

2003 Barbera—The New Purple Haze

Welcome to Unti Vineyards: Refugee camp for wayward/under appreciated varietals. Give us your fruit-forward, full-bodied, and soft tannin huddled gallons of off-beat wine. I think Dad's decision to plant Barbera in 1998, was rather *Dickensian*.. After all, most American winemakers have considered this grape to be second class (Can I have more Barbera gruel sir?); used only for lending acid and color to a massive quantity generic blend. In fairness, I should exclude such producers as Louis Martini, Montevina, and Preston from this generalization. In fact, Preston's success with Barbera in Dry Creek Valley encouraged George to plant it in the first place. Thanks Lou.

Even in its native habitat, Piemonte, Barbera has only recently ascended to fine wine status. Barbera is second only to Sangiovese in total red wine grape acreage planted in Italy. For years it has been the source of very drinkable everyday table wine in this northwest region of Italy. But from the hills of the Langhe, near the town of Alba, Barbera can be made into a very stylish, dare I say sexy, wine. Alba is the well-to-do-hub of Piemonte's finest vineyards. Much like Healdsburg, tourism has been bery-bery good to Alba. (Wonder if their locals complain about not being able to buy underwear on the town square like they do here?)

In the early 1980's, a few great Barolo and Barbaresco producers began making "serious Barbera"; meaning a more extracted, full-bodied rendition from low yielding vines and aged in new French oak barrels. Folks like Giacomo Bologna, Angelo Gaja, and Elio Grasso now make compelling wines from this fruity high-acid varietal. It has become a legitimate fine wine alternative to high-priced Barolo and Barbaresco.

Sooooo...why don't more California wineries make Barbera you ask? Probably because superstar Piemontese Barberas are rarely found in even the best wine shops. I also think local winemakers have acid phobia. Barbera is all about high acidity. Much like my own personality, high acid wines can be an acquired taste. Without enough fruit and body, a high acid red wine can appear thin. This type of wine gets slammed by wine critics in today's "fatter is better" atmosphere. Even our own beloved Sébastien Pochan was leery of our 2003 Barbera's high acidity. Upon tasting it out of barrel, he suggested we may consider de-acidifying this wine. After I almost coughed my wine through my nose, I suggested we compare this wine with several Italian Barberas (what Sébastien didn't know was that this is my standard response to almost any suggestion.) In comparison, our 2003 Barbera was darker *and* bigger with more voluptuous/exotic fruit than anything Italy could throw at it. It even chased the 2002 Unti Barbera off of the table. And the '03 has just the right amount of acidity to let you know what varietal you're drinking. Oh, by the way, like most Italian reds, Barbera tastes much better with food (what a concept!).

Aging: 11 months; in French oak, 25% new
Blend: 100% Barbera
Cases Produced: 660

Whether you are a fan of modern-style Barbera d'Alba or just good, juicy, fruit forward reds, this wine is a must try. If our last vintage is any indication, this wine will be sold out by March. My only question is why Hanna winery hasn't made a Barbera yet? *Mick*

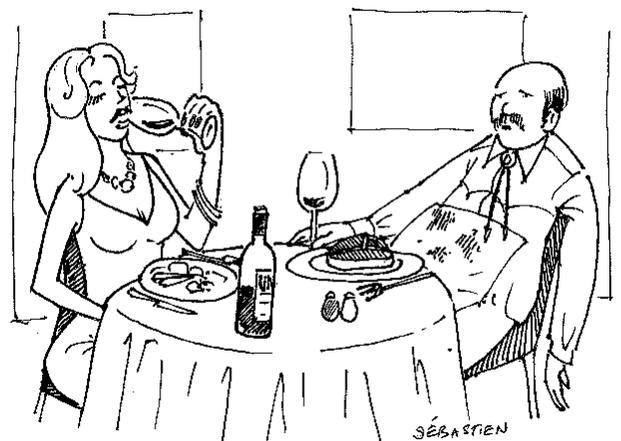
2003 Segromigno—Difficult to say, but easy to drink

In 2000, we took what was our weakest vintage of Sangiovese, blended it with 15% Syrah and made a very palatable "baby super Tuscan" named after my Dad's Italian home: Segromigno. At the time, I was terrified to be selling a Sangiovese blend with a difficult to say proprietary name. As usual my fears were unfounded and the wine sold so well that we still have customers asking when we plan to do another Segromigno. Well, here you go. This time the wine is more like a California Chianti *normale*.

