however, recent vintages have rarely been less than 14%. (Interestingly, the wines shown in a separate overview of 2001 Barolo and Barbaresco during Nebbiolo Prima 2011 were mainly 13 or 13.5% alcohol according to the labels.) All this has been enshrined in law in the belief that Barbaresco produces more 'feminine' wines than Barolo. But this may be a historic view, at least to judge by current vineyard prices in each zone.*



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Whether in Barolo or Barbaresco, one hectare of non-cru vineyard costs €130,000-150,000, while one hectare of a prestigious cru in either zone is at least €300,000-350,000 (figures provided by Albeisa, the producer association responsible for the organisation of Nebbiolo Prima). Of course, there are significant stylistic differences between these two great areas within the Langhe, but it may be that in terms of reputation, the two are not as far apart as the difference in regulations suggests. Like Barolo, Barbaresco consists of several communes which are situated within the Barbaresco official demarcation: Alba (with 28 ha the smallest of the four), Barbaresco itself (107 ha), Neive (182 ha) and Treiso (103 ha). Although it is not easy, either for untrained or trained palates, immediately to detect in the glass the differences among these communes, the divisions between the four villages are not just for bureaucratic or historical reasons. The vineyards of the commune of Barbaresco are planted on Tortonian soils that consist of clay and marl with a high mineral content. Around 60% of all vineyards in the commune are devoted to Nebbiolo, with the remainder given over to Dolcetto, Barbera, and, surprisingly, Chardonnay, in that order. This commune also has the highest number of crus, no doubt the consequence of favourable south to south-east hillside expositions. Although Neive is larger than Barbaresco, far fewer of its vineyards are planted with Nebbiolo, a modest 20% only, the most important variety here being Moscato. Neive, together with Treiso, and Serralunga, which lies within the Barolo designation, also fits within the Moscato d'Asti demarcation. Nebbiolo is cultivated only in the hills of Neive which face south to south-west (it wouldn't ripen otherwise), while Moscato thrives even on north-facing hills. Parts of Neive are also quite flat, and these soils tend to be richer in clay, a cooler soil type which would slow down the late-ripening Nebbiolo.



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*Treiso has only a marginally higher proportion of vineyard area planted to Nebbiolo for the production of Barbaresco, just 23%, and here too Moscato rules. Treiso's hills can rise up to 400 m above sea level, an altitude considered too cool for the fickle Nebbiolo to ripen properly. Hence the predominance of Moscato as well as Dolcetto, both much more accommodating varieties. It is not easy to pinpoint the stylistic differences between Barolo and Barbaresco, and this is made even harder by the myriad different approaches in the cellar in both zones. However, because Barbaresco is restricted to a much less prolonged mandatory ageing (nine months in oak compared with Barolo's 18 months), the preferred vessel still seems to be the French barrique, although it is handled in general with great savvy, while Barolo tends more and more to large oak casks only. What I did notice this year was that generally Barbaresco can seem a bit more alcoholic than Barolo, especially when the wines seem less extracted or show less concentrated fruit. But this impression will certainly also have been created by the particular characteristics of the 2008 Barbarescos we were tasting. The first half of the 2008 growing cycle proved very challenging due to disease in the vineyards. Both sorts of mildew were constant threats from May well into July and in some vineyards even into August, keeping producers on their toes throughout most of the growing season. The result was that quantity was down on the previous year, but the Consorzio maintains that quality was much less affected. Hail also created local damage and reduced yields further. All this meant that the vintage, at least for Nebbiolo, was going to be a protracted one, and producers who had the courage to delay the harvest were rewarded with very good to excellent grapes. But, as always in testing years, terroir and individual sites with certain propensities came into their own in 2008.*



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*Producers with less favoured sites but willing to wait may have picked fruit that started to show the classic characteristics of overripeness. This resulted in some cases in wines that were high in alcohol but not backed up by enough fruit concentration. The commune that seemed to me to fare particularly well in 2008 is Barbaresco, and especially the cru Rabajà, which showed impressive consistency. These are the wines to look out for, and which will keep for many years, even though they are already hard to resist - provided you like tannin. But then, not to like tannin (or acidity, for that matter) is to miss the point about Italian wine in general. Neive and Treiso were more irregular, with many of the wines seeming quite tannic, although in many cases they were overlaid by attractive oak (the Barbareschesi are extremely clever with barriques). This initially softened the fruit but also added a load of dry tannins to an already tannic finish. The wines that seem to have suffered most from the 2008 vintage conditions show very appealing fruit but cannot escape a certain rusticity combined with a lack of complexity on the finish. Having said all this, during Nebbiolo Prima 2011, I encountered far fewer wine defects in the 2008 Barbaresco samples than in the Barolos from the much more benign 2007 vintage. Bravo! And the 2006 Barbaresco Riservas proved a total treat. Forget about Bordeaux, together with the 2006 Barolos, these are the wines that should be snapped up as long as they are available on the market.*