

Flight 1

1997 Barolo Le Coste - Giacomo Grimaldi

92RP

A muscular, dark plum-colored Barolo, Grimaldi's 1997 offers classic aromatics of melted road tar, rose petals, new saddle leather, beef blood, and kirsch liqueur. Impressively endowed, with moderately high tannin, this powerful, thick, juicy effort is a definitive Barolo. An impressive effort from this producer (a former policeman from the village of Barolo), whose debut vintage was 1996, it needs 4-5 years of cellaring, and should keep for two decades.

1997 Barolo Bussia Vigna Rocche - Parusso

92RP

The explosive, dense ruby/purple-colored 1997 Barolo Bussia Vigna Rocche possesses a dramatic, concentrated personality as well as an exceptional bouquet of minerals, black fruits, tar, tobacco, and subtle new oak. This massive, concentrated Barolo exhibits terrific glycerin and fruit, in addition to a fleshy, nicely structured, well-delineated finish. Anticipated maturity: 2003-2020.

1997 Barolo Bussia Vigna Munie - Parusso

91RP

The dark ruby-colored 1997 Barolo Bussia Vigna Munie displays a Chateaufeuf du Pape-like character in its combination of kirsch liqueur and roasted Provencal herbs. It is an expansive, chewy, structured effort with wonderful intensity as well as the vintage's tell-tale overripeness and excessive exoticism. Anticipated maturity: 2002-2017.

1997 Barolo San Rocco - Azelia

94RP

From a well-known Castiglione Falletto vineyard, the 1997 Barolo Bric del Fiasc reveals the essence of cherry jam in its massive constitution. It is a powerful, full-bodied effort displaying pronounced black cherry liqueur-like aromas and flavors, huge extract and glycerin, and 14.5-15% alcohol. Remarkably pure, delineated, and balanced for a wine of such massiveness, it still needs another 2-3 years of cellaring. Anticipated maturity: 2003-2020.

1997 Barolo San Giovanni - Gianfranco Alessandria

92RP

The impressively-endowed, dark plum-colored 1997 Barolo San Giovanni (a vineyard facing Bussia) is a blockbuster. It boasts terrific concentration as well as a sweet bouquet of chocolate, blackberries, cherries, tobacco, asphalt, and smoke. Structured and powerful, with muscle to spare, this massive wine needs 3-4 years of cellaring (despite its low acidity). Anticipated maturity: 2004-2020.

1997 Barolo Brunate - Enzo Boglietti

90RP

The dark plum/garnet-colored 1997 Barolo Brunate exhibits a strikingly pure nose of melted licorice, kirsch liqueur, tobacco, spice box, and toasty oak. Deep, massive, full-bodied, and layered, with huge extract, this is a structured, powerful effort. It is an immensely impressive 1997. Anticipated maturity: 2003-2020.

Flight 2

1997 Barolo Case Nere - Enzo Boglietti

91RP

The 1997 Barolo Case Nere displays an intriguing perfume of hickory/barbecue smoke intermixed with tar, rose water, black cherries, toffee, and maple syrup. Full-bodied, with large volume, a plush, multilayered texture, low acidity, and a boatload of glycerin, it is a thick, succulent Barolo to consume now and over the next 12-15+ years.

1997 Barolo Vigna del Gris - Conterno Fantino

93RP

Conterno-Fantino's 1997 Barolo Vigna del Gris displays beautifully sweet black fruits in its aromatic profile, and huge, concentrated, full-bodied flavors with enormous muscle, amazing glycerin levels, and exceptional purity. This super-concentrated effort is just beginning to reveal the tell-tale Nebbiolo/Barolo traits of tar, rose petals, and sweet black cherry fruit. It requires 2-3 years of cellaring, and should easily last for two decades, although I doubt it will ever close down. This is a super-impressive Barolo.

1997 Barolo Fossati - Enzo Boglietti

91RP

The saturated ruby/garnet-colored 1997 Barolo Fossati possesses thick, blackberry, raspberry, and cherry flavors intermixed with new oak, licorice, and smoke. Pure, opulent, and succulent, this intense, low acid wine displays the vintage's exoticism as well as copious alcohol and glycerin. Anticipated maturity: now-2015.

1997 Barolo Sori Ginestra - Conterno Fantino

92RP

The 1997 Barolo Sori Ginestra exhibits a deep ruby/purple color in addition to complex aromas of tobacco smoke and gloriously sweet, jammy cherry liqueur. Ripe, opulent, and full-bodied, with huge amounts of glycerin and extract, yet high tannin in the finish, this 1997 needs 4-5 years of cellaring, and should keep for 20+ years. This is a super-impressive Barolo.

