



primavera

- SELECTIONS -

Cascina Luisin
dal 1913



LOCALITY: Barbaresco

WINEMAKER: Roberto Minuto

luisin.altervista.org



PIEDMONT

CASCINA LUISIN

Cascina Luisin boasts arguably one of the best positions in the Barbaresco commune. Those who understand the importance of the names Asili and Rabaja would be reassured of Luisin's position as a high-quality producer by the fact that the Minuto family own parcels of these crus. They also happen to be conveniently located right on their doorstep, literally outside their back door.



Entering Barbaresco

This small estate dates back to 1913 and is now run by winemaker Roberto Minuto. He is the fourth generation at Luisin and still displays great respect for his predecessors, including his father, Luigi, who continues to help in the winery.

Similar to other years, this March, Roberto Minuto met us in the courtyard and then took us on a tour of the winery, complete with decades old cellars, large botti and an obviously proud history. But it is when you reach the 'observation deck' – the building's terrace – that you see just how impressive the real estate is. The winery faces west and basically sits directly above the Rabaja vineyard. If you look just to the south from their terrace, you see Asili – arguably the 'grand cru' of the Barbaresco zone. These two prestigious vineyards are among Cascina Luisin's 7 hectares of vineyard holdings and are the source of most of the fruit for their elegant Barbarescos.



Asili Cru when we visited in March

Roberto explains that the Tanaro River, which is just visible from the estate, has a tempering effect on the south-west-facing amphitheatre-shaped vineyards. Rabaja, high on the hill, with soils containing greater amounts of calcium carbonate creates a structured and more mineral Barbaresco. Asili, on the other hand, is slightly lower, sitting at around 290 metres in elevation and is more west exposed, with higher levels of clay, contributing to a floral, plush and silky Barbaresco.



Rabaja in August, from a previous visit

Putting history and real estate to the side, it's the wines that take centre stage. As far as the 2016 vintage is concerned – there has been an enormous amount of press, and deservedly so – it's a classic. This year's trio of '16 crus look stunning, showing exquisite purity of fruit across the range. They are so, so pretty and are structurally seamless. They always strike us as being some of the more expressive wines we sell, with silky yet assertive tannins. The cool '16 vintage amplifies this with heightened aromatics and a more sophisticated and linear tannin profile than from '15. Being within a couple of minutes from the vineyards, in most cases, means that they are lucky enough to bring the fruit in as quickly and freshly as possible. This freshness is reflected in the pure and fragrant nature of these wines.



Roberto Minuto, and Nebbiolo of Asili ready to go

In the cellar, while he has previously trialled some modern techniques, Roberto is a traditionalist. Concrete fermentation tanks and large Stockinger botti are what Roberto proudly presents. Long fermentations and extended post-fermentation maceration are commonplace, followed by 30 months in oak. Each of Roberto's Barbarescos are made in mostly the same way, highlighting the site in each of the wines.

The 2016 'Rabaja', 'Asili' and 'Paolin' Barbarescos are now available in limited amounts, along with some of Luisin's other wines, including Roero Arneis, Dolcetto and Barbera.

THE WINE

2016 'Paolin' Barbaresco DCG

'Paolin' is predominantly (90%) from a relatively cool and elevated cru called Basarin in Neive, of which Bruno Giacosa is a major owner. The exposure is southerly and vine age is 40 years on average. Fermentation and maceration take place slowly in concrete vats for around 40 days with regular pump-overs, followed by maturation in Stockinger Slavonian oak for 30 months. It shows a degree of delicacy, no doubt due to the site, with elegant aromas of rose, cherry and sweet spice. Slightly darker fruit characters come through on the palate: blueberry...

...blackberry and even blackcurrant. Savoury, cedar-like flavours play a part, and the spiciness of the bouquet is evident once again. Tannins are gently firm and there's a minerality that runs right through the palate and lingers on the finish. The overall balance makes this approachable now, but of course, its best years lie ahead.

