



# ASIA TATLER

## The Pearls of Piemonte

*Barbaresco wines are on the rise, thanks to some of the best wine makers in the region*



**(14<sup>th</sup> June 2012 - By Roddy Ropner)** Barbaresco is a quiet town situated above the River Tanaro with sweeping views of the Alps. It is roughly 20 kilometres from Barolo and a mere five kilometres from Alba but is largely untouched by tourism or modernity. It has only one main street and is home to 650 people. But one of its inhabitants, Angelo Gaja, can lay claim to being one of the most important figures in Italian wine making and almost single-handedly putting Barbaresco on the world wine map.

Barbaresco DOCG covers approximately 680 hectares, less than half the size of Barolo, slightly more than one tenth the size of Burgundy's Côte d'Or. Just as in barolo the wine must be made from the nebbiolo grape, while aging requirements are less than that for barolo - a minimum aging period of 24 months is required of which 12 must be in oak.



The soil in Barbaresco is predominantly limestone similar to that of nearby Barolo and La Morra. The vineyards of Barbaresco generally lie lower than those of Barolo and so enjoy higher average temperatures. They are closer to the River Tanaro as well, and benefits from the maritime influence of the Ligurian Sea, so the harvest takes place earlier. These factors, combined with the shorter period of oak maturation means that barbarescos tend to be more approachable than barolos in their youth.

Wine making styles are common to both districts. Some growers favour a traditional style – characterised by a longer fermentation, and maturation in large Slavonian oak barrels, or botti, others favour the more modern style with shorter fermentations and maturation in 225 litre French oak barrels, as pioneered by Gaja. However, many now adopt a compromise or indeed a combination of these techniques.



For years, barbaresco had remained in the shadow of barolo but these days both wines enjoy the same amount of respect. The work of producers like Gaja, Bruno Giacosa and Marchesi di Grésy has done much to raise the quality of the wines and spread the fame of barbaresco. Prices are modest compared to bordeaux first growth and the wines, despite that their potential to age are scarce and it's hard to find mature wines in the market place.

The winemakers of Piemonte are well represented in Vinexpo 2012 that wrapped up just last week in Hong Kong. It's a measure of the high regard that Hong Kong-based **Jeannie Cho Lee MW** and Debra Meiburg MW both conducted seminars on the wines of the region during the event.