A word on Barbaresco 2010:

Barbaresco producers this year had the inestimable advantage of showing their 2010 vintage, about which it is impossible to find a negative opinion in either the Barolo or Barbaresco zone. Producers are simply over the moon about this vintage, and tastings of it bore out their enthusiasm – with the exception, again this year, of the wines from the oak-crazed commune of Neive.

Here is the Consorzio’s verdict on the growing season: ‘Nebbiolo was able to enjoy fine weather throughout the month of September, offsetting the slight delay in the ripening of the grapes due to the wet weather between July and August. Ripening checks showed that the sugars continued to accumulate during the second half of the month, while the acid profile gradually dropped to very acceptable levels. Ripening of the phenolic components which are essential for ensuring body and ageing capacity has been excellent. Without question, Nebbiolo has responded sublimely this year... this will prove to be an excellent vintage for the Nebbiolo denominations.’

Even for the usually optimistic Consorzio reports, this is strong language, and my tastings showed it is justified.

In the communes of Barbaresco and Treiso, producers were able to achieve classic wines, with the poise and balance of traditional Barbaresco and the luscious, accessible fruit of modern vintages. My tasting notes remark again and again about classic aromas of black cherry, road tar and dried roses, about lovely fruit and perfect acidity on the palate, with tannins that are already softening, and perfectly pitched leather and tobacco finishes.

The Neive commune continues this year with its inexplicable-to-me infatuation with toasted oak barrels, which come close to eradicating any Nebbiolo character from the wines – a pity in any year, but a true shame in this superb vintage.

Producers and journalists concur that 2010 seems to be an ideal vintage that will drink very enjoyably soon -- for some of the most forward wines, within this calendar year -- and last for decades. I found many wines to enjoy already, and many more, slightly closed at the moment, that will prove very pleasurable in one or two years' time.

Here is a highly selected list of some of the best:

Albino Rocca, Ronchi, Barbaresco
Albino Rocca, Teorema, Alba
Cascina delle Rose, Rio Sordo, Barbaresco
Cascina delle Rose, Tre Stelle, Barbaresco
Ceretto, Bernardot, Treiso
Marchesi di Gresy, Martinenga, Barbaresco
Michele Chiarlo, Asili, Barbaresco
Pertinace, Marcarini, Treiso
Poderi Colla, Roncaglie, Barbaresco
Produttori del Barbaresco, Barbaresco
Vigneti Luigi Oddero, multiple communes