



The Wine Press



Newsletter of the Orange County Wine Society, Inc.

Volume 46, Issue 12, December 2022

President's Message

Years ago, I was told by a very well-known winemaker that the best wine is the wine one likes best, whether it be a \$150 bottle of Napa Cab or a bottle of Two Buck Chuck. However, as the years have gone on and there are more days behind me than ahead, I beg to now differ with him, as I've learned that the best wines are those shared with friends and loved ones. This is clearly evidenced at all OCWS gatherings throughout the year. The laughter and love that abounds within the group is palpable. This organization brings people together, initially, by their love of wine and thirst for wine knowledge but has the magic touch of creating family circles where otherwise there may not have been. Circles of friends, whose paths wouldn't have crossed in life, through the OCWS become those "families" that share life all year long within and outside of the organization. For me this is high on my list of the best holiday gifts I've ever received and just simply hope for more of these gifts of the heart, gifts of friendship, and gifts of being surrounded by amazingly loving people.



During this holiday season, whether you trim a Christmas tree, light a Menorah or a Kinara, go to church, synagogue, or a mosque, or not, may you all be blessed with the gifts of the heart and be surrounded by loved ones, whether they be family or families of friends. May you have many blessings to count and share the wines you love with others.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a New Year filled with laughter and love.

Cheers and L'Chaim!

- Fran Gitsham, President

Upcoming Events:

December 17	3
Winemakers' Group Holiday Party	
January 13	5
Jeff Runquist	
January 29	5
Bubbles 'n Brunch	
February 10	6
Cypher Winery	

Special Points of Interest:

New Members Corner	1
Photograph of the Month Winner	2
Photography Contest	2
2023 OCWS Winery Program	3
Winemakers Newsroom .	4
Varietal Hours	4
Wines of Alba, Italy	6
Save the Date Calendar	10

New Members Corner

The Orange County Wine Society extends a warm welcome to its newest members! Membership for the following members was approved by the Board of Directors at the November 2022 meeting: Kiana Gonzalez-Rodholm, Magda Elzarki, Lisa Alford, Rick and Cynthia Choate, David Mitchel, Rob and Linda Apted, Tony Ustrell, and Koko Powell.

As of November the OCWS has 1,060 members.

New Members. For new members trying to log into the website, go to OCWS.org. Your default login is the primary member's email address. The default password is the primary member's zip code. Both of these may be changed under the tab "My Account" once you log on. However, there may be only one login/password per membership.

- Rochelle Randel,
OCWS Business Administrator

	Fran Gitsham President Fran@ocws.org
	Carolyn Christian Vice President Carolyn@ocws.org
	Rich Skoczylas Secretary Rich@ocws.org
	Mel Jay Treasurer Mel@ocws.org
	George Cravens Director George@ocws.org
	Kevin Donnelly Director Kevindonnelly@ocws.org
	Linda Flemins Director LindaF@ocws.org
	Fred Heinecke Director Fred@ocws.org
	John Lane Director John@ocws.org

Photograph of the Month Winner



The October winner of the OCWS Photography contest is Charles Walsh with his entry titled "Wine on the Water."

This photo was shot on Charles' cell phone.
Congratulations, Charles!

- Jim Burk, OCWS Photographer

OCWS Photography Contest



The OCWS has started a photography contest and you are invited to participate! As you might have guessed, the subject is "Wine," but this can mean many things to many people. Do you have a great shot of the sun filtering through the vines just before picking?

Or an action shot of wine being poured with some great swirls in the glass? Or a romantic shot of a couple toasting each other with some wine? These are just a couple ideas, and I am sure you have many more ideas of that great shot involving wine in some way.

Each month the Photography Committee will select a "Photo of the Month" for publication in an upcoming *Wine Press* as well as on the OCWS website. The ultimate goal is to publish an OCWS Calendar, consisting of the 12 best photos of the year. These may or may not be the 12 monthly winners.

