There are eleven villages, townships or "communes" that make up the Barolo DOCG. However, there are five key subzones that you should be acquainted with that make up 87% of the wine. These are La Morra, Barolo, Castiglione Falletto, Serralunga d’Alba, and Monforte d’Alba. The soil types divide these communes into two zones, the Central Valley to the west consisting of Tortonian soil (creates moreapproachable wines with fragrance, softness and elegance), and the Serralunga Valley to the east consisting of Helvetic soil (generally creates long-lived, powerfully concentrated wines).

The physical elements of each of these communes provide further characteristics that distinguish them from the wines of the other four communes. These qualities are even further segmented by the microclimates where specific vineyards rest. Until the early 1970s Barolo was for the most part a non-cru wine. Barolo was generally the ideal blend of grapes from La Morra (for fragrance, softness), Barolo (for grace and earthiness), Castiglione Falletto (for boldness and richness), Serralunga (for depth and power), Monforte (for concentration and structure).

However, thanks to the refined efforts of Gaja, Ratti, and Ceretto, among others, the practice of single-vineyard designations is now the fabric of Barolo much as it is for the great wines of Burgundy. Based on the varied soil types and exposures across vineyards there is a lot to discover. The map illustrated here lists some of the highly regarded vineyards in the Barolo zone by soil type and further broken down by the "general" characteristics of each commune. This word needs to be used cautiously, as it is important to note that all variables are not constant and generalizations can oversimplify a complex subject. Individual site altitude and exposure, viticulture and vitification techniques, ideal variation, producer style, and vintages can change these characteristics. Use this map and the tasting case below as guidelines. Contact an IWMA Portfolio Manager for more specifics.

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MAP: KEY COMMUNES, CRUS, AND "GENERAL" CHARACTERISTICS OF BAROLO

The “Grand Crus” of Barolo

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