

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 07, 2012

Amarone in Anteprema: the 2008 Vintage

This year in the folks in Valpolicella presented the 2008 vintage of Amarone, which was a fairly difficult vintage, one that wasn't particularly hot, and therefore yielded wines that are not tremendously powerful (for Amarone), with in many cases relatively lower residual sugar contents and greater freshness that we have seen in some recent vintages. They are also wines that will probably not be as long-lived as one might expect of, say, the 2006 vintage, but that will also be readier sooner and more enjoyable in the short term. In other words, wines to enjoy while we give wines from the better vintages time.



And in this the Anteprema was both enjoyable and interesting.

Unfortunately, there are also clouds in the picture. Over the past ten years winemaking in the Valpolicella has changed tremendously, and this year Emilio Pedron, the President of the Consorzio, said, "From 2000 to 2011 we went from the sale of 5 million bottle to the sale of 12 million bottles of Amarone, to which one must also add more than 20 million bottles of Valpolicella Ripasso (the top-tier Valpolicella Superiore, which gains body and depth by being passed over the marks left in the fermentation vats when Amarone is racked off). Obviously, the number of bottles of Valpolicella Base (the Valpolicella's simple quaffing wine) dropped drastically, from 50 million to less than 25."

And herein lies the rub. Valpolicella is a fairly small area, a set of north-south trending valleys that descend like the fingers of a hand from the foothills of the Alps behind Verona towards the Pianura Padana, and the viticulturally suitable land is both finite and well differentiated: there are steeper slopes on the valley walls, gently sloping areas, and what are almost flatlands where the valley floors broaden.

In the past, as one might have expected, Amarone and Recioto were made from the grapes grown on the very best land, mostly the well exposed, well drained more elevated regions, while the grapes grown in the lower, flatter regions went to make straight Valpolicella, a

light every day quaffing wine. With the increase in Amarone (and Valpolicella Superiore) production, given the finite vineyard area of the region, grapes from vineyards that were in the past used to make Valpolicella are instead being used to make Amarone, and while some of the vineyards previously dedicated to Valpolicella are capable of providing grapes suitable for Amarone, with many it is a bit of a stretch, and as a result a significant percentage of the new production Amarone is not of the same quality as what comes from the area's better vineyards.

Then why make it? Simple economics, alas: Amarone is a hot name, selling for considerably more than any of the Valpolicella's other wines, and the temptation to make it, albeit to a lower standard, and bring in those earnings is very strong, especially among the larger producers, which also include some very large cooperatives. Because of this situation, before buying more than one bottle of an Amarone that you are not familiar with, you should taste it, or check the tasting notes of a wine writer whose palate you agree with.

This policy of expansion has led to considerable resentment among those who believe Amarone should be the highest expression of the Valpolicella, made only from the best vineyards. Some of the unsatisfied have formed an organization called Famiglie dell'Amarone, which consists of 12 wineries (you'll find the [membership here](#)) dedicated to preserving the artisanal characteristics of Amarone, while there are other winemakers who are just as dissatisfied, but have chosen to take a less confrontational path. The Famiglie deserted the Anteprema this year, and there were also other important names missing that had been present in the past, for example Trabucchi and Tommaso Bussola; since I didn't have occasion to talk to them, I don't know if their absence was dictated by philosophical considerations, or by timing -- some of those who bottle later in the spring prefer not to present barrel samples because they are works in progress.

The bottom line is that it was an interesting, though incomplete presentation. The larger wineries were present, as were a fair number of well known smaller wineries, and there were also some interesting new names. But you will note that some of the names people tend to mention when talking about Amarone are absent. I rather hope they choose to present their wines again next year, mostly because the Anteprema is an occasion for those from far enough away that a road trip to Verona is out of the question to get a feeling for the wines, and the more wines they taste the better the picture they have.

The other thing I hope gets reinstated next year is winery visits; this year there was a tour organized for foreign journalists the day after the formal tasting, but those who live in Italy were not invited, and it seems a pity not to take advantage of people's being there to show them around.

The wines, tasted January 28 2012, In the Order Tasted

Rubinelli Vajol

Rubinelli Vajol Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Lively cherry ruby with black reflections. the bouquet is bright, with lively cherry fruit supported by graphite shaving and greenish menthol, also considerable spice and a fair amount of alcohol. On the palate it's fairly rich, with bright berry fruit supported by some sweetness, tannins that are fairly bitter with a slight greenish burr, and minerality more than acidity, flowing into a bitter mineral finish with graphite shavings and berry fruit underpinning. Fairly direct, should age nicely. Very young.

