This Italian Wine is an amazing deal!

Everyone knows about the great Italian wines made from Sangiovese and Montepulciano grapes: Chianti Classico, Brunello di Montalcino, Vin Nobile di Montepulciano, etc. But not many people know about a red wine grape grown in the North-Western part of Italy (Piedmonte) that is an everyday wine that most Italians enjoy with most of their local foods. Barbera is the third most planted red grape in Italy, after Sangiovese and Montepulciano, and shares many of the characteristics of these more expensive and better-known wines. It is a medium bodied, fruity wine with good acidity and moderate alcohol (13.5% -14.5%). It is known for its bright cherry flavors. It can be improved with age, but most Barberas are meant to be consumed young. It pairs beautifully with both tomato based dishes and fatty cuts of meat.

While touring Northern Italy last year, my wife and I had the opportunity to visit the La Spinetta Winery near the towns of Alba and Asti. They make many red and white wines, although Barbera is one of their specialties. Their wines are generally organic and sustainable. Much to my surprise, I ordered a bottle of Barbera from a local Italian Restaurant in Tacoma WA and realized it was from the La Spinetta family of wines after it was brought to our table. I recognized it from the trademark Rhinoceros Image on the label. There were six of us having all different meals, and the Barbera di Asti paired wonderfully with all of our orders from Pizza to eggplant parm to braised leg of lamb. And it was only $35 in the restaurant! It was on sale that night and is usually priced at $48 there; still a wonderful deal for a bottle of great wine. You can find Barbera by other producers at many restaurants and local wine sellers including many grocery stores for closer to $20-$25. Make sure you look for the label that says Barbera d'Asti DOCG or Barbera d'Alba DOC.