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## Italy's Best Wines: Tasting the Tre Bicchieri 2010

I pride myself on my broad tastes in wine. I like wine from everywhere, and don't believe I have a specific bias towards one region or another. However, each year, that claim is shaken a little as I emerge from what is one of the best wine tasting events held in San Francisco, The Gambero Rosso Tre Bicchieri tasting.

For those unfamiliar with the **Gambero Rosso**, it is essentially an organization focused on the promotion and evaluation of Italian food and wine. Each year the organization publishes a guide by the same name. The Gambero Rosso is the Italian Wine bible, and in my experience, it is the most thorough and high-quality guide to any wine region that exists in the world. The guide covers a dizzying 14,000+ wines each year from the incredibly diverse regions of Italy.

Each year the Gambero Rosso guide awards one, two, or three "Bicchieri" (or "glasses") to wines of exceptional character and quality. From tens of thousands, there are usually a couple of hundred Tre Bicchieri wines, and every Spring Gambero Rosso brings many of them to San Francisco for the media and the trade to taste.

While I don't love all the wines at this tasting, I am constantly amazed by the quality and individuality of these wines. I leave the tasting every year pining for many of these wines, and wishing I had the means to add them to my collection, though invariably, there are always some fantastic \$15 wines that are easy to seek out and find. It's quite a contrast to attend this tasting merely a week or two after tasting 200 barrel samples of Napa Cabernet. Comparing Napa Valley to the whole of Italy is quite unfair, of course, but the adjacency of the two tastings definitely provides the opportunity to reflect on how narrow an experience one would have if they only drank wines from Napa.

This year I was particularly taken by a number of 2005 Barolos which are hitting the market after the much vaunted 2004 vintage and not getting the attention they deserve, in my opinion. I also fell head over heels in love with yet another wine from the flanks of the volcano -- my next trip to Italy absolutely must include a pilgrimage to Etna.

Without further ado, here's what I thought of these wines.

RED WINES WITH A SCORE AROUND 9.5  
(...)

### **2004 Elvio Cogno Barolo V. Elena, Piemonte. \$110**

Light ruby in color, this wine has an incredibly aromatic nose of cherry and cedar aromas with hints of the floral. In the mouth it is beautifully juicy with cherry, leather, cedar and redcurrant fruit supported by firm, leathery tannins and enlivened with great acidity. The wine finishes long and airy. Outstanding.