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Italy placed two wines in Wine Spectator’s top four for 2026

Produttori del Barbaresco’s 2021 Rabajà Riserva ranked No. 2, followed by Caparzo’s 2021 Brunello di Montalcino at No. 4

Friday, November 13, 2026



Italy placed two wines in the top four of Wine Spectator’s annual Top 100 ranking after the magazine released part of its 2026 list on Thursday, November 12, giving a strong showing to two of the country’s best-known wine regions, Piedmont and Tuscany.

The highest-ranked Italian wine so far is the 2021 Barbaresco Rabajà Riserva from Produttori del Barbaresco, which was placed at No. 2. The producer is a cooperative in Piedmont that has long been one of the most recognized names in Barbaresco. At No. 4 is the 2021 Brunello di Montalcino from Caparzo, the Montalcino estate owned by Elisabetta Gnudi Angelini, one of the best-known figures in Italian wine.

Wine Spectator also said the 2024 Bin 389 from Australia's Penfolds took the No. 3 position. The No. 1 wine was scheduled to be announced on Friday, November 13, while the full Top 100 list was set for release on Monday, November 16.

The rankings gave Italy two places in the top 10 before the top wine of the year was revealed. For Italian producers, that result is a notable endorsement from one of the most influential wine publications in the United States. It also puts renewed attention on two areas that have long defined premium Italian wine abroad: the Langhe hills in Piedmont, home to Barbaresco, and Montalcino in southern Tuscany, the center of Brunello di Montalcino production.

Produttori del Barbaresco is widely known for its cooperative model, which brings together growers from the Barbaresco zone and bottles wines that regularly receive strong critical reviews in international markets. The Rabajà vineyard, named on the No. 2 wine, is one of the appellation's best-known sites. A riserva bottling from that vineyard carries particular weight among collectors and critics because it combines a recognized cru with extended aging and a house style that has become closely linked to traditional Barbaresco.

Caparzo's No. 4 placement adds another high-profile result for Montalcino. The estate is one of the established names in Brunello and is part of a broader group of wineries associated with Gnudi Angelini. In addition to Caparzo, she also owns Altesino in Montalcino, Borgo Scopeto in Chianti Classico and Doga delle Clavule in Morellino di Scansano. Her presence in several major Tuscan appellations has made her one of the most prominent owners in the Italian wine industry.

The partial top 10 released on Thursday, November 12, also included several wines from France, the United States, Spain and Australia. At No. 5 was the 2023 Saint-Julien from Château Saint-Pierre in Bordeaux. No. 6 went to the 2023 Cabernet Sauvignon Fay

from Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars in California’s Stags Leap District. That winery, founded by Warren Winiarski, is now owned by Italy’s Marchesi Antinori family, giving Italy another connection to the upper part of the ranking even outside domestic production.

The rest of the published top 10 included the 2023 Sagacious from Law Estate in the Adelaida District of California at No. 7, the 2023 Pessac-Léognan White from Château Carbonnieux in Bordeaux at No. 8, the 2022 Ribera del Duero from Bodegas y Viñedos Alión in Spain at No. 9 and the 2024 Pinot Noir from Melville in California’s Sta. Rita Hills at No. 10.

Wine Spectator’s Top 100 is followed closely by producers, importers, retailers and collectors because it can shape demand in the U.S. market and influence international visibility. Placement near the top of the list often leads to stronger attention from consumers and trade buyers, especially for labels that already have a reputation among critics.

Italy has a long history with the ranking’s top spot. Before the 2026 winner was announced, Italian wines had taken No. 1 five times. The first was Antinori’s 1997 Solaia, named Wine Spectator’s wine of the year in 2000. It was followed by the 1998 Ornellaia in 2001, the 2001 Brunello di Montalcino Tenuta Nuova from Casanova di Neri in 2006, the 2015 Sassicaia from Tenuta San Guido in 2018 and the 2018 Brunello di Montalcino from Argiano in 2023.

That record helps explain why the latest results drew attention in Italy. Even without the top position already in hand, two placements so close to No. 1 suggest another strong year for Italian wine in a ranking that remains one of the industry’s most watched annual lists. The fact that the two wines come from different regions and styles also underlines the breadth of Italy’s standing in the fine wine market.

The No. 2 ranking for a Barbaresco and the No. 4 ranking for a Brunello are likely to reinforce the international status of both denominations, which already rank among Italy’s most established export categories. Barbaresco, made from Nebbiolo, is often compared with nearby Barolo but has its own identity and set of leading vineyards. Brunello di Montalcino, made from Sangiovese, is one of Tuscany’s most recognized red wines and has long held a strong position in the United States.

With the top-ranked wine due on Friday, November 13, and the full list coming on Monday, November 16, the 2026 ranking was still incomplete when the new placements were announced. But by Thursday, November 12, Italy had already secured one of the strongest early showings in the list, led by Produttori del Barbaresco and Caparzo.