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[Home](#) > Dinner with Piedmont Winemaker Gianpaolo Manzone

Dinner with Piedmont Winemaker Gianpaolo Manzone

Learning about winemaking in Italy



Manzone

One captivating element of the evening was learning how differently Manzone treats each wine he makes.
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By [Gabe Sasso](#)
Special Contributor

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Gianpaolo Manzone represents the sixth generation of his family involved in the wine business in one aspect or another. His family has two plots of land that add up to 24 acres under vine. In addition to being the winemaker, Gianpaolo is also the vineyard manager for this property which sits in two different town's right in the midst of the Piedmont Region. I recently had dinner with Gianpaolo at **Ristorante Morini** in New York. The evening was fascinating for a multitude of reasons, but two in particular stood out for me. He was remarkably passionate about what he does; that love and intensity for his vocation comes rushing out of him in loud and descriptive bursts. Here's a man who not only loves tending his vines and crafting wine, he loves sharing it with people and explaining what he does. The other captivating item was how differently he treats each wine he makes. An example would be the grape Nebbiolo. He uses it to make both a varietal wine and several Barolos. However, he has different production and barrel regimens for each. By treating each one differently he's allowing the grapes in question to shine more

prominently than they might otherwise. Over the course of the night we tasted nine wines including a couple of slightly older Barolos which helped form a mini-vertical. I had several favorites that night.

Paolo Manzone 2010 Dolcetto d'Alba "Magna" DOC – The fruit for this wine came from vines sitting approximately 375 meters above sea level. This offering is composed entirely of Dolcetto. Fermentation and aging took place in stainless steel tanks. 1,250 cases of this wine were produced and it has a suggested retail price of \$17.99. Wild strawberry aromas are prominent on the nose here. The palate is studded with Bing cherry and copious spices. Leather, white pepper and earth are all in evidence on the finish which has good length. Gianpaolo indicated he loves to put just a hint of a chill on thine wine in warm weather and enjoy it with grilled foods. I have to agree, it would work nicely that way.[related]

Paolo Manzone 2011 Barbera d'Alba "Fiorenza" DOC – This 100% Barbera wine was produced from fruit sourced in two vineyards. The fruit was picked by hand; fermentation in temperature controlled stainless steel followed. A mere 150 cases of this wine were produced and it has a suggested retail price of \$21.99. Black cherry aromas are prominent on the nose here along with subtle hints of violet. Cherry and bits of red raspberry dominate the palate which is impeccably balanced and even keeled in nature. Earth and wisps of sour cherry are part of the lengthy finish. The tannins here have some bite but recede with air. Firm acid keeps things in check. This wine was a stellar match for a pan seared pork chop.

Paolo Manzone 2009 Nebbiolo d'Alba "Mirine" DOC – The vines sourced for this wine had ten years of age on them at the time of harvest. This offering is entirely Nebbiolo. Fermentation and maceration took place in stainless steel; aging in French oak barriques followed. 580 cases of this wine were produced and it has a suggested retail price of \$37.99. The massive nose of this wine practically leaps from the glass and grabs your senses. Bits of violet and spice are joined by a hint of plum. The mouth-feel is luxurious and lush with red and purple fruits joined by bits of savory herbs. The long finish is marked by lots of earthiness and continued spices. Medium tannins and firm acidity provide terrific structure. This wine is a noteworthy value.

Paolo Manzone 2009 Barolo "Serralunga" DOCG – The vines sourced for this Barolo have 15 years of age on them. It is 100% Nebbiolo. After manual harvesting and fermentation it was aged in large French Oak Barrels. 1,000 cases of this wine were produced and it has a suggested retail price of \$59.99. Dried cranberry and red violet aromas emerge from the slightly reserved nose of this wine. Tons of dark fruit flavors are evident on the palate. Black tea, pepper, and bits of earth are all present on the persistent finish. This is a deep and concentrated wine with firm tannins. It's still quite young and a bit closed off right now so decant it if you're going to drink it over the next few years. Otherwise lay it down for a while and enjoy its evolution.[pullquote:left]

Paolo Manzone 2007 Barolo "Serralunga" DOCG – We tasted this slightly older vintage of the Serralunga Barolo. A couple of additional years of bottle time have done wonders. Starting from the big, bold, intoxicating nose, the 2007 is a much more open wine. The palate is also bolder and a bit fatter with brighter fruits and juicier overall flavors. It has an impressively long finish with red fruits dotted with spice and earthiness all coming together to form an impressive core of flavors. Some of the differences are vintage variation. But this wine is made in the same manner year after year from the same vines, tasting these side by side is a nice mini window into the start of the aging process. All that said this wine is just at the beginning of its great drinking window. Look around, you might still find some in a fine wine shop near you.

Paolo Manzone 2009 Barolo "Meriame" DOCG – The fruit for this wine comes from vines with 60 years of age on them. This offering is 100% Nebbiolo. After hand harvesting and temperature controlled fermentation the wine is aged in large French oak barrels. 500 cases of this wine were produced and it has a suggested retail price of \$79.99. Red raspberry aromas lead the open and welcoming nose of this 2009 Barolo. Cherry and other red fruit flavors dominate the impressively structured and deeply layered palate. Minerals, earth, savory herbs and sour fruits are all in evidence on the prodigiously long finish. Like the other 2009 Barolo, this one will also benefit from some cellar time. If you're drinking it now, decant it

and pair it with substantial, full flavored foods.

The Paolo Manzone wines are really terrific artisan products. Their portfolio showcases a number of grapes that thrive in Piedmont as well as a variety of suitable styles for them. They also offer varying amounts of relative value. The Barolo's are quite fairly priced for the level of quality and sophistication they offer. The Dolcetto and Barbera offer above average bang for the buck and the Nebbiolo is close to an outright steal. These are real wines that showcase a sense of place, made by a passionate man who loves what he does so much you can practically taste his zeal in each bottle.