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'Rose, menthol, wild herb and forest berry aromas lead the nose. Linear and elegantly structured, the savory palate is loaded with finesse, offering wild cherry extract, liquorice and orange zest framed in firm, refined tannins. Bright acidity lends balance and tension. Drink 2024–2036'

94/100 Cellar Selection — Kerin O'Keefe, winemag.com

Tasted blind. Deep ruby. Fine, marasca and wild-strawberry cherry nose with mineral hints and perhaps already a little evolved. Generous and mouth-filling, and with good acidity and finely sculpted grainy tannins. Long and can already be approached.

17/20 — Walter Speller, jancisrobinson.com

'You get a real sense of ripeness, as soon as you get a whiff of this red; blackberry essence, ripe stems, vanilla and lifted balsamic vinegar and shoe polish are out in full force. It's on the full-bodied palate where the power really hits you — this is a chewy, full-bodied Barbaresco with unforgiving, stocky tannins and densely packed dark fruit. Don't tread lightly here but expect a powerhouse of fruit and tannin! Drink from 2023.'

94/100 — James Suckling, jamesuckling.com

2016 'Rabaja' Barbaresco DOCG

Vinification for the 'Rabaja' is essentially the same as for 'Paolin', although there is more frequent racking during the first week or so of fermentation to gently extract the tannins. Maturation is in oak of varying capacity from 20hl to 5s0hl for 30 months. Very expressive bouquet with elements of cherry, anise, rose petal and tobacco. While still beautifully elegant and aromatic, this is certainly a more structured and coiled Barbaresco, with intense chalky tannins and a compensating touch of fruit sweetness. Ripe cherry, liquorice, spice and alpine herbs on the palate complete the wine and show that it is one capable of longevity.

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'Tasted blind. Mid ruby. A little leafy and closed on the nose. Very slow to open up. Subtle rather than powerful yet with plenty of concentration. Brooding and with long, chewy tannins. Finely tuned balance and has real potential.'

17.5/20 — Walter Speller, jancisrobinson.com

A liquorice note frames the plum and cherry flavours in this rich, supple red. Hints of flowers and mineral add depth as the muscular tannins flex on the finish. Best from 2023 through 2042.

93/100 — Wine Spectator, winespectator.com

Forest floor, blue flower, leather and pipe tobacco aromas shape the nose. Elegantly structured, the taut palate offers sour cherry, raspberry compote, white pepper and wild herbs, while firm, refined tannins and fresh acidity lend finesse and balance. Drink 2024–2034.

93/100 – Kerin O’Keefe, winemag.com

2016 ‘Asili’ Barbaresco DOCG

The fruit for this wine comes from the mostly south-facing aspect of the Asili cru, with an average vine age of 55 years. The winemaking is similar to the other Barbarescos. This is perhaps the most compelling of the Luisin Barbarescos, with a textbook Nebbiolo red colour and an intriguing bouquet of so many elements that all come together in harmony. Classic varietal characters of liquorice root, rose petal and anise, alongside brighter fruit aromas of pomegranate, cherry and raspberry, with savoury, herbal notes in the background – tar, leather and sandalwood are all in the mix. There is beautiful energy to this wine, with fresh acidity, some voluptuous and silky fruit and soft tannin, most likely a reflection of the classic 2016 vintage and the personality of the Asili site.

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Tasted blind. Mid ruby with orange tinges. A little closed on the nose. Concentrated and very pure on the palate. Bags of concentrated sour cherry and coating tannins equally vying for attention on the finish. Long, embryonic and in need of much more time.

18/20 – Walter Speller, jancisrobinson.com

Ripe, with plum, macerated cherry and chocolate flavours, this red is backed by tightly wound tannins. Features plenty of fruit to match the structure, winding down with tobacco, spice and mineral elements. Best from 2023 through 2043.

93/100 – Wine Spectator, winespectator.com

Aromas of menthol and dark-skinned fruit lead the nose along with whiffs of exotic spice. The firm, linear palate shows dried cherry, liquorice, and a hint of espresso alongside firm acidity and close-grained tannins.

92/100 – Kerin O’Keefe, winemag.com