

## A little information about one of Italy's wine regions-- Piedmonte



Piedmonte is Italy's western most region and borders Switzerland and France at the Alps. Piedmonte literally translates to "foot of the mountain." Being close to the Alps, the area enjoys a high altitude and vineyards benefit from the hills and elevation. Vineyards are planted on the hills and harvested with some of the lowest yields in Italy. Its wines can be likened to wines of Burgundy, France. Many of the wineries are small-scale family operations that focus--almost obsessively--on quality.

Along with Tuscany, Piedmonte has the reputation of producing some of the finest wines in Italy. The main grape grown in this region is the Nebbiolo--the base for the famous Barolo and Barbaresco wines. The word comes from "nebbia" (fog) as the grape develops a velvety, whitish coating. It also grows in an area where there is heavy morning fog. It is this humid fog that gives the grapes their ideal habitat.

Barolos are very rich, rose-scented wines that need a very long aging. Because of this, they are also very expensive! Some of the other famous wines of the region are Barbaresco, Barbera de Alba, Blanc de Blanc, Dolcetto, and Gavi di Gavi.

While Piedmonte is known for the red Barolo and Barbaresco, it also produces many excellent white wines. Who hasn't heard of bubbly, sparkling Asti Spumante or Moscato d'Asti? Both sweet and best with desserts, they are most often associated with celebrations--from toasting the bride and groom, heralding in a new year, to the birth of a new baby. Asti Spumante is usually sweeter and fizzier while Moscato d'Asti has fewer bubbles. Wines from Piedmont typically range in price from \$15 to \$85 per bottle.

Piedmonte not only produces some very notable wines but it is also home to artisanal cheeses, cured meats, herb products, mushrooms and the coveted white truffle of Alba. It is the mushrooms and truffles that add to risottos and pastas. The bold reds of Piedmont are best with fonduta (a variation of Swiss fondue), rice, meats (particularly game), pastas, and stuffed vegetables.