The rules are simple:

1. Entrants must be OCWS members in good standing and the submitted photo must have been photographed by the OCWS member when he/she was an active member.
2. The photo must be somehow wine oriented. It may be of a winery, a vineyard, the winemaking process, the finished product or simply the consumption. But don't limit yourself to these ideas!
3. The photo may be submitted to the photography committee anytime but will be considered only for the month it was submitted. There is a limit of five (5) submissions per month.
4. Upon submission, rights of the photo are given to the OCWS for marketing purposes, so before you submit it make sure it is your property. Please get permission from any people in the photo to use for OCWS marketing purposes.
5. The photo may be submitted in any either JPEG, RAW, TIFF, or Photoshop format. Any size is acceptable, but is preferred to be at least 3000x2400 pixels, which is an 8x10 shot at 300 dpi for printing.

To submit a picture attach it in an email to Jim@JBurk.net. Be sure to include your name, phone number, picture location and picture title.

If you have any questions contact Jim Burk at Jim@JBurk.net, OCWS photographer and head of the OCWS photography committee.

- Jim Burk, OCWS Photographer

2023 OCWS Winery Program: Double Gold Award-Winning Wineries



The 2023 Winery Program starts in January with “Double Gold” winning wineries and continues monthly through April. We have invited prestigious wineries who have won this coveted

Award in the 2022 Commercial Wine Competition. This Annual Series promotes the knowledge of winemaking, viticulture, and wine appreciation.

This program introduces our members to different wines made from the best wine producing regions in California. Save the Friday dates below and mark your calendars to attend. Look for information about each tasting in *The Wine Press*, and sign-up on the OCWS website.

- **January 13, 2023—Jeff Runquist**
- **February 10, 2023—Cypher Winery**
- **March 10, 2023—Macchia**
- **April 14, 2023—Notre Vue**

We invite the winemakers to come and talk about their wines and to answer your questions. This is a great benefit that we

provide our members with the opportunity to meet the wine-makers. If you consider, that if you visit a winery, how often are you able to hear and talk personally with the winemakers themselves? You can do that by participating in this program.

Having these award-winning wineries, gives our members the chance to taste their wines and learn if you enjoy a particular style. At the end of the evening, you may order the wines, usually at a discounted price. The wines will then be shipped directly to your home.



We will hold our Winery Program on Friday evenings at the Avenue of the Arts Hotel in Costa Mesa. Each tasting starts with a light dinner. You may select either the dinner buffet, or a plated “sit-down” dinner with this meal served to you at your table. With our large membership and limited attendance space, we encourage you to sign up early. Self-parking is included in the price.

- Rich Skoczylas, Winery Program Coordinator

Winemakers’ Group Holiday Party & Potluck



Get into the holiday spirit and celebrate with the Winemakers’ Group at our Annual Holiday Party and Potluck. This year’s festivities will be **Saturday, December 17 from 4 pm to 8 pm at the East Lake Village Association**

Clubhouse in Yorba Linda.

The Clubhouse is located on the community lake. The nearby area and lakeview homes are decorated for the season and at night, the twinkling Christmas lights reflecting off the water will surely put you in the holiday spirit.

This is always a wonderful social event to celebrate the Holiday Season and enjoy the fruits (wine) of our labors. This

event is open to the entire OCWS membership. All are welcome, you don’t have to be a winemaker to attend. Signups are now open on the OCWS website. For OCWS members, the cost is \$15 per person to cover decorations and the facility’s rental. Ticket price for non-members is \$20. A member may purchase a ticket for one non-member guest.

This is a potluck event. Please bring one dish per person or couple to serve between 8-12 people, and one bottle of wine per person, either homemade or commercial. Dress is holiday casual. There is plenty of free parking in the clubhouse lot or on the street.

Be sure to sign up today! Attendance is limited and this event always sells out quickly. I look forward to seeing you there!