2 stars

Antolino

Antolino Cà Coato Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections cherry rim. The bouquet is closed, swishing brings up minerality and spice with some graphite shavings some greenish accents. On the palate it's ample and fairly rich, with bright sour cherry fruit supported by slight mentholated acidity and by tannins that are ample and smooth, flow into a mentholated berry fruit finish with hints of pepper jam. Fairly direct, and quite approachable, will age nicely and may do interesting things with time.

2 stars

Soraighe

Soraighe By Bennati Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is bright, with sour cherry fruit laced with India ink and some hints quinine, also some graphite shavings. Gives impression overripeness. On the palate it's ripe, with cherry plum fruit supported by dusky tannins and moderate acidity, while there are greenish sandalwood accents as well, and it flows into a rather bitter berry fruit finish. Fairly direct, and with time may become rather austere.

2 stars

Giuseppe Campagnola

Giuseppe Campagnola Vigneti Vallata di Marano Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections cherry rim. The bouquet is medicinal, with herbal accents and some eucalyptus mingled with sour cherry fruit and some underlying spice; it somehow brings a Barolo chinato to mind On the palate it's ample and fairly sweet, with moderately intense cherry fruit that gives way to blocky greenish tannins and moderate mineral acidity, and as the fruit fades the medicinal elements of the nose reemerge and carry at fair length. It's a little unusual, and the medicinal notes may be wood-fruit interaction.

1 star

Cantina di Soave

Cantina di Soave Rocca Sveva Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby. The bouquet is closed, some spice, some berry fruit, savory notes and sandalwood with some bramble too. On the palate it's fairly direct, with moderately intense sour plum -- not prune, but more red plum -- cherry fruit supported by moderate sour cherry acidity and by tannins that are warm and cedar laced, and flow into a long warm tannic finish with savory accents. Quite approachable, but a touch more direct than I expect an Amarone to be; we will see what happens when it is in bottle.

Gamba

Gamba Vigneto Campedel Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is muted, though swishing brings up some mint with hints of cocoa; the combination brings an After 8 mint to mind. Not much fruit. On the palate it's full, with minty sour cherry fruit supported by slight sweetness and by tannins that are strongly cedar laced and flow into an ample fairly dry tannic finish that echoes the mint on the nose, with some berry fruit as well. It's fairly direct, and I might have liked more complexity; also, at present the tannins are still quite invasive, and I'm not sure they will ever completely fold in.

1 star

Pasqua Vigneti e Cantine

Pasqua Vigneti e Cantine Cecilia Beretta - Terre di Cariano Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with jammy cherry fruit with some sandalwood accents, sweetness, and some spice, mingled with slight graphite shavings bitterness and hints of scalded milk/cedar. On the palate it's ample and fairly sweet, with ripe cherry plum fruit supported by mineral acidity and by powerful tannins that have a spicy burr and flow into a clean rather peppery bitter finish. Promising in a fairly direct muscular key.

Cav. G. B. Bertani

Cav. G. B. Bertani Villa Arvedi Amarone della Valpolicella Valpantena DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is moderately intense, with candied almonds and marzipan mingled with some red berry fruit and underlying spice; it gives an impression of being in the coming together phase. On the palate it's not as concentrated as I might have expected, with fairly thin (for an Amaone) sour berry

fruit supported by mineral acidity and tannins that have a dusky graphite shaving burr, and flow into a fairly dry finish with a fair amount of alcohol. It may become ethereal with time, but I expect more concentration from an Amarone.

1 star

Accordini Stefano

Accordini Stefano Acinatico Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black almandine with black reflections and almandine rim. The bouquet is moderately intense and smoky, with hardwood ash mingled with mentholated fruit, some sandalwood, and jammy berry fruit accents with some cumin spice as well. On the palate it's fairly sweet, with ample cherry plum fruit supported by moderate acidity and by tannins that are ample and blocky, and flow into a blocky tannic finish that gradually resolves into sweet cocoa dust. It's big, and brings to mind a person walking with clogs.

