

**Sandhill****2005 Barbera - Small Lots, Sandhill Estate Vineyard (Okanagan Valley)**

In 1993, 300 vines each of Barbera, Sangiovese and Nebbiolo were imported from a California nursery and planted in the Sandhill vineyard (then known as Burrowing Owl). At that time, Bordeaux varietals dominated all the other new plantings in the Okanagan. The vineyard's owners were looking for options that, as farm manager Richard Cleave puts it, would give them "an edge" in marketing the wines of the future.

Nebbiolo flopped because it proved impossible to ripen. But cuttings of Barbera and Sangiovese were propagated into four-acre blocks of each in the hottest spot in the vineyard. Since 1999, Sandhill has released the wines under its small lots program. The winery has released 247 cases of the 2005 Barbera, the only such varietal made in Canada. Beginning in 2004, winemaker Howard Soon has tweaked what was a 100% varietal by blending complementary grapes into the wine.

This wine struck me as a northern Zinfandel in style – dark ruby in colour, with bold red plum aromas. There is a ton of fruit on the palate, notably brambly, spicy plums with a touch of balsamic and a hint of chocolate. The long ripe tannins give the wine a full texture. 90

Reviewed March 28, 2008 by [John Schreiner](#).

THE WINE

Winery: Sandhill

Vineyard: Sandhill Estate Vineyard

Vintage: 2005

Wine: Barbera - Small Lots

Appellation: Okanagan Valley

Grapes: Barbera (86%), Sangiovese (9%), Cabernet Franc (5%)

Price: \$29.99

THE REVIEWER**John Schreiner**

John Schreiner has been covering the wines of British Columbia for the past 30 years and has written 10 books on the wines of Canada and BC. He has judged at major competitions and is currently a panel member for the Lieutenant Governor's Awards of

Excellence in Wine. Both as a judge and as a wine critic, he approaches each wine not to find fault, but to find excellence. That he now finds the latter more often than the former testifies to the dramatic improvement shown by BC winemaking in the past decade.