- Ed Reyes, for the Winemakers’ Group

The Wine Press is the official newsletter of the Orange County Wine Society, Inc. The newsletter is published monthly.

The Wine Press welcomes input from the OCWS membership.

Forward comments, questions, and suggestions to WinePress@ocws.org

Editor-in-Chief: Linda Mihalik

Contributing Writers: Board of Directors, Jim Burk, Scott Harral, Rochelle Randel, Ed Reyes

Contributing Editors: John Goodnight, Ron Nickens, Rochelle Randel, Daniel Vlahovic

Copyright © 2022 Orange County Wine Society, Inc. and its licensors.

All rights reserved.

Winemakers Newsroom

Celebrating Success While Looking to the Future!



The Winemakers' Group took advantage of the opportunity to pour our wines at last month's OCWS Chili Cookoff. We had an enthusiastic response from many members who have never tasted our wines before. Thanks to Sam Clark, Kevin Donnelly, Jerry

Guerin, and John Lane, who, along with myself, donated wines for the event. We have already been asked to pour our wines at the OCWS Spring event and look forward to again sharing our wines with the entire OCWS membership.

Our November Meeting & Potluck was held the home of Jim Kerins in Silverado Canyon. Autumn was definitely in the air on that cool, breezy Saturday. The beautiful rustic property, framed by hills and with Silverado Creek gurgling alongside, made for a lovely



and relaxing afternoon. About 50 of us, including some new winemakers, enjoyed the scenery, great food and, of course, our homemade wines. Jim's property has many things to enjoy and places to explore including a teepee, a gypsy wagon, ducks and chickens, secluded gardens, and many seating areas in a beautiful natural setting. By far the most popular area we explored was Jim's wine cellar where he treated us to bar-

rel tastings of the many wines he has "in the works". Thanks, Jim for hosting and treating us to your fabulous wines!

The Winemakers' Group Holiday Party & Potluck is coming up on Saturday, December 17, in Yorba Linda. Signups for the event are open on the OCWS website and tickets are still available. All are welcome, you don't have to be a winemaker to attend. This beautiful lakeside area will be decorated for the holidays to put us all in a festive mood. It's a great way to come together and enjoy each other's company in the spirit of the season.

On a personal note, I have been running the Winemakers Group since April. I appreciate the support and continued involvement of both Kevin Donnelly and Bill Forsch who ran the group before me. I may now be the "face" of our group but by no means does one person run the whole show. The Winemakers' Group, like the Wine Society as a whole, could not run without the help of all who have stepped up to organize and run our winemakers' activities. We are all indebted to those who have hosted our quarterly meetings, run our SO2 testing program, led the group grape, bottle and cork purchases, and organized and volunteered at the Home Wine Competition. With everyone's help, we can all look forward to continued success in 2023.



Cheers and Happy Holidays!

**- Ed Reyes,
for the Winemakers' Group**

OCWS Varietal Hours—Come Join the Fun!

The OCWS Varietal Hours have been holding the Varietal Hours for almost two years now! Each week we all learn something new about wine. Join us every other Monday at 7 pm for a virtual happy hour that you can enjoy from home via Zoom!

The Varietal Hour themes are listed below. Grab a wine that fits that theme from your cellar or venture out to your favorite wine store for something new! Each Varietal Hour, we discuss that week's theme and share what we like about the wine(s) we have chosen. This event is a great way to learn about wines you haven't tried before and see if someone shares a

wine that appeals to your wine palate. And the best part ... the event is FREE!

You will need to register on the OCWS website no later than the Sunday night before the event. A link for the meeting is emailed to you on the day of the event.

Please contact Carolyn at Carolyn@ocws.org or George Cravens at George@ocws.org with any questions or suggestions.

We look forward to Zooming with you soon at one of the future Varietal Hours! Cheers!