1 star

Albino Armani

Albino Armani Cuslanus Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with smoky hardwood ash at first swish, and jammy berry fruit following; with some sour accents as well. On the palate it's fairly rich, with bright sour cherry fruit laced with sandalwood and spicy greenish accents, and a deft savory underpinning, while the tannins are tight and fairly bitter, with some graphite shavings. Promising in a middle of the road key, and may become ethereal with time.

Salvaterra

Salvaterra Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with purple rim. The bouquet is up in the air, with heady menthol and spice and some red berry fruit. On the palate it's ample and fairly direct, with moderately intense berry fruit supported by sandalwood and savory accents that become rather balsamic in the finish. I'd have expected a little more concentration, and it seems soon for this degree of balsam.

Albino Armani

Albino Armani Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is smoky with a

fair amount of cedar and some berry fruit. On the palate it's ample, and direct, with moderately intense cherry plum fruit supported by mineral acidity and tannins that are fairly smooth, with a bitter underpinning.

Aldegheri

Aldegheri Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Dusky with some animal accents and reduced aromas; this can happen in a barrel sample. On the palate it's bright, with fairly rich cherry plum fruit supported by slightly balsamic greenish acidity, and tannins that have a spicy sandalwood burr, and flow into a fairly bright vegetal laced finish with dry tannic underpinning. It's like a person one has looked in upon while taking a shower, and a bit out of sorts, but what there is promises well.

Valentina Cubi

Valentina Cubi Morar Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is bright and fairly floral, with cherry fruit supported by plum accents and spice. On the palate it's ample and quite ripe, with moderately intense plum fruit that gradually settles below tannins that are broad and quite cedar laced, with some balsamic accents.

Dal Bosco

Dal Bosco Giulietta Le Guaite Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Impenetrable pigeon blood ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is spicy, with bitter smoky savory accents and as it opens considerable grilled green pepper mingled with prune and raisin, with hints of sweetness; with further swishing pencil shavings also enter the picture. On the palate it's fairly sweet, with plum fruit supported by balsam laced cedary tannins that flow into a warm savory alcoholic finish. It's quite ripe, and rather charged in a vegetal key, and is one of those wines you will like only if you like the style, which is in some ways winks at Recioto.

Dindo

Dindo Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is moderately intense, with berry fruit supported by some mentholated accents and some sandalwood with slight underlying cumin seed; and as it opens spicy graphite shavings with slight vegetal accents. On the palate it's fairly rich, and quite ripe, with cherry plum fruit supported by

moderate dusky acidity and by tannins that have a distinct greenish burr and are supported by a fair amount of alcohol, which flows into a fairly sweet peppery berry fruit finish. It's woefully young and needs a few years to come together, but may do so nicely. Scoring now is like betting on the wind.

Aldrighetti Luigi, Angelo e Nicola

Aldrighetti Luigi, Angelo e Nicola Le Bignele Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with berry fruit and some mentholated accents. On the palate it's ample, with fairly rich quite ripe cherry fruit supported by some jammy accents, moderate acidity, minerality, and tannins that have a slightly greenish splintery burr and flow into a fairly sweet almost candied plum finish. Something of a work in progress.

Antolini

Antolini Moropio Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is muted, though swishing brings up wet tree bark, spice, and some greenish accents with underlying ripe red berry fruit and some savory accents. On the palate it's full, with fairly rich cherry fruit supported by moderate acidity and by tannins that have a warm savory burr and flow into a fairly long cherry finish. It's fairly direct, in an up front sort of way, and promises nicely, though it has a ways to go. The nose is behind with respect to the palate at present, and it needs at least a couple of years to catch up.

2 stars

Arduini Luciano

Arduini Luciano Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Lively black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with powerful dusky vegetal accents, grilled green peppers in particular, and some underlying spice with slight graphite shavings bitterness. As a fellow taster notes, these are not typical aromas for Veronese grapes. On the palate it's fairly rich, with graphite laced berry fruit supported by slight sweetness and by tannins that have greenish cedary accents, and flow into a fairly bitter tannic finish with powerful grilled pepper accents that echo the nose. It's quite young, and rather light for an Amarone, and I would have liked more concentration. And less bell pepper.