1997 Barolo Brunate - Ceretto

94RP

The 1997 Barolo Brunate displays an evolved dark garnet color with an amber edge. However, in the mouth, it is dense, full-bodied, moderately tannic, structured, and backward with plenty of power, concentration, and youthfulness. Despite the evolved color, this wine needs another 1-2 years of cellaring, and should age well for 16-18+ years.

1997 Barolo Giachini Vecchia Vigne - Giovanni Corino

95RP

The explosive 1997 Barolo Giachini Vecchia Vigne's (200 cases) plum/garnet color is accompanied by an awesomely layered texture, great purity, abundant quantities of fruit, and complex aromatics as well as flavors. It should drink well over the next 14-15 years.

Flight 3

1997 Barolo Enrico VI - Cordero di Montezemolo

91RP

The 1997 Barolo Vigna Enrico VI (a cuvee that sees 50% new barriques rather than the 100% for the Bricco Gattera and 33% for the Monfalletto) is complex and intense. The wine's dense ruby/purple color is followed by classic aromas of road tar, rose petals, leather, cedar, and black fruits. Full-bodied, dense, chewy, and powerful, with good underlying acidity as well as sweet tannin, this classic should age well for 2+ decades. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2020.

1997 Barolo Margheria - Luigi Pira

92RP

Luigi Pira, who has the most massive hands I have ever encountered on a vigneron, has fashioned a more structured effort with his 1997 Barolo Margheria. This wine has become more delineated and civilized after spending time in cask and foudre. Tell-tale notes of kirsch liqueur, dried flowers, rose petals, licorice, soy, leather, and tobacco combine with scents of seaweed, chocolate, and red/black fruits. The Margheria possesses firm tannin and muscle. It is a sensationally concentrated, full-bodied, powerful Barolo in need of 2-4 years of cellaring. It should drink well between 2004-2020.

1997 Barolo Bussia – Prunotto

94RP

The profound 1997 Barolo Bussia boasts intense aromas of molasses, cherry liqueur, melted tar, licorice, and toast. Dense and full-bodied, with enormous quantities of glycerin and fat, this hedonistic, thick, viscous Barolo can be drunk now and over the next 15-16 years.

1997 Barolo Vigna Rionda Riserva - Massolino

93RP

The 1997 Barolo Riserva Vigna Rionda, from one of Barolo's great vineyards, shows all the intensity one might expect. The powerfully alcoholic rose petal, anisette, and kirsch aromas are matched by equally potent flavors, a densely packed extract, strapping but supple, with a richness and a velvet which are out of the common. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2025.

1997 Barolo Bric d'el Fiasc - Paolo Scavino

95RP

From a well-known Castiglione Falletto vineyard, the 1997 Barolo Bric del Fiasc reveals the essence of cherry jam in its massive constitution. It is a powerful, full-bodied effort displaying pronounced black cherry liqueur-like aromas and flavors, huge extract and glycerin, and 14.5-15% alcohol. Remarkably pure, delineated, and balanced for a wine of such massiveness, it still needs another 2-3 years of cellaring. Anticipated maturity: 2003-2020.

1997 Barolo Bricco Rocche - Ceretto

96RP

The ostentatious, staggering 1997 Barolo Bricco Rocche possesses a dark garnet color with amber at the edge. The explosive bouquet of coffee liqueur, licorice, spice box, black cherries, kirsch, raspberries, and cedar is to die for. The wine reveals numerous dimensions and nuances as well as a boatload of glycerin. Full-bodied, massively concentrated, and exceptionally thick and juicy, with a sweetness due to the high glycerin and ripeness, this is Barolo on steroids. Anticipated maturity: now-2018.

Flight 4

1997 Barolo Ciabot Mentin Ginestra – D. Clerico

94RP

The 1997 Barolo Ciabot Mentin Ginestra is a fearsomely powerful, tannic, ultra-concentrated, explosively rich wine with a mid-palate in which one could get lost. A saturated ruby/purple color is accompanied by scents of lead pencil, cedar, black fruits, smoke, earth, and vanilla. Massive richness, monster extract, sweet tannin, and a blockbuster finish characterize this dazzling, 20-30 year wine. Anticipated maturity: 2005-2025.

1997 Barolo Lazzarito - Vietti

90-93RP

The dark ruby/garnet-colored 1997 Barolo Lazzarito reveals a certain forwardness, no doubt because of the vintage's exotic, opulent, low acid character. There is plenty of stuffing, full body, and notes of balsam wood, spice box, fruit cake, and cherries. Viscous, chewy, and deep, this precocious wine can be drunk upon release, or cellared for 15-20 years.