- Carolyn Christian & George Cravens, Directors

DATE	TIME	VARIETAL	Hosts
12/5/2022	7:00 PM	Southern Hemisphere Wines	George Cravens
12/19/2022	7:00 PM	Holiday Wines	Damian & Carolyn Christian

January Winery Program: Jeff Runquist

Friday, January 13, 2023
Dinner starts 6:30 pm
Avenue of the Arts Hotel
3350 Avenue of the Arts
Costa Mesa, CA

Jeff Runquist is well known to produce balanced wines that can be enjoyed in their youth, but will also age and become more complex with time. His wines share a theme with zest and vibrant flavors of fresh fruit reflective of the varietal flavors inherent in the grape. With Jeff's passion for red wines, he won TWO Double Gold awards at the 2022 OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition, in addition to many Gold and Silver awards.



Jeff produces over twenty different varieties from nine different appellations and receives dozens of medals every year in competitions at Orange County, San Francisco to the California State Fair. His wines bring in the highest awards and are easily recognizable wines with an "R" on the bottles.

This event starts with a light dinner. The cost of the Buffet meal is \$46 for members and \$51 for guests. This Buffet meal includes Breast of Chicken with Mustard Seed Cream Sauce, Rosemary Roasted Pee Wee Potatoes and Charred Seasonal Vegetables.

We offer a separate option of a "Heart Healthy" meal served at

Bubbles 'n Brunch

Citrus City Grille
Sunday January 29, 2023
11 am to 2 pm
122 N. Glassell St.
Orange, CA

Back by popular demand, our first Brunch of 2023, we will revisit the Citrus City Grille. Their Buffet includes:

Salad/Cheese/Charcuterie/Fruit Bar
Breakfast Station: Waffles, French Toast, Omelet, and Eggs Benedict
Hot Entrees: Chicken, Ribs, Mussels, Salmon
Carving Station: Ham, Prime Rib
Seafood Station: Shrimp Cocktail, Ahi Poki
Bakery Station: Breads, Danishes, Sweet Treats
Endless Champagne, Mimosa and Bloody Mary bar
Coffee, juice and soft drinks are also included.

The restaurant is located just north of the Orange circle. Parking is in the rear of the restaurant or on the street. Carpooling or ride sharing is suggested. The price for the buffet is \$66 for

your table of Pan Roasted Local Sea Bass with Citrus Sauce, Quinoa, and Charred Seasonal Vegetables for \$53 for members and \$58 for guests.



The Buffet and Heart Healthy meals include a salad of California Caesar Salad with Toasted Pepitas, Chopped Romaine, Heirloom Cherry Tomatoes, Garlic Croutons, Parmesan Cheese, a Creamy Caesar Dressing, plus Warm Artisan Breads & Rolls with Sweet Butter.

A vegetarian meal may be specially ordered for \$53 for members and \$58 for guests.

Sign up on the OCWS website to attend this event. Attendees can self-park in the hotel garage and get their ticket validated at OCWS check-in or pay \$10 for valet parking. Dinner begins at 6:30 pm with the meeting following about 7:15 pm.

Volunteers Needed – We need a couple of volunteers to help with check-in from 5:30 to 6:40 pm. Please indicate you can help when you sign up to attend this event.

Members may bring their own wine to enjoy and share during dinner. Be sure to wear your OCWS nametag. As we need to contract the meals with the hotel, **the last day to sign up or cancel and receive a refund is Sunday, January 8.**

- Rich Skoczylas, Winery Program Coordinator

CITRUS CITY GRILLE

members and their guests, all inclusive. The event will be posted on the website for signups. Space is limited; when the event fills up, please contact the office to be placed on a waitlist.

Each person is requested to:

1. Bring a bottle of your favorite champagne and/or wine (no corkage fee).
2. Bring champagne and/or wine glasses.
3. Please wear your nametag.
4. Please drink responsibly.

Because we need to contract with the restaurant the attendance count, the last day to sign up, make changes, or cancel to receive a refund is January 25, 2023. Any cancellations after this date would be filled and refunded from the waitlist. Looking forward to toasting with you again!