1 star

Benedetti Società Agricola

Benedetti Società Agricola Corte Antica Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is muted, though some candied cherry fruit -- almost gummy bear -- emerges with mentholated accents and some fairly bright spice. On the palate it's fairly bright, with lively berry fruit that's much more sour than I expected supported by bright slightly mentholated berry fruit acidity, and flowing into a fairly quick warm finish with lasting cedary dryness. It's going in several directions, as barrel samples often do, but shows promise.

Zecchini

Zecchini Vigneto Calandra Amarone della Valpolicella Valpantena DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is powerful, with menthol and candied accents supported by some marzipan and mentholated eucalyptus laced berry fruit. In mid stride, and there's ample alcohol as well. On the palate it's bright, with sour berry fruit that's a little thinner than I expected supported by mineral acidity and tannins that are dusky with considerable graphite shaving bitterness, and flow into a rather bitter savory finish. It needs time, but I found it lacking in flesh. Not quite emaciated, but the bones are showing. It may with time become lacily ethereal, but that is for the future.
1 star

San Felice

San Felice Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is dusky and rather mineral with unusual greenish accents that are fairly chemical. On the palate it's disconnected with respect to the nose, with unexpectedly sweet prune fruit supported by moderate acidity, just enough for steorage, and tannins that are ample and blocky. It lacks the verve and excitement I expect from an Amarone.
1 star

Zeni F.lli

Zeni F.lli Vigne Alte Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is muted, of the lights out nobody home variety; with swishing slight prune manages to emerge. On the palate it's ample with moderately intense prune fruit supported by tannins that have smoky sour accents and flow into a blocky tannic finish. It's fairly direct, and rather settled.

Sartori

Sartori Corte Brà Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, and greenish, with spicy notes and some bramble supported by menthol as well. On the palate it's ample and fairly direct, with moderate berry fruit supported by some mineral acidity, and by blocky cedar laced tannins that overshadow most everything else. With time the tannins will fold in, but the fruit isn't as bright as I might have hoped.

Secondo Marco di Marco Speri

Secondo Marco di Marco Speri Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

From a magnum; Barrel sample

Deep pigeon blood ruby with black reflections. The bouquet is dusky, with moderate fruit and some bramble. On the palate it's ample, with bright sour cherry fruit supported by bright berry fruit acidity and by tannins that are clean and greenish with some vegetal accents, and flow into a bitter dusky berry fruit finish. Promising, though it needs time. Quite alcoholic.

Guerrieri Rizzardi

Guerrieri Rizzardi Villa Rizzardi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep pigeon blood ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly rich, with some berry fruit. On the palate it's sweet, with ripe cherry plum fruit supported by dusky cedary accents and some underbrush, and by tannins that have a peppery splintery burr and flow into a rather bitter finish. It will be a fairly sweet interpretation of Amarone, and may become ethereal with time. Something to look out for.

Giacomo Montresor

Giacomo Montresor Fondatore Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black almandine with black reflections and almandine rim. The nose is a bit rustic, with animal accents and spice mingled with some sour berry fruit; there is also the smell one finds around old large wood that is past its prime. On the palate it's fairly direct, with moderate berry fruit supported by mineral acidity and tannins whose aftertaste harken back to the nose, and also some savory accents. Not as clean as I might have liked.

1 star

Tinazzi

Tinazzi La Bastia Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Impenetrable pyrope with black reflections. the bouquet is fairly intense, with candied cherries that bring gummy bears to mind supported by mentholated accents and some spice, and as it opens some cedar as well; with slight cocoa too. On the palate it's ample and fairly tart, with bright sour berry fruit that has some balsamic accents supported by balsam laced acidity and tannins that have a warm spicy burr and flow into a lasting balsamic finish. Pleasant in a fairly traditional key, and if you like the style you will enjoy it, though it needs a couple of years at least to get its bearings.

2 stars

Bixio Poderi

Bixio Poderi Tenuta Badin Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Impenetrable pyrope. The bouquet is unusual, with cut cucumber at first swish supported by slight cedar and some shellac but little fruit; it really doesn't want to be disturbed. On the palate it's ample and fairly sweet, with prune fruit supported by moderate acidity that isn't enough to keep it from settling, and by tannins that are ample and smooth, flowing into a soft prune finish. Lacks verve.

1 star

Bolla

Bolla Le Origini Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG Riserva 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry with black reflections. The bouquet is cedar laced with moderate fruit. On the palate it's promising, with fairly ripe cherry fruit supported by bright slightly peppery acidity and by tannins that have a greenish burr and flow into a fairly tannic finish. It's up in the air, but may come together nicely, albeit in a direct up front key.

