

Cordero di Montezemolo

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By Stephen Tanzer

Enologist Alberto Cordero told me he wasn't yet convinced that 2010 is an outstanding vintage and that he doesn't understand those who are raving about these wines. On the other hand, he said, "2009 is so good, so pleasurable: I love to drink them." Cold temperatures after the flowering cut eventual yields by 15%, then the summer was pretty good and the harvest was very early, lasting from September 3 through October 13, he added. "The growing season was not as hot as people think." Two thousand ten witnessed a shorter, more concentrated harvest. The Barolos in both years have plenty of alcohol: about 15% in 2009 and 14.7% in 2010. But the 2011s are even higher in octane, even if they also have "great acidity."

2012 Cordero di Montezemolo Langhe Chardonnay Elioro

89

(\$38) (barrel-fermented and aged for nine months in 50% new and 50% second- and third-pass barrels; bottled in August): Good bright yellow. Pungent, penetrating aromas of peach, *mirabelle*, vanillin oak and fresh herbs. Ripe, silky and dry, with a Burgundian aspect to the flavors of pungent white berries, flowers and butterscotch. There's a thickness to this wine but the finish offers lovely lift. (The 2011 version, which I rated 87, was dominated by pineapple and sweet oak and showed more obvious tannins on the finish.) Incidentally, Cordero opened a bottle of the 1991(!), the second vintage for this wine, made from four-year-old vines. It showed mature aromas of peach, truffle, oatmeal and coffee; a plush but dry palate featuring lemon and peach fruit; and a sexy, persistent, truffley aftertaste. This 22-year-old chardonnay was still full of life.

2012 Cordero di Montezemolo Barbera d'Alba

87

(\$20) (a blend of multiple plots, including parcels in Roero; from vines between 13 and 30 years of age; aged for six or seven months in a mix of *barriques*, a small percentage of them new, and large casks): Good deep, bright red. Redcurrant, nutty oak and enticing floral perfume on the nose and palate. Soft, smooth and easygoing, offer good richness without alcoholic weight. Finishes with slightly dusty tannins and hints of herbs and mint.

2011 Cordero di Montezemolo Barbera d'Alba Superiore Funtani

89

(\$36) (15.7% alcohol; from vines in Gattera, planted in 1968; aged for 15 months in nearly all new *barriques*, and held back for a year prior to release): Good deep red. Redcurrant and sexy chocolatey oak on the rather international nose. Round and full in the mouth, with harmonious ripe acidity giving shape to the flavors of red and darker cherry, cola, cocoa powder and spices. Finishes suave, rich and long, with a fine dusting of tannins. This wine fermented for a full month, and Cordero needed to add fruit from a younger vineyard to get the alcohol below 16%.

2010 Cordero di Montezemolo Barbera d'Alba Superiore Funtani

88(+?)

(\$36) Good full medium red. Less expressive and nuanced on the nose than the comparatively open-knit 2011. Juicy, restrained and dry in the mouth, with nicely delineated flavors of redcurrant, raspberry, black cherry and wild herbs. In a more classic, adult style than the 2011 version but also quite dry on the finish. Perhaps in an awkward stage today, but has good aging potential. Cordero notes that this wine is usually best at age five or six, as it gains in roundness.

2012 Cordero di Montezemolo Nebbiolo Langhe

89

(\$25) (includes a lot of declassified Barolo, mostly from young vines given a cooler fermentation and shorter maceration; aged for three months in barrels): Good bright medium red. Fresh, expressive aromas of raspberry, red cherry, leather, licorice and herbs. Juicy and alive on the palate, with a light touch and plenty of detail to the red fruit and spice flavors. Lovely varietal character here. Finishes with firm tannic support and nice length.

2010 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Monfalletto

90(+?)

(\$45) Good full, healthy red. Complex, pure nose melds raspberry, minerals and licorice. Suave, dry and tight, with reticent red fruit flavors accented by mint and flowers. With modest flesh, this seems a tad sour today on the back end and not at all expressive, but it's suave and sharply delineated. This represents a large blend of parcels around the estate, with each lot vinified separately. Cordero describes this as a feminine site, noting that the wine includes a parcel of rose clone. I may be underrating this today.

2010 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Vigna Bricco Gattera

92(+?)

(\$80) (from the best plot of Monfalletto; 100% michet): Good medium-deep red. Redcurrant, black cherry, cola and sweet soft spices on the nose. Then densely packed and tight on the palate, offering a compelling blend of energy and tension on the one hand and seamless sweetness on the other. Finishes with fine-grained tannins and suggestions of dark fruits. Very promising. This estate eschews long aging in oak, usually keeping their Barolos in wood for just 19 to 22 months.

2010 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Vigna Enrico VI

92(+?)

(\$90) (from a single parcel in Villero, in Castiglione Falletto): Good dark medium red. Currant, menthol and soft spices on the nose. Very rich but quite backward, showing no easy sweetness to its raspberry, spice and medicinal herb flavors. This chewy, deep, well-delineated Barolo finishes with serious dusty tannins that coat the sides of the mouth. Has the balance and energy to support a long and graceful evolution in bottle. My score may turn out to be overly conservative.

2009 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Monfalletto

92

Good medium red. Redcurrant, marzipan and sexy sweet spices on the nose and palate; much showier today than the 2010 version. Rich, pliant and sweet, combining a fine-grained texture and noteworthy inner-mouth lift. Broad, ripely tannic and easy to understand.

2009 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Vigna Bricco Gattera

90(+?)?

Good dark red. Very rich, ripe aromas of cherry liqueur, cocoa powder and licorice. Then rather sullen in the mid-palate and not currently showing the sweetness or pliancy of the Monfalletto. Finishes with a dry tannic edge. Is this going through an awkward stage? This may need more time to harmonize its oak component.

2009 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Vigna Enrico VI

94

(from 70- and 40+-year-old vines in what Alberto Cordero describes as the central part of Villero): Good deep red. Captivating aromas of black cherry, strawberry and sweet spices, with subtle notes of dried flowers, woodsmoke, cinnamon and orange peel emerging with air; remarkably aromatic for 2009. Sweet, plush and seamless; round and full, with a three-dimensional texture. Finishes very long and sweet, with suave, broad tannins. A beauty.

2005 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Gorette Riserva

92

(just 1,000 magnums produced; from 45-year-old southeast-facing vines in an extension of Monfalletto on the other side of the estate's famous cedar of Lebanon tree): Good dark red. Musky plum, licorice, mocha, earth and sweet oak on the nose. Sweet and atypically rich for 2005, with a round, sweet middle given shape by harmonious acidity. But I find more oakiness than the vintage's delicate floral aromatics. The long, mouthcoating finish features mellow tannins. Two thousand kilos of the best grapes are used to make seven new *barriques*' worth of wine. The Gorette Riserva is vinified separately every year but sometimes goes into the Monfalletto bottling, as it did in 2004 and 2006. The 2005 magnums were held back six years prior to being released.