- Rochelle Randel-OCWS Champagne Brunch Coordinator

February Winery Program: Cypher Winery

Friday, February 10, 2023

Dinner starts 6:30 PM

Avenue of the Arts Hotel

3350 Avenue of the Arts

Costa Mesa, CA

CYPHER

Cypher Winery first entered the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition in 2022 and immediately won a

Double Gold Award. Winemaker and Owner Susan A. Mahler (affectionately known as “SAM ZinPunk”) grew up with a solid sense of independence via an adventure-fueled, free-range 70s style childhood. Skiing, dirt biking, and flying with a commercial and instructor pilot license over Western Colorado and Utah made for a great adventure.



SAM co-founded Four Vines winery while living and working in Berkeley and made the move to Paso Robles in 2002 to dive full time into the workings of running a winery. Flash forward to 2020, the adventure continues with Cypher's 10th anniversary and the release of the long-awaited Anime Series, bringing things full circle in her adventure called

life.

This event starts with a light dinner. The cost of the Buffet meal is \$46 for members and \$51 for guests. This Buffet meal includes Grilled Breast of Chicken with Marsala Wine Sauce with Mushrooms, Parmesan Herb Risotto and Seasonal Baby

Wines of Alba, Italy—Close to Home!

For those of you that know Manuela and me, you know that we love to travel. This past October, less than five months after our quasi-world cruise, we were at it again, this time back in Northwestern Italy where Manuela was born – in the region known as Piemonte, or Piedmont for the English speakers. And, of course, our travels would not be complete without a trip to a few wineries.

About an hour and a half south of Ivrea, now our second home, and south of Turin, are two cities – Alba and Asti. Surrounding Alba are the two well-known Italian AVAs, *Barolo* and *Barbaresco*. We stayed near Alba to see the sights but also to visit three outstanding wineries that produce wines from these AVAs.

Some more background for you. Italy has some very specific rules and standards that are set for its AVAs that assures both

Heirloom Vegetables.

We offer a separate option of a “Heart Healthy” served at your table meal of Roasted Salmon Filet with Bouillabaisse Sauce, Chive Couscous and Matignon of Seasonal Vegetables for \$53 for members and \$58 for guests.

The Buffet and Heart Healthy meals include a Wedge Salad of Butter Lettuce, Roasted Tomatoes, Crispy Pancetta, Bleu Cheese Crumbles and Creamy Peppercorn Dressing, Warm Artisan Breads & Rolls with Sweet Butter.

A vegetarian meal may be specially ordered for \$53 for members and \$58 for guests.

Sign up on the OCWS website to attend this event. Attendees can self-park in the hotel garage and get their ticket validated at OCWS check-in or pay \$10 for valet parking. Dinner begins at 6:30 pm with the meeting following about 7:15 pm.

Volunteers Needed – We need a couple of volunteers to help with check-in from 5:30 to 6:40 pm. Please indicate you can help when you sign up to attend this event.

Members may bring their own wine to enjoy and share during dinner. Be sure to wear your nametag. As we need to contract the meals with the hotel, **the last day to sign up or cancel and receive a refund is Sunday, February 5.**

- Rich Skoczylas, Winery Program Coordinator



quality and distinct characteristics to be found in the specific AVA. You know them as DOC and DOCG. I will spare you from the Italian, but the later – DOCG – implies the highest quality and distinction. And in all of Italy, Piemonte has the greatest number of DOCs, 37, and DOCGs, 18, than any other Italian region, more than the famous Tuscan region. I will get into this more as I talk about the three wineries, but one example of the regional requirements is that there can only be natural irrigation of the vines, regardless of the climate and weather. The three wineries that we visited, adhere to that requirement, producing *Barolo* and *Barbaresco* DOC and DOCG wines.

Something else I want to share with you that is no small achievement. All three of the wineries that we visited were not

(Continued on page 7)

Wines of Alba, Italy—Close to Home!