Boscaini Carlo

Boscaini Carlo San Giorgio Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Fairly bright black cherry ruby with purple reflections. The bouquet is moderately intense with candied fruit laced with some mint and airy spice. On the palate it's full, with fairly rich fairly sweet berry fruit supported by peppery accents and tannins that have an angry graphite shaving burr. Quite disjointed.

Cà La Bionda

Cà La Bionda Vigneti di Ravazzol Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep purple ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is mentholated with some candied accents and underlying berry fruit; it's very young and still rather closed. On the palate it's approachable, with fairly rich, fairly sweet cherry prune fruit supported by tannins that have a distinct greenish burr and flow into a greenish berry fruit finish with considerable spicy splintery tannic underpinning. A lot of oak, which it has yet to digest. When it does it will be approachable in a direct middle of the road key.

1 star

Cà Rugate

Cà Rugate Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is moderately intense, with warm berry fruit laced with balsamic accents and some spice, also bright mentholated accents and hints of gummy bear as it opens. On the palate it's direct, with fairly bright berry fruit supported by smooth sweet berry fruit laced acidity, and by tannins that are fairly splintery, and flow into a dusky, splintery finish. Needs another couple of years at least to come together, and will always be fairly oaky, I think, though the brightness of the fruit is pleasant, and will allow the wine to balance the oak -- there is enough. It's just in an unfortunate stage now.

2 stars

Cà Vegri

Cà Vegri Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep pigeon blood ruby with cherry ruby rim. The bouquet is moderately intense and slightly musky, with mentholated notes mingled with cocoa and some peppery spice, also slight berry fruit. Still coming together. On the palate it's ample with moderately intense plum fruit with moderate dusky plum acidity and tannins that have a fairly dry cedar cast to them, and flow into a dry cedar laced finish. I'd have liked more, and brighter fruit; by the time the tannins have smoothed the fruit will I fear have significantly faded.

1 star

Tinazzi

Tinazzi Aurum Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, and quite young, with jammy cherry fruit supported by some India ink bitterness and fairly rich sandalwood spice as well. Pleasant in a very young key. On the palate it's bright, with rich sour cherry fruit supported by bright berry fruit acidity and some dusky bitterness, while the tannins are fresh and rather splintery but bode well for the future. It needs another 3-5 years, but will I think prove interesting.

2 stars

Pietro Zanoni

Pietro Zanoni Zovo Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with greenish cedary accents that have something of wet paper to them, mingled with some scalded milk and greenish overtones, while there's not much fruit. Not as clean as some. On the palate it's ample and fairly direct, with moderately intense berry fruit supported by some acidity, and by tannins that echo the aromas from the nose, flowing into a splintery, blocky finish.

1 star

Santa Sofia

Santa Sofia Antichello Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections. The bouquet is fairly intense, with mentholated cherry fruit supported by nutmeg spice and some plum accents with underlying sandalwood. On the palate it's up front, with fairly bright plum cherry fruit supported by minerality and graphite shaving bitterness, while the tannins are warm and display a youthful splintery burr. Pleasant in a young direct key, and while it doesn't have the depth that many Amaroni have, it does have a cheeky allure.

2 stars

Santi

Santi Proemio Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is muted, though swishing brings up some scalded milk, which is from wood, and prune fruit. On the palate it's ample and fairly sweet, with bright splintery cherry plum fruit supported by moderately intense mineral acidity and by tannins that have a dusky graphite shavings burr, and flow

into a warm decidedly tannic finish. It will be fairly rich in a quite ripe key when the tannins fold in.

F.lli Recchia

F.lli Recchia Masua di Jago Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is rustic, with spice and wet stable straw mingled with penetrating saline accents and some lathered horse. A bit extreme. On the palate it's ample and surprisingly languid, with balsam laced sour plum fruit supported by savory minerality and tannins that are warm and fairly bitter, flowing into a youthfully splintery finish. If you can get past the nose the palate is quite traditional in feel, but you have to like this sort of rusticity or it won't work for you.

