After a childhood of microwaved meat and saturated fat, Matthew Gavin Frank got serious about food. His "research" ultimately led him to Barolo, Italy (pop. 646), where, living out of a tent in the garden of a local farmhouse, he resolved to learn about Italian food from the ground up. Barolo is Frank’s account of those six months. At once an intimate travelogue and a memoir of a culinary education, the book details the adventures of a not-so-innocent abroad in Barolo, a region known for its food and wine (also called Barolo). Upon arrival, Frank began picking wine grapes for famed vintner Luciano Sandrone. He tells how, between lessons in the art of the grape harvest, he discovered, explored, and savored the gustatory riches of Piemontese Italy. Along the way we meet the region’s families and the many eccentric vintners, butchers, bakers, and restaurateurs who call Barolo home. Rich with details of real Italian small-town life, local foodstuffs, strange markets, and a circuslike atmosphere, Frank’s story also offers a wealth of historical and culinary information, moments of flamboyance, and musings on foreign travel (and its many alien seductions), all filtered through food and wine. (20100430)

My Personal Review:
Barolo. It's a town in Piedmont, Italy, population 646.

It's a wine from the same region, made from the Nebbiolo grape.

And now it's the name of this wonderful book, which is as memorable as the region and the wine. One swig of this book, and you're hooked.

I was sent a review copy of Matthew Gavin Frank's book, Barolo, and thought that I would motor through it in a day and give it brief exposure on this site, having fallen in love with the town on a visit last fall.

But once I started Barolo, which is a summary of Matthew's six-month visit to the region, where among other things, he worked illegally at Luciano
Sandrone's winery, I put on the brakes and started to read it s-l-o-w-l-y, to make the pleasure last.

Matthew's paragraphs are sweet and sticky like torrone, Piedmont's hazelnut nougat. They're like torrone in another way too: once you have a torrone bar, or a bag of wrapped pieces, you parse them out slowly, enjoying them one by one, over days, to make the mouthwatering experience last. The same goes for Matthew's prose. His writing is rich and perfumed with similes. I found that I did not want to zip through passages, but, instead, preferred to slow down to enjoy every noun, thought nugget, and impression.

Read the rest of my review at my web site:

[...]

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