(Continued from page 6)

just fourth- or fifth-generation family-owned establishments, they were all owned and managed by the women of the families. And well managed they were. So, let's get to the specifics.

Pio Cesare

After learning about Pio Cesare from a network channel called *V is for Vino* – something else that I found and recommend to OCWS – we knew we had to come find out for ourselves. Pio Cesare was started in 1881 within the city of Alba, just twenty years after the formation of country that we currently know as Italy. Five generations later it is one of the most historical and well-known wineries in Italy and elsewhere, producing 450,000 bottles mainly of Barolo, Barbaresco, Barbera, Dolcetto and Chardonnay.



Our host for the two-hour tour and tasting was Davide. And as is the practice of Pio Cesare, he devoted the entire time just to Manuela and me. Davide began with a bit of the history of both the family and the home that became the cellar and winery. It is still the home of the current family to this day. The cellars, comprising four levels, are constrained by ancient Roman walls dating back to 50 B.C. Over

the decades, expansion of the facility included going under the adjacent Tanaro river. The cellars were abound with massive French and Slavonian (similar to Hungarian) oak barrels. Our guide pointed out two distinctive highlights to be found in the cellars. One was the century-old single bottle “elevator” that brought filled bottles to the top level and empty bottles back down. Another highlight was to see at some three levels below-ground an original vine still growing after more than one hundred years. Davide also pointed out that there are bottled wines still in the racks dating back to at least 1916 and that the labels had not changed significantly in over the past one hundred years.

The current managing family member is Federica Boffa, only 25 years old. She does have other family members to support her. As for the vineyards, which are distinct throughout Barolo and Barbaresco, Pio Cesare owns many. Davide told us that all grapes are grown on estates contained within the family-owned 170 acres and within the Barolo or Barbaresco AVAs.

The tour was phenomenal, but then we came to the best part –

the tasting. We were seated at the table that the family still uses for its holiday gatherings. Davide brought out four reds and, surprisingly, a Chardonnay. Apparently, back when fourth generation owner, Mr. Pio Boffa, was visiting California, he became enthralled with Chardonnay. He thought that if France and California can grow it, so could he, despite local assertion that it would never thrive. Pio Boffa was one of the great pioneers of Chardonnay planted and produced in Italy in the early 1980's. I can tell you that after tasting the 2020



Piodilei Chardonnay, he exceeded all expectations. After a taste and some more explanation by Davide, he had me set my glass of Chard aside while we went on to the reds.

And, of course, each of the reds had some history behind them.

The first that I tried was a 2021 Grignolino. I had only learned of this varietal just a few days before while in Ivrea – Manuela's home town – and was quite pleased. The Grignolino presented by Davide was fantastic, something between a Malbec and a Pinot Noir, in my opinion.

The remaining three reds were the commonly known ones of the region, the first being a 2020 *Fides* Barbera d'Alba. Wonderful! It should age a bit longer, but was still ready to drink now. Typical of Barbera, it was medium bodied, but like a Pinot, it would be great with white meats, fish and pasta.

This was followed by two Nebbiolos, a 2019 Barbaresco, and a 2018 Barolo. Both were outstanding but needed to age a few more years to reach their peak. In fact, Davide told me that only the family had previously tried the 2019 Barbaresco since bottling. I was the first outside the family – what an honor! It was still young though. Two to four years from now, it will be phenomenal.

Wrapping up the tasting, we went back to the Chardonnay, now that it had been open for a while. You could definitely discern a subtle difference. And after the full-bodied reds, it held its own, while expressing some of the characteristics of the Nebbiolos! Excellent.

As we were saying good-byes, Davide informed me that the wines are not sold on the premises. Thus, you are not pressured to buy after your tour. He also said that Pio Cesare was undisputedly, the best winery in all of Alba... it's the only win-

(Continued on page 8)

Wines of Alba, Italy—Close to Home!

