



## APRIL 2010 REPORT, AND SPRING IS IN THE AIR

The Wine Gang is five of the UK's most respected wine critics. From left to right: Olly Smith of BBC1's Saturday Kitchen, Tom Cannavan of [www.wine-pages.com](http://www.wine-pages.com), Anthony Rose of The Independent, Joanna Simon of House and Garden and Tim Atkin MW of The Observer.

Having expanded its range to straddle both Old and New Worlds, quality importer Liberty can no longer be called just an Italian specialist. And yet fine Italian wines remain its heart and soul, so we've selected a mouth-watering handful of truly original Italian wine styles from its vast annual portfolio tasting.

## DRY WHITES



### Franz Haas Manna Cru 2008

As close to heaven as it gets in Alto Adige, hence presumably the name, this fascinating modern Italian blend of 50% Riesling, 20% Chardonnay, 20% Gewurztraminer and 10% Sauvignon Blanc is quite lovely, showing aromatic notes of Gewurz rose petal and Sauvignon's nettly character, while the palate combines the four varieties in a textured, spicy and intensely flavoured whole that's greater than the sum of the parts.

93 points



### Livio Felluga Friulano 2008

Fine, intense and refreshingly aromatic, this superb north-east Italian dry white made from Friulano (what used to be called Tocai Friulano) is rich in stone-fruit and peachy concentration of flavour with a touch of spice and a lovely tongue-caressing texture enlivened by the classic crisp acidity of the best Friulian white wines. 'The ultimate porch wine', according to the owner.

92 points



### Pieropan Soave Classico Calvarino 2007

A freshness of aroma combines with a lively fresh spritz and makes way for a delicious palate of concentration and peachy richness and yet with that classic acidity and nutty finish that defines the best of Soave and gives this wine both complexity and finesse.

92 points



### Ca' dei Frati Lugana Brolettino 2008

Made from the Trebbiano di Lugana grape (a different animal from boring Trebbiano), this is a fragrant yellow gold, dry, uniquely Italian white style whose seven months in older oak adds roundness of texture to the juicy ripe stone-fruit flavours whose leesy edge also adds complexity and freshness.

91 points



### Ca' dei Frati Pratto 2008

A distinctive blend of Trebbiano di Lugana, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, this dry white has a similarly leesy, complex profile to the pure Trebbiano di Lugana Brolettino, its deliciously juicy Ogen melon sweetness given a sharply defined, refreshing edge thanks to a mineral richness on the mid-palate.

91 points



### Cantine Belisario Verdicchio di Matelica Vigneto del Cerro 2008

A classic Verdicchio from vineyards set back from the Adriatic and much closer to the Apennine Mountains than the more familiar Jesi, this is a lovely dry white full of stone-fruit concentration with a touch of leesy complexity, and energised by a fine isotonic freshness. Good value.

One of this month's Five Best Value Wines

91 points



#### La Giustiniana Gavi di Gavi Montessora 2008

The aromas of this Cortese-based Piedmontese white are distinctive, fresh and inviting, the palate rich in peachy fruit concentration, all the while cut by the typically incisive, citrusy acidity of this north-west Italian grape variety and finishing with a touch of honey.

90 points



#### Specogna Pinot Grigio Ramato 2008

Ramato means copper and the typical colour of this quality Pinot Grigio is a very pale coppery blush that some might even call rosé; the aromas are fresh and the flavours ripe with a stonefruit quality and fine crisp acidity; it's the sort of wine that made so many want to try and emulate the real Pinot Grigio.

90 points



#### Specogna Ribolla Gialla 2008

From eastern Friuli near the Slovenian border, this is an intriguing dry white made from the local Ribolla Gialla (yellow) grape fermented mostly in stainless steel for freshness with a fifth in big oak vats; the result is a savoury nose of corn, richly textured, ripe full fruit with a lovely crisp acidity bringing balance.



#### Deltetto Roero Arneis 2008

Made from the local Piedmontese white variety, Arneis, this floral example combines a delicious richness of flavour with the typical crisp, refreshing acidity of the variety in its native region.



#### Deltetto Langhe Favorita Sarvai 2008

Made from the local Favorita, this dry white has lovely freshness with distinctive undertones of rhubarb and gooseberry, almost a northern Italian Sauvignon Blanc, and an elegant dry finish with crisp Piedmontese acidity.



#### Cantine Belisario Verdicchio di Matelica Terre di Valbona 2009

With its fresh lemony aromas, there is some attractively ripe and juicy fruit in this Verdicchio from vineyards set back from the Adriatic and much closer to the Apennine Mountains than the more familiar Jesi, a spritz adding freshness and zip to the very attractive fruit; good value.

## DRY REDS



### Massolino Barolo 2005

Fragrant and sweetly complex on the nose, this fine Piedmontese red shows oodles of juicy sweet cherries on the palate with none of Barolo's fierce tannin, just plenty of seductively rich cherry fruit, supple tannins and savoury acidity. From a relatively forward vintage after 2004, it's just about ready to drink now.

92 points



### Aldo Conterno Langhe Nebbiolo Il Favot 2006

Representing the modern Nebbiolo style about which the late Aldo Conterno himself was initially equivocal, this has some of the smokiness of new oak on the nose while the fruit is full of intriguing pomegranate and blackcurrant-like characters, international in style perhaps compared to Barolo, but with fine underlying seductive richness of flavour and savoury acidity.

91 points



### Proprieta Sperino Lessona 2005

Tuscany's Paolo De Marchi is in fact from Piedmont and it shows in this pure Nebbiolo from his resurrected family estate at Lessona; it's intriguingly aromatic with fine fresh cherry and spice notes underscored by ripe cherryish fruit with notes of tannin and astringency balanced by subtle spicy oak; a sort of Italianate red Burgundy.

91 points



### Massolino Barbera d'Alba Gisep 2007

Yes, this is a fairly extraordinary Barbera, dense in colour and full of the sweet dark cherry fruit flavours associated with concentrated super-ripe grapes; a touch of the California Barbera about it perhaps but it's saved from over-richness or overwhelming power by Barbera's amazing bright acidity. You have been warned.

91 points



### Bruno Rocca Barbera d'Asti 2007

Deep ruby and bright with an intriguing almost Marmitey touch of savoury yeastiness on the nose, this is lovely and bright Barbera with fine damsony fruit framed by subtle oak and appetisingly savoury acidity.

90 points



### G.D.Vajra Langhe Nebbiolo 2007

Fresh and fragrant, this delightful Piedmontese red has juicy fresh, sweetly savoury and crunchy cherry and redcurrant fruit; approachable and juicy for Nebbiolo and a little firmer than Dolcetto but without quite the ageworthy structure of Barolo.

90 points



### G.D.Vajra Dolcetto 2008

A bright violet ruby in colour with floral violety notes, this is a classic Piedmontese example of pure bright cherryish fruit, utterly gluggy and delicious with the most supple and juicy of tannins and bright acidity; a far better bet for summer's day lunches than what they used to call luncheon claret.

90 points



### Proprieta Sperino Costa della Sesia Uvaggio 2006

Isole e Olena's Paolo De Marchi shows his Piedmontese roots in this distinctive blend of two-thirds Nebbiolo and a third local varieties Vespolino and Croatina; it's aromatic with a ripe cherry and herby undertone, spicy and berry fruit on the palate, like a Pinot Noir only with a twist of northern Italian astringent freshness and tannin.