



# primavera

– S E L E C T I O N S –

## PIRA

**LOCALITY:** Serralunga,  
Barolo

**WINEMAKER:** Giampaolo  
Pira

[piraluigi.it](http://piraluigi.it)



PIEDMONT

### LUIGI PIRA

The story of the Pira family is the story of Barolo, one told about people of great warmth and integrity. Always seeking quality and improvement, the Pira family are workers of the land, using the grape Nebbiolo (and Barbera and Dolcetto) as the medium through which their particular terroir can speak. Like many Langhe families, they started as growers and eventually released their own wines under the family name.

Luigi Pira was the first to bottle the family's wines, prompted by stories from the outside world of the interest in Barolo, and encouraged by sons Giampaolo and Romolo, and later Claudio, who were confident of the eventual demand for Serralunga and the importance of their vineyard plots. Giampaolo later took the reins in the winery and was one of the original and probably the lowest-key of the 'Barolo Boys'.



L: Giampaolo Pira was described by Robert Parker as "...one of Piedmont's superstars..."

R: The Pira cantina overlooks Vigna Rionda, with the Serralunga Castello in the background.

Up until recent years, the use of roto-fermenters with quick ferments and a decent amount of new oak resulted in somewhat 'Parker-ised' wines, but due to the very strong Serralunga imprint – stock, smoke, graphite and darkest cherry – the wines and their personalities always overtook the oak. These days, ferments have been significantly slowed down to allow for a gentler process. The barrels are fewer, larger and older, and commentary on the presence of oak has disappeared over the last few years.

Today, a Luigi Pira Barolo is regarded as a benchmark for wines that show classic Serralunga characters of darkness and power, allied with numerous complexities and an up-tempo style. Vineyard management has been essentially sustainable for decades, too, and Pira are long-time practitioners of cover-cropping, natural insecticides and minimal sulphur use. One testimonial to this combination of attention to detail in both the winery and vineyard is to the distinctly individual characteristics in the 'Margheria' and 'Marenca' Baroli, even though the crus are adjacent.



L: Barbera 2019 R: Dolcetto harvest

Pira are not solely about Barolo. Their Dolcetto, Barbera and Nebbiolo are very highly regarded versions, powerful and distinctive. The Dolcetto, vinified in steel and entirely from estate fruit from below Serralunga village, is quite dark, black-blue and almost glossy, a really bright style of lifted violet florals and deep dark cherry. Barbera is always a very strong suit for Pira, and theirs comes from a unique, calcareous-clay-rich vineyard (similar to their home vineyards, but 4km away in Roddino) that the family always admired and eventually purchased. The wine is a wonderful ambassador for Barbera, showcasing those dual features of juiciness and structure. The relatively small production of Pira's famed Langhe Nebbiolo is due to it being effectively a 'baby Barolo', with it made from only very high-quality fruit. This wine is used by keen observers as a guide for the yet to be released Barolo vintage.

The cluster of famous crus owned by the Pira family are the premier vineyards around Serralunga village: Margheria and Marenca, which are only just separated from the great Vigna Rionda. Barolo 'Serralunga' is the Pira normale, an assemblage of the three crus.

## THE WINE



### 2018 Dolcetto

The vines were planted in 1980 in a perfectly cool north-facing site. The fruit is fermented for 6–7 days, then left to mature in steel for 8–9 months. Vivid, saturated, essence of cherry, purple-hued Dolcetto. Cherry-skin texture, quite fragrant (almost perfumed). A cut above regular Dolcetto, with wonderful dark fruits, length and zip.

### 2017 Barbera d'Alba

Sitting just outside the Barolo zone, it's no wonder this Roddino commune vineyard was so keenly sourced, and eventually bought by Pira. Sitting up at 420 metres with south-west exposure, these are the perfect conditions for this variety to flourish. Fermentation and maceration last for about 2 weeks before the fruit is racked off into old French oak of varying sizes. Subtle hints of smoked meats with violet notes, dark plums and red fruits typical of high-class, sleek Barbera. Bright to look at and lively to taste, with fresh, crunchy acidity.

### 2017 Langhe Nebbiolo

An assemblage of their three crus: Margheria, Marenca and Rionda. Fermentation is followed by maceration over 14 days, then racking into large old oak for 12 months. Immediate seriousness here. 12 months in big wood pushes this into 'baby Barolo' territory again. More open than Barolo at a similar stage, with trademark raspberry, chocolate powder, leather/tobacco and fennel seed. Powdery black-tea tannins finish this off nicely.

### **2015 Barolo 'Serralunga'**

Always a blend of the three crus below, the Barolo 'Serralunga' in recent times has had the maceration/fermentation time slowed down to 2 weeks to allow for a more gradual and integrated process – all four Baroli are made this way. Once complete, the wine is moved into 25 hectolitre aged barrels for a minimum of 2 years, then rested for an additional year or two (depending on the vintage) before being released to the market. The most approachable of the four Baroli, this is a symphony of elements: porcini, smoke, cola, cherry and spices.

### **2015 Barolo 'Margheria'**

All south-facing and sitting at 340 metres, vinification is the same as the Barolo 'Serralunga'. Intense and complex nose with notes of fruit and flowers and hints of leather and fresh hay, while on the palate it's perfectly knit and very distinctive, red-fruited in style with ironstone, choc-cherry, roses and some of the darker notes of cola and porcini, along with textural red plum-skin, grippy, black-tea tannins that underpin, but it's still generous and very approachable now.

### **2015 Barolo 'Marenca'**

Classic south/south-west exposure. The only difference in the vinification process is the oak maturation. Around 50% goes into large-format aged botti and the remainder in tonneaux, partially new (1 year in tonneaux and 1 year in large botti). 'Marenca' is only offered as a cru Barolo by Pira – the other owner, Angelo Gaja, use theirs (along with their 'Margheria') in Barolo 'Sperss'. The nose is fresh, with complex aromas that range from wild berries to dark chocolate and dried herbs. 'Marenca' is characterised by a darker and more earthy palate of leather, tobacco, stock, black cherry, chocolate and dark spices.

### **2015 Barolo 'Vigna Rionda'**

In recent times, Vigna Rionda gets spoken about as the grand cru of the Langhe – altitude, exposure and soil profile play an integral part. As expected, this is Giampaolo's flagship wine. The oak regime is similar to the 'Marenca' but with a larger portion of new used – around 30%. Ultra-powerful and layered in fragrances, flavours and textures. Smoke, graphite, incense, stock/porcini, sweet tobacco, violets. All this character is underpinned by a fierce, tingling acid line and a complementary sturdy structure. This wine is evocative, with subtle nuance and when on song, a Pira 'Vigna Rionda' seems endless.