

Michael Franz's 2019 Wine of the Year: Vietti Barolo Ravera 2015

Writing this on the day after Thanksgiving, I'm deeply thankful for all of the wonderful wines I was fortunate to taste during 2019. There were so many of them out of the 9,000+ I tasted that selecting "the best of the best" is more an act of impulse and emotion than direct comparison, as the top wines were tasted at different times in varied settings on four different continents. Nevertheless, the wine that still holds the strongest grip on me was one I tasted all the way back in January in the gorgeous town of Alba, just below the Alps in northwestern Italy.

I hasten to emphasize that the beauty of the place had nothing to do with the evaluation experience, as I tasted this "blind" among many, many other newly-released, Nebbiolo-based wines over the course of four days. Working on 100+ of these per day is a little less fun and a lot more like "work" than you might guess...until a truly great wine in the long sequence just kicks down the door and announces itself with exhilarating clarity, which is how Vietti's 2015 Ravera presented itself to me.

If you've read some of my Barolo reviews from the past 10 years of blind tastings in Alba, you'll know that I'm not overawed by the region's big names, nor afraid at all to give very high scores to up-and-coming producers regardless of how obscure they may yet be. But with that noted, it is also true that sometimes famous houses prove entirely deserving of their fame, as in the case of Vietti's phenomenally great Barolo from the Cru of Ravera in the commune of Novello.

In terms of texture, it is simply the best 2015 Barolo I've tasted, with an uncanny combination of silkiness and proportionality that effectively disguises the fact that it is actually a big, concentrated, powerful wine. Wine descriptors are all just analogies, so bear with me while I note that it is essentially impossible for a human being to come off as "charming" and "formidable" simultaneously, whereas this wine proves that the combination is no impossibility in the rare realm of truly great Barolo.

Ultra-complex and yet amazingly pure and natural-seeming, this will be expensive, but well worth taking a hammer to your piggy bank. \$195 is a lot to ask from a piggy bank, but not too much to ask for this amazing wine, which I may have under-scored at **99 Points**. Do what you must: Raid the kids' College Fund, sell your watch, hock your wedding ring...do whatever is necessary to get ahold of one of these. Then wait about 8 - 10 years, and get ready to hear the Heavenly Choir chime in when this hits your palate....

Posted by Michael Franz at 11:46 AM Nov. 29th, 2019

