

Tre Bicchieri – Identifying Italy’s Best Wines



Tom Hyland Contributor

Food & Drink

I write about wine (and sometimes food) from around the world.



Cover of 2020 Gambero Rosso Tre Bicchieri Guide COURTESY GAMBERO ROSSO

Italians take their wines very seriously, and no wonder when wine is produced in all 20 regions of the country. To keep abreast of all the selections available, at least a half dozen wine guides are published in Italy each year, rating thousands of wines in all price ranges and styles.

The best known Italian wine guide is the one published by *Gambero Rosso*, the country’s leading publication for Italian wine and food. This guide, simply known as *Vini d’Italia* (or *Italian Wines* for the English language version) has been named by many as the “Bible of Italian Wines,” a name that is quite apt, given the breadth and width of its coverage of its topic.

For the 2020 guide, the 33rd annual, the tasting panel of more than 60 individuals in Italy sampled more than 22,000 wines from 2542 producers from all over Italy. The wines listed in the guide are then rated according to a scale based not on points or stars, but rather on *bicchieri* or “wine glasses.” If a wine receives *un bicchiere* (one glass), it is considered a good wine in its respective category. A wine rated *due bicchieri* (two glasses) is acknowledged as a very good to excellent wine in its category, while a *Tre Bicchieri* award is reserved for wines the editors consider as excellent in their respective categories. The tasting editors are strict with these ratings, as is evidenced by the 2020 guide, in which only 457 wines out of more than 22,000 listed in the guide were awarded *Tre*

Bicchieri; this means that only about 2% of the wines in the guide receive the highest honor, truly something any producer treasures.

Today In: [Business](#)



Paolo Mazzone of Serralunga d'Alba at the Tre Bicchieri tasting in Chicago PHOTO ©TOM HYLAND

What is great about the *Gambero Rosso* guide, as well as other Italian guides, is the fact that the top awards represent numerous style of wines, be they full-bodied reds, aromatic whites or lively sparkling wines. So as you would expect, you will find several examples of Barolo and Brunello di Montalcino receiving *Tre Bicchieri* awards, but the highest honors also go to examples of Gattinara, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Orvieto, Franciacorta, Vermentino, Greco di Tufo, Fiano di Avellino and dozens of other wine types.

I think this is an important distinction, as too often wine critics wax on about the glories of powerful red wines, while dismissing lighter reds, white or sparkling wines. Distinctive wines are produced throughout Italy, from a wide selection of varietals, so there should be a vast array of wines that are presented as among the finest in the country. Bravo to *Gambero Rosso* and the other Italian wine guides for their work in recognizing the tremendous variety of the country's viticultural offerings.

Here are brief notes on a few of the best wines offered at the Chicago Tre Bicchieri tasting:

Paolo Manzone Barolo Riserva 2013 - Paolo Manzone, an underrated Barolo producer in Serralunga d'Alba, sources fruit for his powerful riserva Barolo from his estate Meriame vineyard; the vines here are more than 70 years old. Offering deep concentration and firm structure, this is in its infancy; peak in 15-20 years.