1 star

Cantina Sociale della Valpantena

Cantina Sociale della Valpantena Torre del Falasco Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is smoky, with quite a bit of cedar and some spice, not much fruit. It's hidden. On the palate it's ample and soft with cherry plum fruit supported by smooth not too powerful tannins; I'd have preferred more verve and depth from an Amarone.

Monteci s.s.

Monteci s.s. Costa delle Corone Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with smoky balsamic accents and some wet horse supported by greenish mentholated spice. Not much fruit. On the palate it's ample and fairly bright, with sour berry fruit that's not quite as fleshy as I might have hoped supported by mentholated acidity and some graphite shavings bitterness; the tannins have an angry graphite burr that squeezes the wine down to nothingness making it seem extremely thin, and this was somewhat unexpected from the nose. It needs time.

Massimago 1.8.8.3.

Massimago 1.8.8.3. Massimago Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, and rather sweet, with some berry fruit supported by cedar and some scalded milk, with greenish vegetal notes as well. On the palate it's ample, with bright fresh cherry plum fruit

supported by deft berry fruit acidity and smooth tannins that have a warm cedary overlay and flow into a clean fresh plum cherry finish with savory tannic underpinning. Pleasant, and promises well, though it is a bit too young to score.

Corte San Benedetto

Corte San Benedetto Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections. The bouquet is fairly intense, with greenish spicy cherry plum fruit supported by some almost quinine bitterness, and fairly intense graphite shaving minerality. On the palate it's fairly bright, with lively plum cherry fruit supported by fairly bright vegetal acidity and by tannins that have a warm savory splintery burr and flow into a clean bright bitter berry fruit finish. Promising, and will likely be graceful in a couple of years' time.

Monte del Frà

Monte del Frà Lena di Mezzo Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep cherry ruby with pink rim. The bouquet is fairly rich, with bright slightly candied cherry fruit that brings gummy bears to mind, supported by deft vegetal acidity and by some dusky bitter undercurrents. On the palate it's ample and fairly sweet, with bright cherry plum fruit supported by bright sour berry fruit acidity with greenish vegetal accents, and by tannins that are fairly smooth, though they do display a certain youthful blockiness. It's full in a rather voluptuous ripe fruit driven key, and if you like the style, which isn't quite sexpot -- the tannins aren't smooth enough now, though they may become so in time, you will enjoy it. Approachable and fairly direct.

2 stars

Corte Archi

Corte Archi Gli Archi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with ripe plum prune fruit supported by jammy accents and spice with some warmth and greenish vegetal accents as well. On the palate it's ripe, with bright sweet plum cherry fruit supported by lively berry fruit acidity and by tannins that have a zesty peppery burr and flow into a warm rather tannic prune plum finish. It's direct, and quite ripe, with quite a bit of alcohol, and tough it is simple for an Amarone it is approachable, and will drink well with hearty stews or roasts.

2 stars

F.lli Recchia

F.lli Recchia Cà Bertoldi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Impenetrable pyrope with purple rim. The bouquet is sweet, with fairly rich greenish plum fruit supported by warm sour plum acidity that has some balsamic accents, and by tannins that are warm and balsamic, flowing into a fairly long peppery balsamic finish.

Monte Zovo

Monte Zovo Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly sweet, with spicy fruit that has some sandalwood notes, and some greenish accents as well. On the palate it's full and sweet, with fairly powerful cherry plum fruit supported by bright berry fruit acidity and by tannins that are fairly smooth, and have bright greenish accents to them. Promising, in a sweeter key that winks at Recioto, and will be pleasant in that key when it's in bottle. If you prefer drier wines it won't work as well for you.

Piccoli Daniela

Piccoli Daniela Monte la Parte Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with aromas that bring soap to mind together with some mentholated notes; there are just hints of wet paper as well, which seem to cut into the fruit. On the palate it's ample and smooth, and also fairly direct, with fairly rich cherry plum fruit supported by slight sweetness and dusky spicy accents with a degree of sandalwood and warmth, and by tannins that are ample and fairly smooth, flowing into a clean greenish finish. Simple and very direct, and the nose may just be a phase, because there isn't any evidence of it on the palate.

1 star

Le Marognole

Le Marognole Campo Rocco I Corsi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry with black reflections and almandine rim. The bouquet is fairly rich, with sweetish mentholated spice mingled with some berry fruit and some greenish cedary accents. On the palate it's ample and ripe, with cherry plum fruit supported by bright slightly vegetal acidity and by tannins that have a bright greenish burr and flow into a clean bright berry fruit finish. It's approachable, and displays pleasing verve, and will be pleasant in a fairly ripe key.

