

BARBACAN
(Valtellina, Lombardy)

August 2025



With Luca Segia in the terraced vineyard of Söl in the alpine hills of Valtellina (photo by Christine Reyes).

During my recent visit to the domain, Luca Sega of Barbacan tells me: “*I visited Canada in my twenties to see my relatives. It was in the province of Saskatchewan.*” I chuckled at the irony of the situation. Luca has visited the absolute flattest province of Canada, who now farms the steepest vineyards of Valtellina in Italy. Sometimes, there are only extremes in life.

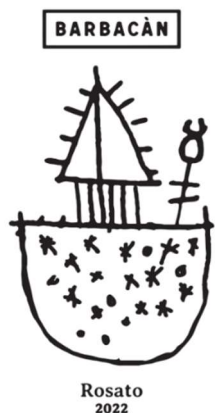
I can't think of no other appellation that is as dramatic and beautiful as the vineyards hanging on the cliffs of *Valtellina*. The cliffs look so inhospitable that it is a miracle that the vines can thrive. *Valtellina* has a series of free-standing stone walls that enclose each vineyard. The *Valtellina* vineyards are so inhospitable that one wonders why the ancients would spend their back-breaking labour to plant vines. That is until one experiences a great bottle of *Valtellina*.

Valtellina is located in Lombardy, which is about a two-hour mountainous drive northeast from Milan. *Valtellina* is a series of terraced granite vineyards that are chiselled out of a single south-facing mountain. There are five classified subzones in *Valtellina*: *Grumello*, *Inferno*, *Maroggia*, *Sassela*, and *Valgella*. Barbacan vineyards are in the subzone of *Valgella* in *Valtellina*. Broadly speaking, *Valgella* is known for perfume and elegance. The slopes are so steep that the ancients had to hand-build narrow stone stairs just to access the vineyards. You can see a glimpse of what is like to grow vines in *Valtellina* in the photo above. A tractor cannot access these vertically chiselled vineyards and all work must be done by hand. Farming is heroic.

Barbacan is a family farm run by the two brothers Matteo and Luca Sega. Their semi-retired father Angelo still helps with the vineyard work every now and then. Matteo and Luca farm a tiny total surface of nine hectares, including some recent additions. The vineyards of *Valtellina* are like no other and its wines are like no other.

Rosato 2023

SKU: 386819 SPECULATIE 750ml 12 bottles/case
\$39.89 Wholesale / \$52.00 Retail per bottle



A blush of a faintest rose hue. So pretty colour in this vintage. Rosato like no other. Uplifting aromatics of *Chiavennesca*. From the *Chiavennesca* (the local dialect for *Nebbiolo*) vines grown at extreme 700 meter in elevation. In the Alpine granite vertical slope of *Valtellina* at this elevation, the *Chiavennesca* grapes ripe just so to make an ideal rosato. The farming is back-breaking work on these steep slopes. It takes guts to produce a rosato like this. The label adorns an artistic impression of Noah's Ark – perhaps a symbolic gesture of Matteo and Luca, who are determined to preserve the various strains of *Chiavennesca* and the other ancient varietals of *Valtellina*, as you will see in their other wines below.

(Labels are not current vintages and are shown for illustration purposes)

Rosso 2023

SKU: 386827 SPECULATIE 750ml 12 bottles/case
\$37.37 Wholesale / \$48.00 Retail per bottle



Shimmering burgundy colour. Fresh. A hint of alpine strawberries with spices. Perfume of roses. Maceration is short to bring out the fruit forwardness of this Rosso. Made predominately with *Chiavennesca* (the local dialect for *Nebbiolo*). Fermentation is with ambient yeasts, like all of *Barbacan* wines. A portion is aged in neutral vats, while the remaining portion is aged in neutral big barrels (*botti*). The wines are then blended after about nine months of *élevage* and bottled without filtration. Charming and compelling Rosso from one of the most unique and stunning appellations of Italy. Matteo and Luca's hands-on work in the vineyards and hands-off approach in the cellar really shine. One of the best valued *Chiavennesca/Nebbiolo* wines that I come across.

Liòm 2023

SKU: 338812 SPECULATIE 750ml 12 bottles/case
\$50.44 Wholesale / \$66.00 Retail per bottle



This is a new vintage. Summer fruits with violets. A hint of spices adds complexity. Velvety texture but with some structure from the long skin maceration. A very attractive lingering finish. Beautiful aromatics from ancient varietals that are grown on a tiny parcel that sits 800 meter high in elevation. The vineyard is full of ancient varietals of *Valtellina - Rossolino, Rossola, and Rossolino Rosa*. Wine history of Valtellina in a bottle. Matteo of Barbacan tells me: "*Liòm is about a contadino (farmer) but also about the place. Liòm was a friend of Matteo and his brother Luca's grandfather. Over the years, Liòm became a family friend that now spans three generations. Liòm lived close to his vineyard. Liòm loved nature and tended his vines lovingly.*" Matteo and Luca now farm the vineyard in Liòm's honour. The grapes are raised in amphorae with its skins for six months prior to bottling.