(Continued from page 7)

ery within the city. A mere technicality!

Marrone

The next day we traveled south toward the Barolo region to a town called La Morra. There we encountered a winery facility, primarily the aging cellar, on top of the hillside, outside of town. The winery is called Agricola Gian Piero Marrone, or simply, Marrone. We were met by Nina Schurer, who was our tour guide and hostess. Nina is originally from the Netherlands, but had moved to the region with her family only a few years earlier. Needless to say, she was fluent in several languages.

Gian Piero Marrone, a third-generation owner and operator of the winery, has turned operations over to his three daughters, Denise, Serena and Valentina, making it now four generations of winemakers. The current winemaker is Valentina, the youngest of the three Marrone sisters, but still with the helping hand from her dad Gian Piero Marrone. The three sisters are already the 4th generation in this family making wine, each of them with her own task. Be it sales and marketing, administration or process management. The three of them together are well equipped to lead this family business further into the future.

If Pio Cesare could be considered a large operation, Marrone was on the medium size. Yet, it was by far, a more diverse producer of wine. The family owns vineyards both within the Barolo and Barbaresco AVAs, as well as outside in the nearby region of Madonna di Como. At least twenty different lines (for lack of a better word) of wine were bottled by Marrone. Varietals included Nebbiolo, Barbera, Dolcetto, Arneis, Chardonnay and Moscato could be found here, but to retain their DOC or DOCG status from one of the regions, such as Barolo, then they could only produce the wine of the varietal from that region. Barolo and Barbaresco wines are 100% of the Nebbiolo varietal, but come from the two distinct regions with different terroir and different production requirements.

We received an informative and impressive tour of Marrone's aging cellar. It appeared to be substantially underground, maintaining a constant temperature. The facility was very impressive, as you would expect, containing the numerous oak barrels or "bottes."

At one point though, Nina pointed out something we had never seen before. For some of the varietals, part of the aging process is carried out with the lees (or inactive yeast material) still in the barrel. But what Marrone does that is different is that the barrels are stacked on rollers. Then, for as long as the wine is in the cellar, which varies from six to eighteen months, the bar-



rels are hand cranked to rotate and, thus, stir up the lees. The churning process, known as *battage*, takes place two to three times a week. This enhances the exposure of the lees to the wine and allows for more extraction of the elements that Marrone's winemaker wants as part of his final product. The photo shows some of the barrels on rollers.

At the end of the tour, Nina took us to their aboveground tasting room. More like a veranda, it had an incredible view of the region. And we had ideal weather for it too.

I was able to choose from a number of wines for my tasting. Naturally, I went for what the region is famous for, starting with a 2019 Barbera d'Alba Superiore. If you know Barberas, this was right there – lighter than the Nebbiolo, very fruity but surprisingly purplish in color. And also surprisingly, it was 14.5% ABV. My tasting notes say I must find this one in the California markets.

Next up was a 2019 Nebbiolo d'Alba Superiore. Not a Barolo or Barbaresco, but still in the neighborhood. Nina told me that this wine spent six months in small botte, one year in large botte and one year in the bottles before being served. It was excellent. And side note: For those of you that know that I make Nebbiolo at home, this Marrone Nebbiolo was exactly why I do!

But perhaps the best was saved for last, I tasted the 2018 *Pichemej*, a Barolo DOCG. It was bold and flavorful, as I would expect from a Barolo, but clearly at the top of the class. OK, the sad part is, I was so into this wine, I failed to write down my notes, but I remember it well and that isn't that what drinking great wine is all about!



Azienda Agricola Pietro Rinaldi

Heading back toward Alba, we stopped at Azienda Agricola Petro Rinaldi. We selected this winery based on the very positive recommendation of one of my close Italian friends. Once again, we hit the jackpot. Like so many in the area, the Pietro Rinaldi winery is located high up on a hill. And like the two I had visited previously, this was another four-generation family-owned winery dating back to 1920, currently owned and

(Continued on page 9)

Wines of Alba, Italy—Close to Home!