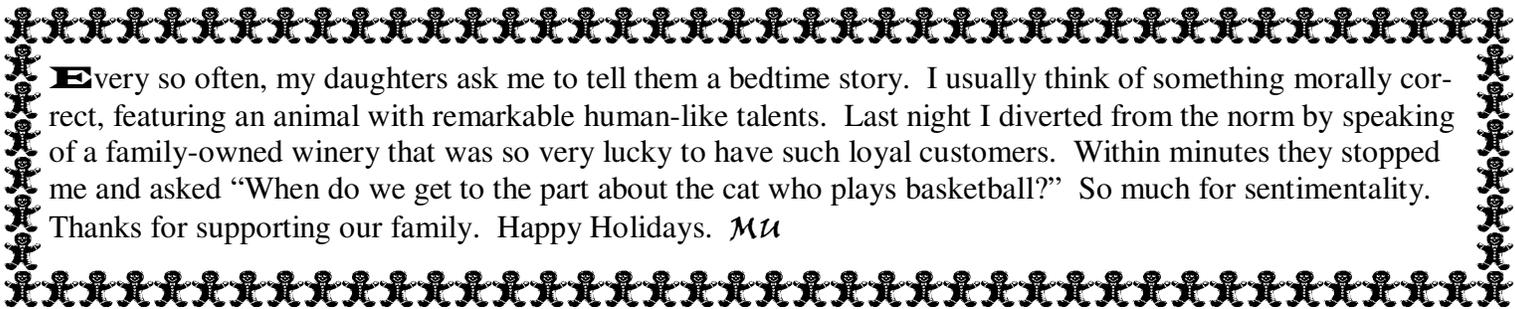
Since the 2001 vintage, we have harvested Dad's four-acre Sangiovese vineyard in three basic sections on different dates. Dad goes through this laborious process because the vineyard is planted on two hillsides of a ravine that cuts through his property. The first section to ripen is our prized west side terrace, which is always the darkest, most full-bodied and Brunello-like lot. It is what comprises our 100% Sangiovese. The 2003 Sangiovese will be released next February and it is a monster (I mean that in a good way), but let's save that discussion for our next newsletter.

The east terrace and the lower section of the vineyard ripen much later and generally produce a lighter, less complex wine than that of the west hill. In 2003, though, these lots have incredible bright cherry-fruit and spice. The blended wine, while it may not possess the structure and depth of our west side, is still pretty darn charming. Sébastien deftly added a little Barbera and Dolcetto and ... *Ecco!* (it's the closest Italian word we could find to voilà) We have our version of a Chianti normale. Like moderately priced Chiantis, this Sangiovese is not meant for long-term aging. It is, however, delightful as an every day utility player. And at this price, it is a wine that Oakland A's GM Billy Bean would gladly sign for a two year deal. *Mick*

Aging: 11 months; in French oak, 10% new
Blend: 82% Sangiovese, 9% Barbera, 9% Dolcetto
Cases Produced: 310



Honey, would you pour me another glass of that San Geronimo?



Every so often, my daughters ask me to tell them a bedtime story. I usually think of something morally correct, featuring an animal with remarkable human-like talents. Last night I diverted from the norm by speaking of a family-owned winery that was so very lucky to have such loyal customers. Within minutes they stopped me and asked "When do we get to the part about the cat who plays basketball?" So much for sentimentality. Thanks for supporting our family. Happy Holidays. *MU*

Ordering information: Mail this form to **Unti Vineyards, 4202 Dry Creek Rd., Healdsburg, CA 95448**; fax it to (707) 433-5591; email us from the order page at **www.untivineyards.com**; or, call us at (707) 433-5590. You may also call (or email) to schedule an appointment for tasting and purchasing wine at the winery.

New Releases:

2003 Barbera bottles @ \$24 =
 2003 Segromigno bottles @ \$15 =

Current Releases:

2002 Grenache bottles @ \$26 =
 2001 Syrah bottles @ \$26 =
 2002 Syrah "Petit Frere" bottles @ \$20 =
 2002 Zinfandel bottles @ \$22 =
 Subtotal =
 (6-11 bottles=5%, 12-35=10%, 36+=15%) Discount = ()
 (CA=7.5%, GA=\$6/case, LA=4%, NH=8%, NV=\$3/case) Taxes =
 Shipping =
TOTAL =

Shipping Information: Order Date ___/___/___

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
 State*: _____ Zipcode: _____
 Daytime phone #: (____) _____ - _____
 *DOB (req'd for HI & WI) ___/___/___

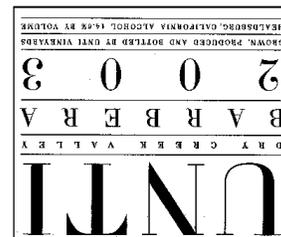
Payment Information:

Check enclosed ___ or Charge to Credit Card below ___
 Visa/MC # _____
 Expiration Date ___/___

Name / billing address for Credit Card, if different from shipping information

*Purchasers must be 21 or older.
 An adult signature will be required at delivery.
 Shipping only to states where permitted by law.*

SHIPPING COSTS (Subject to change)		
State	6 Pk (4-6 bottles)	Case (7-12 bottles)
No. CA, NV	\$17	\$21
So. CA, CO, ID, NM, OR, WA	\$19	\$24
DC, IA, IL, MO, NE, ND, WI, WY	\$26	\$33-38
LA, MN, TX, and Most Others	\$29	\$46-50
AK, HI (via 2-day air)	Call	\$58



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