



DRINKS / WINE

Little red wine that could

Take notes on Italy's lesser-known red wine, Barbera.

by PAUL ABERCROMBIE

Ask most Italian red wine geeks about their favorites, and chances are they'll say at least one of the following: Barolo, Barbaresco and Brunello. Or as a brother-in-law lovingly calls them, "the Killer B's."

Pity that most of these folks don't mention Barbera. Here's a wine with zesty acidity, softer tannins (what typically makes your mouth water in big red wines) and a

Plus, Barbera is what you want in a big B's.

Like Barolo and Barbaresco, Barbera is Italy's Piedmont region's Piedmont region's Piedmont region's Barbera grape variety. Footloose and fancy-free, it's found in other countries, particularly, to California.

ingredient in Martini Gran Lusso vermouth, lovely on the rocks with a twist of lemon as a before-dinner cocktail.)

Yet for many years, Barbera has been overlooked. Or maybe under-promoted. "For many years [Barbera] was looked at as a simple, daily drink that you enjoy while waiting for your Barolos and Barbarescos to mature," says Bern's Fine Wines & Spirits General Manager Kevin Pelley, a fellow Barbera lover. "But in the last decade, producers have begun to see Barbera as something more noble."

To this end, winemakers are tinkering with more modern methods, including aging Barberas in oak barrels to give them more depth and complexity.

You can score a fantastic bottle of Barbera for around \$15, though posher versions can run several times as much.

Al Beck, director of education at Premier Beverage Company, recently invited me to join him in tasting a handful of Barberas his company distributes.

We started with a bottle of 2011 Barbera D'Alba by Bruno Giacosa, a rock star among Barbera D'Alba fans. Clearly the guy wasn't phoning in his Barberas either. Bursting with dark cherry and a hint of chocolate, it seems to straddle the traditional and modern wine worlds and worth every penny.

I also loved the **2010 Beni di Batasiolo Barbera D'Alba (\$20)**. A faint chocolate vibe really complements its bright cherry.

from grapes grown on planet, where day and night are less hardy grapes which whole different animal takes a back seat to a swear) a hint of bacon

I have to admit I prefer Some other Barberas and liked — include a Barbera D'Alba (\$26). classic lively cherry taste

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A great example of even Fontanafredda Briccotondo Barbera D'Alba is super delicious. And criminally cheap at less than \$15 a bottle. It's our semi-official house wine.

