



Asti and Alba – The Prodigal Siblings

Description

Barbera d'Alba is an elegant woman with finesse that you can dance with whereas Barbera d'Asti is determined, powerful, intense, a woman you gotta watch out for! •, that's the quote by the renowned winemaker Luca Vietti in an interview with the Wine Spectator magazine sometime back. These two wines happened to be in focus during the Italics Wine Club dinner held at Delhi recently and I took the opportunity to undertake a comparative tasting of the two.



Barbera d'Asti and Barbera d'Alba

Let's start with Barbera in general first which is the third largest grape grown in Italy. It is a rather unusual grape with early maturation in vineyard which gives a wine of dark ruby color, high acidity and low level of tannins. Due to the dark pigments in its skin the wine is rich in color, however the aromas reflected are those of a lighter bodied wine, like Pinot Noir. This contradicting feature is exactly what forces one to put on the thinking cap as the realization dawns that Barbera is not a simple wine.



Italics Wine Club Dinner at Delhi

Barbera can be made in a variety of styles, from a fresh, fruit forward, easy drinking wine to something more complex. Much depends on the producer and the vitiviniculture practices adopted by him. Much also depends upon the production area, which is best demonstrated by the differences between Barbera d'Asti and Barbera d'Alba. Asti and Alba can be called as twin towns in Piemonte since they are co-located. Some compare it with Napa and Sonoma at California – similar areas yet producing so much different wine styles. So let's see how Barbera from both areas differ from each other.

Asti is a somewhat dry and sandy area due to which it gives an intense and powerful Barbera which is more masculine. The tannins are concentrated and the acidity is pleasant. It is marked by a distinct red fruit character with a mineral complexity. The oaked ones also show vanilla notes.

Alba on the other hand has more acidity in the soil. It is also a bit more humid and the rain adds floral character to the wine. However its distinguishing feature is the marked acidity and black fruit aromas. Here again one would find vanilla notes in the oaked version.

After tasting both Asti and Alba, the opening words by Luca Vietti rung true. Alba was surely the delicate and elegant one. But it is Asti that catches your imagination â?? powerful and intense like the woman you gotta watch out forâ?!!