1997 Barolo Brunate - Vietti

91-93RP

The exquisite 1997 Barolo Brunate is a backward offering. Dark ruby-colored with a purple hue, it offers a compelling nose of barbecued pork, cherry syrup, roasted coffee, rose water, and licorice. Full-bodied, muscular, and powerful, with a load of tannin as well as huge richness and thickness, it requires cellaring for 2-3 years, and should drink well for 20-25 years.

1997 Barolo Barolo Mosconi Per Cristina Riserva – D. Clerico 93RP

The 1997 Barolo Ciabot Mentin Ginestra is a fearsomely powerful, tannic, ultra-concentrated, explosively rich wine with a mid-palate in which one could get lost. A saturated ruby/purple color is accompanied by scents of lead pencil, cedar, black fruits, smoke, earth, and vanilla. Massive richness, monster extract, sweet tannin, and a blockbuster finish characterize this dazzling, 20-30 year wine. Anticipated maturity: 2005-2025.

1997 Barolo Cannubi Boschis - Luciano Sandrone

96RP

The prodigious 1997 Barolo Cannubi Boschis possesses a dark saturated garnet color. The sweet nose of black fruits, minerals, scorched earth, smoke, dried herbs, and wet stones is stunning. Amazingly concentrated, with tremendous unctuousity yet superb delineation, this large-scaled as well as elegant Barolo possesses fabulous extract as well as a multidimensional mid-palate and finish. It is an amazing effort! Anticipated maturity: 2003-2020.

1997 Barolo Arborina - Elio Altare

95RP

The saturated dark ruby/purple-colored 1997 Barolo Arborina offers a stunning nose of smoky, sweet oak intertwined with jammy cassis, cherry liqueur, licorice, and white truffles. Full-bodied, with explosive fruit, terrific purity, and layers of glycerin and extract, this magnificent, mouth-filling, teeth-staining Barolo possesses extraordinary symmetry for its size, as well as low acidity and nearly over-ripe tannin. There is not a hard edge to be found. Anticipated maturity: 2002-2018.

Flight 5

1997 Barolo Brunate - Roberto Voerzio

92RP

A big wine, the dense opaque ruby/purple-colored, tannic 1997 Barolo Brunate, exhibits copious aromas of cassis, black cherry, kirsch liqueur, licorice, smoke, truffles, and new oak. Notes of coffee and chocolate emerge as the wine sits in the glass. It possesses amazing density, a lot of muscle, and a roasted character to its fruity personality. This backstrapping, full-bodied Barolo requires 4-5 years of cellaring, and should keep for 25.

1997 Barolo Vigneto Cannubi - Comm. G.B. Burlotto

86RP

The exquisite 1997 Barolo Brunate is a backward offering. Dark ruby-colored with a purple hue, it offers a compelling nose of barbecued pork, cherry syrup, roasted coffee, rose water, and licorice. Full-bodied, muscular, and powerful, with a load of tannin as well as huge richness and thickness, it requires cellaring for 2-3 years, and should drink well for 20-25 years.

1997 Barolo Sori San Lorenzo - Gaja

98RP

Profound, the 1997 Sori San Lorenzo is an elegant, nuanced, and complex Gaja offering. It exhibits a striking perfume of lead pencil, roasted nuts, black fruits, spice box, leather, cedar, and Chinese black tea. Forward yet enormously constituted and rich, with an ethereal elegance underpinning its personality, the Sori Lorenzo displays a classic combination of power and finesse. Sadly, there are only 10,000 bottles. As this wine sat in the glass, notes of Japanese soy sauce made an appearance. Anticipated maturity: 2002-2030.

1997 Barolo le Rocche del Falletto - Bruno Giacosa

96RP

Bruno Giacosa's 1997 Barolo Rocche de Falletto emerges from four blocks of his Falletto vineyard with a southeastern exposure. This amazing, deep plum/garnet-colored offering possesses huge body as well as a sweet, sexy, fleshy mid-palate and finish. Classic aromas of rose petals, melted tar, and cherry liqueur not only soar aromatically, but saturate the palate and coat the taster's teeth. Profoundly complex and multilayered, with an exquisite texture and overall harmony, for a Giacosa Barolo it is uncommonly precocious, making me think it will provide profound drinking in 2-3 years, and last for three decades.

