

ODDERO

opening a bottle

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Still Essential: The Wines of Oddero

The Historic Family Winery of La Morra Continues Its Excellence



[Kevin Day](#)



A recent survey showed that, among Opening a Bottle's regular readers, the lists of the [Essential Winemakers of Italy](#) and [France](#) are the most appreciated part of Opening a Bottle. (Thank God, because they are a lot of work). I am delighted that so many of you feel this way. To me, being a smart wine shopper means knowing who the most consistent and best value producers are for a given region — and that's what the Essential Winemakers lists are about. Not vintage charts, not 100-point scores ... rather: who is consistent, compelling and worth the money. Keeping such a list updated has become paramount to my mission at Opening a Bottle, particularly for Italy — a nation I have come to know better than any other (including my own) when it comes to wine.

But that also means regularly reassessing every winery I list — something I do quite a bit behind the scenes, but rarely write about.

This year, I've de-listed a few wineries from the Italian list, not because their wines diminished in quality necessarily, but because I found different producers who are more compelling to me. And so, [Barbacàn](#) joined [ARPEPE](#) to represent Valtellina, replacing Nino Negri in the process. Despite smaller production, Barbacàn's wines just seemed more soulful and vital to me. The same can be said for [Villa Russiz](#) taking the place of Russiz Superiore and Marco Felluga.

These are tough calls, and I'd rather not dwell too much on de-listing a winery. They work hard and they do great work, but I want to have a balanced list that is representative of — what I find to be

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— the most dynamic and layered wine nation in the world. Few places in Italy are more competitive in this regard than the Langhe of Piedmont. Across the region, producers meet impossibly high standards year after year, and their landmark grape variety — Nebbiolo — often doesn't reveal its true character until at least 10 years after vintage. Assessing this landscape involves a lot of give and take: What separates one estate from the next can often be the tiniest detail. This week, Pietro Oddero of [the esteemed La Morra-based winery Oddero](#) came to Denver as the guest of honor for a winemaker dinner at [Barolo Grill](#). I visited the estate and met with his cousin, Isabella, in the fall of 2017, listing them on the Essential Winemakers of Italy page for the first time shortly after that. It was [one of the most impressive estate visits](#) I've encountered, and so I was quietly optimistic that this tasting would show their wines just as well as then.

Six of their 13 wines were poured Tuesday night, and there is no doubt in my mind that they are still essential. Below are notes on three of the most exquisite wines: the Barbera d'Alba Superiore, the Barbaresco Gallina and the Barolo Villero. We also sampled the **2016 Oddero Langhe Riesling** (★★★★ 1/2) which paired wonderfully with a smoky hamachi dish; the **2015 Oddero Barolo** (★★★★ 1/2), the *classico* blend from across the appellation; and the **2007 Oddero Barolo Bussia Soprana Vigna Mondoca** (★★★★ 3/4), the last vintage in which Oddero released the wine as a non-riserva. From the 2008 vintage on, the Bussia will be held back for 10 years and labeled as a Riserva.

It certainly helped that the team at Barolo Grill — possibly the best restaurant in Denver, still after nearly 30 years in business — were able to produce exquisite and authentic dishes from Piedmont to match the tenor and tone of these wines. (After all, the restaurant closes every summer so that the entire team can fly to Italy to study the cuisine, wine and traditions of Piedmont). My only question now is how many Piedmont producers is too many to list? Two more are on the verge (I'm reviewing their latest wines now), and I am likely to list them once I fill in a few holes in the Italian map — namely Campania and Etna.

In the meantime, if you have a chance to pick up any bottle from Oddero, I say “do so.”

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Weekend Read: On the #wines of @oddero 🇮🇹

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Wine writer Kevin Day evaluates the wines of La Morra, Italy's Oddero, and once again concludes that the Barolo estate makes essential Italian wine.
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