Curnàl 2023

SKU: 262491 SPECULATIE 750ml 12 bottles/case
\$49.94 Wholesale / \$65.00 Retail per bottle



This is a new cuvée. Crunchy. Deep fruit and lasting finish from the old vines. The vines are so old that Matteo and Luca of Barbacan can only guess. The family, who used to own the vineyard, did not keep documentations – like the majority of farmers back then. Wine was not the only crop in those days. Hillsides were planted with vines to make wines for table; flatlands were for grazing cows to make cheeses – a typical, timeless scene in the alpine hills of *Valtellina*. *Curnàl* comes from the vineyard that sits at 750 m above sea level. Due to its high elevation, the vineyard is outside the appellation of *Valtellina*. The vineyard is comprised of about 50% *Chiavennasca* (aka *Nebbiolo*), 20% *Pignola*, 15% *Chiavennaschino*, 10% *Rossola*, 5% *Brugnola*. There is something special about wines grown in alpine hills – so crystalline and fresh. *Élevage* is in amphora.

Valtellina Superiore Valgella Sol 2022
SKU: 386824 SPECULATIE 750ml 12 bottles/case
\$48.76 Wholesale/ \$64.00 Retail per bottle



From the tiny classified *cru* of *Sol* in the subzone of *Valgella* in *Valtellina*. It is 100% *Chiavennesca* (aka Nebbiolo). Perfume of flowers, fruits and spices. Complex from the vines struggling on the chiselled granite vertical slope. Harmonious. Elegance shining through from the *Chiavennesca* grown on the alpine hills. This wine has that beautiful, mouth-watering *Chiavennesca* structure and tannins. Nervous. Vibrating with energy. The finish is lingering petrichor – the earthy scent after a summer rainstorm. It is the scent that I associate with great Valtellina wines. It is best to decant if you are enjoying this wine now.

Valtellina Superiore Valgella Jazpémi 2021
SKU: 386910 SPECULATIE 750ml 12 bottles/case
\$55.22 Wholesale / \$72.00 Retail per bottle



Jazpémi is the most stunning terraced vineyard that I have ever seen. The vineyard seemingly hangs off the cliff. *Jazpémi* is a patchwork of terraces. The beauty of this vineyard is etched in the wine. There is only a tiny road that separates *Sol* from *Jazpémi* but the wines taste so different. *Sol* is always structured when released and takes a few months to unwind, whereas *Jazpémi* is open and complex from the start. Luca tells me *Jazpémi* is open even when it is in *botti* and stays open throughout its life, while gaining complexity. From the century-old vines in the subzone of *Valgella* on the classified *cru* of *Jazpémi*. Magical perfume of *Chiavennesca*. Sappy from the old vines. Graceful. Complex taste of flowers and spices. It is 95% *Chiavennesca* with the remaining portion being *Rossola* and *Pignola*, which are also indigenous varieties in *Valtellina*.

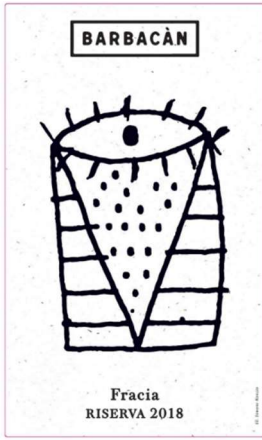
Valtellina Superiore Valgella Livèl Riserva 2018
SKU: 489220 SPECULATIE 750ml 6 bottles/case
\$80.22 Wholesale per bottle



This Riserva spends considerable time (about six years) in the winery cellar before being released. From the subzone of *Valgella* on the classified *cru* of *Livèl*. The parcel was planted by Matteo and Luca's great, great parents in the 1920's. It is one of the highest elevations of all the classified *crus* at 550 – 600 meters. Very thin soil, which causes vines to yield very low but astonishing grapes. This wine is aged for three years in a large traditional large *botti* (big chestnut barrels), followed by additional two years in bottles to settle down. Spices. Haunting fragrance. Beautiful light burgundy colour. Put away a few bottles in a cold cellar for special occasions. It is made with about 90% *Chiavennesca* with smatterings of *Chiavennaschino*, *Rossola*, *Pignol* – which are indigenous varieties. (**Note:**

This wine comes in 6 bottles per case.)

Valtellina Superiore Valgella Fracia Riserva 2018
SKU: 61969 SPECULATIE 750ml 6 bottles/case
\$79.82 Wholesale/ \$103.00Retail per bottle



There are two riservas from Barbacan: *Livèl* (see above) and *Fracia*. From the subzone of *Valgella* on the classified *cru* of *Fracia*. The parcel was also planted by Matteo and Luca's great, great parents in the 1920's. It is one of the highest elevations of all the classified *crus* – close to 600 meters. Spices. Cashmere texture with stunning nose. Shimmering light burgundy colour. Elegant. Complex. *Élevage* is long – three years in *botti*, followed by an additional year in bottles. Concentration without weight from the old vines and natural farming. Only made in certain vintages when Matteo and Luca feel the designation 'Riserva' is warranted. Wine of grace and distinction. One of the finest expressions of *Chiavennesca*. Both riserva wines of *Fracia* and *Livèl* are extraordinary. **(Note: This wine comes in 6 bottles per case.)**

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