1997 Barolo Cannubi San Lorenzo Ravera - Giuseppe Rinaldi 94RP

The 2001 Barolo Cannubi/S.Lorenzo-Ravera is striking. Sweet red cherries, flowers, mint and spices are some of the many nuances that emerge from this fresh, vibrant Barolo. The Cannubi/S.Lorenzo-Ravera is often overlooked, but that would be a mistake here. The 2001 has put on serious weight over the last few years. It is a sensual, powerful Barolo that can be enjoyed now or cellared for another decade-plus. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2021.

1997 Barolo Monprivato - Giuseppe Mascarello

92RP

One of Piedmont's perennial stars, particularly in top vintages, Mauro Mascarello's 1997 Barolo Monprivato exhibits a dense ruby/garnet color as well as a sweet nose of cedar, black fruits, earth, tar, and rose petals. The explosive perfume is followed by a rich, seamless, full-bodied, unctuously-textured wine. One of the most precocious and accessible Monprivatos I have ever tasted, the 1997 is the finest since the glorious 1990. Anticipated maturity: now-2015.

Flight 6

1997 Barolo Riserva Granbussia - Poderi Aldo Conterno 92RP

Granbussia, the Barolo Riserva of the house, is made principally from the grapes of the Romirasco vineyard, the estate's highest, and the altitude was obviously of real assistance in the unusually hot year of 1997. The 1997 Barolo Riserva Granbussia, quite fresh for the vintage, features a sweet, ripe, floral and tarry nose, fine cherry and plum fruit on the rich and full-bodied palate along with minerals, herbs, licorice, and asphalt. Though always a long-lived wine, it generally comes around earlier than Vigna Cicala, and I would choose to drink the wine between 2005 and 2020.

1997 Barolo - Bartolo Mascarello 94RP

I underestimated this wine from barrel, but now that the great old man of the village of Barolo, Bartolo Mascarello, has gotten it in bottle, it is an impressive, old style, heavyweight effort that will age for three decades. A dark plum/garnet color is accompanied by a striking bouquet of cinnamon, balsam wood, roses, tar, minerals, and cherry liqueur. There is good acidity, a broad, full-bodied, super-concentrated palate, and tell-tale truffle, leather, and dried herb notes. Powerful and long, this well-delineated, gorgeously pure, structured Barolo is a classic from the old school of Piedmontese winemaking.

1997 Barolo Sperss - Gaja 99RP

A virtually perfect effort is the 1997 Sperss (30,000 bottles), which represents the essence of truffles, earth, and black cherries in its striking aromatics and multidimensional, opulent, full-bodied palate. The acidity seems low because of the huge glycerin levels and prodigious concentration of fruit, but I suspect it is normal in the scheme of oenological measurement. This profound wine requires 3-4 years of cellaring, and should age well for 30-35 years.

1997 Barolo Sori Tildin - Gaja 99RP

The awesome 1997 Sori Tilden (10,000 bottles produced) is a candidate for perfection. The saturated purple color is followed by a dense, full-bodied wine possessing extraordinary vibrancy for such a heavyweight, muscular Nebbiolo. It offers a super-sweet entry, a boatload of glycerin, and notes of earth, licorice, cedar, blackberry and cherry liqueur, and a touch of blueberries. Extremely full, gorgeously pure, with a seamless texture, this spectacular 1997 will enjoy three decades of cellaring.

1997 Barolo Riserva Monprivato Cà d'Morissio – G. Mascarello 95RP

Mascarello's outrageous 1997 Barolo Riserva Ca' d'Morissio makes a case for itself as the most primary and unevolved wine of the vintage. It offers everything one could want from a Barolo, starting with a huge, brooding balsamic nose of spices, cocoa, leather, menthol and tar. This superbly structured wine is massive, with waves of ripe dark fruit that coat the palate, potent tannins and an exquisitely long finish. Made from a special parcel within the heart of the Monprivato cru planted with the Michet clone, this Riserva is only released in top vintages. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2027.

1997 Barolo Riserva Monfortino - Giacomo Conterno 98RP

The 1997 Barolo Riserva Monfortino might be considered Giovanni Conterno's monument, the greatest ever made in a series which goes back all the way to the 1950s. Enormously full and ripe, layered and textured with a richness which is almost indescribable, it truly has it all, the rose petals, tar, and licorice of the nose, the succulent density of the flavors, the endless finish which rises to a crescendo of sensual authority. Strangely enough, it is already approachable, even if it will undoubtedly be good for another quarter of a century. A last piece of good news is that the 1996 version of this wine, a work of art which seemed hewn out of granite, is finally beginning to soften, open up, and show its austere magnificence. Unlike the 1997, it is a wine I would not touch for another ten years but, as in the fable of the tortoise and the hare, it is entirely possible that the former beast will win the race.