



A bit of Grand Torino

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Italy is one country that I find stunningly similar to India: mountains in the north, drama in the east, spicy food in the south and the loudest people in the capital city. Sure they thrash us at city architecture but that is just the exception to test the rule.

I have most often been to the Venice region and this time around I managed to get to Torino for their famed wine show (which could use some sprucing up if you ask me). It is to be found right at the foothills of the Alps, the centre for European Winter sports (think Olympics), the centre for chocolate (Ferrero Rocher), design (Pinninfarina, anyone!), cars (Fiat: they have a lot better models than what we will ever get) and even pens (Aurora: don't know them? don't feel bad; four out of five is still pretty good).

Needless to add that a hedonist like me was absolutely and uncontrollably excited at the prospect of being in one place that could provide so many avenues for anticipatory amusement. And then, the real fun thing (for me that is) was the local food and wine. At first you may think you don't know the wines here but if I asked you to name four wine producing regions from Italy, chances are you would mention two from here. Very popular for the red wines called Barolo and Barbaresco, (Barbera too), Piedmont is sure a good place to please the palate.

The region is mostly known for reds, Nebbiolo being the popular grape. It is soft and elegant like a Pinot Noir yet with a more pronounced tannic presence. If not tamed, the wines can be heady. In good hands, the wine is sheer magic, even if you have to wait at least a decade to truly enjoy it. The wines are pricey by all standards and I would suggest you head to Casa del Barolo, a local Enoteca, and let Luigi (I think it was Luigi) choose a good yet sensibly priced bottle for you. Once you have sussed the wines, attack the food. The local delicacies tend to align themselves with the local wines, or vice versa, I can never be too sure. Galup, the brand that makes the famous Panettone and Pandoro (ginormous fermented cakes with all sorts of exotic (rich) stuffing) are great tea-time bites, or else can be easily gorged besides a special...