I Scriani

I Scriani Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections. The bouquet is fairly intense, with powerful greenish spice that has some green leather and leaf tobacco accents, and a fair amount of spice as well. On the palate it's ample, with fairly rich prune plum fruit supported by deft mineral acidity, and by tannins that have a pleasant greenish vegetal burr. Approachable, in a fairly vegetal key.

Monte del Frà

Monte del Frà Scarnocchio Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with floral accents and spice mingled with red berry fruit and powerful tart berry fruit acidity and greenish accents that bring flower stocks to mind. On the palate it's fairly rich, and quite ripe, with plum cherry fruit supported by vegetal accents and tannins that have a considerable sandalwood burr and flow into a fairly intense sandalwood overlay. It's going in several directions in a ripe key, and is one of the least ready barrel samples tasted, but is also has an intriguing something to it.

Tamburino Sardo di Fasoli Adriano e Figli

Tamburino Sardo di Fasoli Adriano e Figli Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black almandine with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is dusky, with fairly intense balsamic accents mingled with equally powerful greenish notes and hints of chalk dust; there's not much fruit. On the palate it's approachable, with fairly rich sour plum cherry fruit supported by moderate mineral acidity and by tannins that have a fairly strong greenish sandalwood overlay, and flow into a fairly long sandalwood laced finish. It's pleasant but still disjointed, and needs another couple of years to come together, at which point it will be spicy and rather exotic.

2 stars

Tezza

Tezza Corte Majoli Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with smoky greenish medicinal accents, and some jammy berry fruit with some balsam as well. On the palate it's ample and fairly rich, with plum cherry fruit supported by fairly bright acidity, and by tannins that have a warm greenish burr and flow into a greenish fairly

tart prune finish with lasting sandalwood laced underpinning. Promises nicely.

Gnirega di Clementi Pietro

Gnirega di Clementi Pietro Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep purple ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is moderately intense, with scalded milky accents that are I think derived from oak. On the palate it's ample, and fairly sweet, with ripe plum fruit supported by dusky greenish acidity and by tannins that have a decidedly greenish spicy splintery burr. It's brooding now, and may brood further in bottle though time will tell.

Cantina Valpolicella Negrar

Cantina Valpolicella Negrar Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Impenetrable pigeon blood ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is intense, and rather spiky, with a tendril of acidity that worms its way up the nose, supported by brambly accents and a certain airiness. Not much fruit at the outset, though with time prunes and a certain graphite spice emerge. On the palate it's quite ripe, with cherry prune fruit supported by dusky greenish mineral acidity, and by vegetal accents, while the tannins are fairly smooth, with a greenish burr, and flow into a dry rather greenish finish. Pleasant in a quite ripe key, and though very young will be approachable in a year or two.

2 stars

Cavalchina

Cavalchina Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with cherry ruby rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, and smoky, with some cedar and greenish vegetal accents supported by leaf tobacco and some savory spice. Not much fruit though there is some anger. On the palate it's ample and softer than I expected, with fairly rich, fairly bright fairly sweet cherry plum fruit supported by bright berry fruit acidity and by tannins that are ample and smooth, with slight splintery accents that flow into a warm sweet berry fruit prune finish with dusky leaf tobacco underpinning. It's fairly direct, with a peasant fullness, and the palate is ahead of the nose. If it catches up, the wine will be pleasant in a fairly direct key.

2 stars

Cesari

Cesari Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Impenetrable pyrope with purple reflections and slightly violet cherry rim. The bouquet is ripe, with quite a bit of alcohol and cherry plum fruit supported by greenish sandalwood

accents and some spice, and by some white pepper as well. On the palate it's ample and sweet, with plum cherry fruit supported by moderate acidity and by tannins that have a decidedly cedary overlay to them and flow into a dry cedar laced finish. It's quite young, and chewing over considerable oak; how well it will digest it is an open question, but I would have liked more richness of fruit to balance the oak.