(Continued from page 8)

operated by Monica Rinaldi.

Smallest of the three I visited, Pietro Rinaldi was every bit as charming as the other two. And, of course, all grapes for their wines are estate grown and were DOC or DOCG (only their Rosato was not). Pietro Rinaldi's production included Barolos, Barbarescos, Barbera d'Albas, Dolcetto, and Langhe Arneis.

Our host, Ombretta, told us of the history and production of the wines, but quickly set us down for the tasting.



Ombretta presented me with five wines for tasting – shown in the adjacent photo.

We started off with a 2021 Rosato. This rose wine was 13½% ABV, so you

know it was dry. Our host told me that it was macerated for two hours and that this was only the third vintage of this wine. It was dry and a bit bitter but could still be aged for three more years. Clearly this was intended for pairing with summer meals.

On to the reds... First up was a 2020 Barbera d'Alba. Fermented to 14% ABV, and aged in steel tanks, it was medium bodied, dry, fruity and quite pleasant. This is a summertime wine. Ombretta said it did not require further aging. This was followed by a 2018 Barbera d'Alba Superiore. This Barbera was aged one year in steel tanks followed by one year in oak. Barbera is not known to be tannic, but this one was very mild in oak tannins when I tasted it. Definitely a notch above the prior Barbera and it can be enjoyed year round. Definitely a good wine to have around.

My fourth tasting was a 2020 Langhe Nebbiolo. Nebbiolo is, by far, the predominate varietal of this part of Italy. Langhe is another broader name for the AVA region. This particular wine was a blend of Barolo and Barbaresco, taking the best and distinctive differences of these AVAs – and, thus, the name Langhe. It had been aged in oak for one year. Our host said this would age well for up to ten years. Since I make Nebbiolo, I am always a fan. I found this wine to be light for a Nebbiolo, but would be very good with most foods year round.



For my final tasting, I was offered a newly released 2018 Barbaresco – sound familiar – that was excellent. It had a strong fruity aroma. It was a single-vineyard source, which is referred to as an MGA. MGAs, or **menzioni geografiche aggiuntive (there will be a test on this later)**, are specifically delineated place-names, that is, vineyards, within Barolo and Barbaresco that have been codified since 2010.

All were excellent wines. I bought two – one was the 2018 Barbaresco (new release) – to hold for a few years. But unless you plan to visit us in Italy, I won't be able to share them with you.

In conclusion, I can say my trip to this region was outstanding. It was not our first time, and certainly won't be our last. And, as they will be receiving copies of this article, I wish to take this moment to thank our three wonderful hosts. They each added to the experience. If you make it to this part of Italy, please seek them out!

- W. Scott Harral, Contributing Writer

The Orange County Wine Society is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization incorporated under the laws of the State of California with its principal place of business in Costa Mesa, California.

PO Box 11059, Costa Mesa, CA 92627
Phone: 714.708.1636 ■ Fax: 714.546.5002

Website: OCWS.org ■ FB ■ Twitter ■ IG: [OCWineSociety](https://www.instagram.com/OCWineSociety)

2022 Wine Competition Results: WineCompetition.com

OCWS Website Administrator: Wendy Taylor

OCWS Photographer: Jim Burk

OCWS Save the Date Calendar

Varietal Hour:

December 5 Southern Hemisphere Wines
December 19 Holiday Wines

December 3 OCWS Holiday Dinner & Dance
December 10 Mini-Tasting Holiday Wines & Comfort Foods
December 17 Winemakers' Group Holiday Party & Potluck
January 29, 2023 Bubbles 'n Brunch

2023 Double Gold Winery Program

January 13, 2023 Jeff Runquist Wines
February 10, 2023 Cypher Wine
March 10, 2023 Macchia
April 14, 2023 Notre Vue



www.ocws.org