1 star

F.Ili Fabiano

F.Ili Fabiano Nicola Fabiano Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with musty wet paper mingled with some greenish notes and moderate acidity; there's not much fruit. On the palate it's quite ripe and quite smooth, with powerful fairly sweet plum fruit supported by sour plum acidity and by tannins that are quite smooth and fairly soft, flowing into a fairly bright cherry plum finish with a dry tannic underpinning. It's young, and will be ample in a very ripe soft fruit driven key. If you like the style you will enjoy it, but if you prefer tighter wines it will work less well for you. The nose is now frankly behind the palate, and if it catches up the wine will be pleasant in its style, but we will have to wait to see what it does.

1 star

Guerrieri Rizzardi

Guerrieri Rizzardi Calcarole Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep pyrope with violet reflections and purple in the rim. The bouquet is smoky, with burnt cork mingled with spice and some savory accents as well as sweetness. Not much fruit. On the palate it's quite sweet for an Amarone, edging into what one expects of a Recioto, with prune fruit supported by bitter accents and some spicy acidity, and by smooth sweet tannins that again have a bitter underpinning, and flow into a prune laced sweet finish. If you like the style you will enjoy it, but be forewarned: it's a very sweet interpretation of a wine that is usually dry.

Latium

Latium Campo Leon Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Impenetrable purple ruby with violet reflections. the bouquet is intense, with floral accents and sweet prune fruit supported by mentholated notes and a fair amount of sandalwood, and also slight laundry soap. On the palate it's ample and fairly sweet, with moderately intense plum fruit that is overshadowed by angry greenish accents and tannins that have a bitter greenish splintery burr and flow into a decidedly bitter finish with graphite shaving splinters. Angry, and it remains to be seen what it does upon its release into the bottle.

Pasqua Vigneti e Cantine

Pasqua Vigneti e Cantine Villa Borghetti Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is rustic, with powerful balsamic notes overlying wet stable straw and spice; there's also a certain smokiness to it, with some petroleum overtones, though not much fruit. On the palate it's brighter than expected, with fairly rich, moderately sweet plum cherry fruit supported by greenish vegetal acidity and tannins that have a greenish peppery burr and flow into a decidedly tannic rather greenish peppery finish. It's very young, in a ripe key, and needs at least a couple of years to digest the tannins. If the nose catches up with the palate it will be pleasant enough.

2 stars (?)

F.Ili Farina

F.Ili Farina Farina Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is intense, and cedar laced with quite a bit of alcohol and considerable sandalwood mingled with some greenish accents and chemical notes. Not much fruit. On the palate it's full, with soft quite ripe greenish plum fruit supported by greenish acidity that has some petroleum accents, and by tannins that are warm and smooth, with a slight peppery cedar laced burr that flows into a fairly long petroleum laced vegetal finish with peppery tannic underpinning. It's up in the air, and though I can say it will come down quite ripe, I'm not sure just what the tannins will do. It is in any case fairly extreme, and something to consider only if you like this style.

1 star

Novaia

Novaia Selezione Corte Vaona Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG 2008

Barrel sample

Deep black cherry with black cherry rim. The bouquet is powerful, with spice and slightly burnt cedar mingled with some greenish accents; as it opens the burnt accents fade, and the wine simply becomes closed. On the palate it's fairly direct, with powerful sour cherry fruit supported by spicy accents and tannins that are clumpy and greenish. It's quite behind, and needs at least a year, perhaps two, to get its bearings. Very much a babe in the woods.

Roccolo Grassi

Roccolo Grassi Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Impenetrable black cherry ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is intense, and fairly sweet, with peppery berry fruit supported by some mentholated accents and spice, and also by some sandalwood. Fresh, and fairly charged. On the palate it's bright, with rich cherry fruit

supported by some sweetish accents, sour berry fruit acidity, and dusky tannins that flow into a warm slightly balsamic finish. Pleasant in a ripe but not overripe fairly charged key, and will also age nicely for a number of years, though at present it needs time.

2 stars

Corte Sant'Alda

Corte Sant'Alda Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2008

Deep black cherry ruby with cherry rim. The bouquet is deft, with pleasant mentholated spice mingled with red berry fruit, some berry fruit acidity, and underbrush, while there is also some sea salt. On the palate it's bright, with lively sour cherry fruit supported by dusky acidity that has some tobaccoey vegetal accents mingled with sandalwood, and supported by fresh bright slightly greenish tannins. It's very, very young, but promises well, and should develop nicely with time; it needs a couple of years to work things out and make itself presentable.

2 stars