

# *Guide to Italian Wines*

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*Chicago, IL [thwinewriter@comcast.net](mailto:thwinewriter@comcast.net) Spring 2007*



**MORNING FOG ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MONTALCINO**  
**Photo by Tom Hyland ©2007**

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## NEW RELEASES FROM CHIANTI CLASSICO

In February, I attended Anteprema (preview) tastings of Chianti Classico, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano and Brunello di Montalcino at various locations in Tuscany ranging from Florence to Montalcino. The tastings are a way for journalists such as myself to taste new releases of these wines before they are in the marketplace.

I'll begin with Chianti Classico, both *normale* from 2004 and 2005 as well as *riserva* from 2004. 2004 was an outstanding vintage with great fruit concentration as well as beautiful acidity, as this was actually a cool growing season (a welcome development after the terribly hot 2003 and the warmer temperatures of recent years). Look for these wines to age well – from 3-5 years or longer for the *normale* and 5-7 years or longer for the *riservas*.

2005 was an excellent vintage and will suffer in comparisons to 2004, as the wines are lighter in body. Yet this was a first-rate year with a long, cool growing season that yielded wines with very good concentration, lovely aromatics and vibrant acidity. The best of the 2005 *normale* that I tasted will drink well for 3-5 years or longer.

### 2005 CHIANTI CLASSICO Normale

\*\*\*\*\* OUTSTANDING

#### QUERCIABELLA

Bright ruby red with aromas of cherry, mint and tobacco. Medium-full with very good concentration. Beautifully defined mid-palate and excellent fruit persistence. Great length in the finish with lively acidity, well-integrated oak and vibrant acidity. This has the structure and stuffing to age for 7-10 years, which is quite impressive for a regular bottling of Chianti Classico.



**Guido De Santi, Winemaker, Querciabella**  
Photo by Tom Hyland ©2007

## **2005 CHIANTI CLASSICO Normale**

### **\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

#### **SAN FELICE**

Deep garnet with a lovely nose offering aromas of cherry, currant and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long finish with lively acidity, moderate tannins and nicely integrated oak. Excellent food wine, this is a beauty! Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

#### **PANZANELLO**

Deep, bright ruby red with ripe aromas of black cherry, raspberry and a bit of charcoal. Medium-full with very good concentration. Tasty, delicious, bright fruit and a finish structured for 5-7 years of enjoyment.

#### **BROLIO**

Bright purple with aromas of ripe black cherry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate and excellent fruit persistence. Polished tannins, lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. This is a modern style of Chianti Classico that is extremely well made; it will drink well for 5-7 years.

### **\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

#### **BADIA A COLTIBUONO**

Beautiful garnet color with a lovely nose of strawberry, currant and light brown herbs. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Beautifully balanced with silky tannins, lively acidity and subtle oak. Enjoy this graceful wine over the next 3-5 years. You can count on Badia a Coltibuono to produce a lovely, elegant Chianti Classico *normale* such as this every year.

#### **FONTODI**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of oak, cedar and cardamom. Medium-full with very good concentration. There is good fruit persistence, but the finish is earthy and a bit dirty. This is always one of my favorite producers of Chianti Classico, but their 2005 is rather disappointing. Best in 3-5 years.

#### **TERRABIANCA "SCASSINO"**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of dried cherry, cedar and brown herbs. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice expression of Sangiovese grape, though the finish is a bit rough. Best in 3-5 years.

#### **POGGIO BONELLI**

Bright ruby red with aromas of black cherry, black plum and menthol. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe, full and forward, this is very much in a modern style. This should drink well for 5-7 years.



## **2005 CHIANTI CLASSICO Normale**

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **ROCCA DELLE MACIE**

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry and dried herbs. Medium-full with good concentration. Traditional style with tasty fruit, lively acidity, moderate tannins and subtle oak. Nice expression of terroir. Good food wine to be enjoyed over the next 3-5 years.

### **VERAZZANO**

Deep garnet with aromas of black cherry, tobacco and mint. Medium-full with very good concentration. Young tannins and lively acidity with nicely integrated oak- this will be at its best in 5-7 years.

## **2004 CHIANTI CLASSICO Normale**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

### **FATTORIA LA RIPA**

Deep garnet with a lovely nose of currant, strawberry and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Wonderful persistence of fruit and a long finish with lively acidity. Nice expression of terroir. Best in 3-5 years. This is a very underrated estate in San Donato in Poggio in the northern reaches of the Chianti Classico zone that has become a highly consistent performer over the past few years.

### **PODERE LE BONCIE "LE TRAME"**

Deep garnet with aromas of cherry, violets and strawberry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long, long finish with silky tannins, vibrant acidity and subtle oak along with beautiful fruit persistence. Lovely, understated wine with wonderful complexity. This will drink well for 3-5 years. This small estate in Castelnuovo Berardenga in southern Chianti Classico was established in 1990 and produces about 13,000 bottles of wine per year. The winemaker is Giovanna Morganti, who formerly worked at Castello di Volpaia.

### **LE MICCINE**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe cherry, mint, red plum, cedar and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Nice mid-palate. Excellent fruit persistence, lively acidity and moderate tannins. This will be at its best in 5-7 years.

## **RATINGS**

**\*\*\*\*\* OUTSTANDING**

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

**\*\* GOOD**



## **2004 CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

### **IL MOLINO DI GRACE**

Deep garnet with aromas of black pepper, myrtle, cherry and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Impressive mid-palate. Big finish with graceful tannins, lively acidity and beautifully integrated oak. Nicely balanced all the way throughout. Best in 7-10 years.

### **FONTODI**

Deep garnet with intense aromas of currant and cedar, though it is a bit closed. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big finish with youthful tannins, lively acidity and rich oak. Give this time to settle down- this should be at its best in 10-12 years.

### **CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA**

Bright ruby red with aromas of cherry, strawberry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very good persistence of fruit in the finish. Lively acidity and moderate tannins. Best in 5-7 years.

### **CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA "COLTASSALA"**

Deep ruby red with aromas of vanilla, black cherry and strawberry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big finish with ample oak, lively acidity and youthful tannins. This needs a bit of time. Best in 7-10 years.

### **CASTELLO DI MONSANTO**

This is the regular Riserva bottling (an oxymoron?) and not the "Il Poggio" bottling which will not be released for some time yet. Deep garnet-light ruby red with lovely aromas of cherry, dried brown herbs and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, balanced tannins and subtle oak give this wine a nice roundness. This should drink well for 5-7 years.

### **SAN FELICE "IL GRIGIO"**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cedar, vanilla and red cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lengthy finish with very good fruit persistence, vibrant acidity and subtle oak. A typically classy wine from this ultra consistent estate. Best in 5-7 years.

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **RUFFINO "SANTEDAME"**

Deep ruby red with aromas of black cherry and dried herbs. Medium-full with very good concentration. There is ample oak and the finish is a bit rough now. This will be better with a bit of time and at its best in 3-5 years.



## **2004 CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA**

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **DIEVOLE “NOVECENTO”**

Bright ruby red with aromas of ripe cherry, violets, plums and a touch of tobacco. Medium-full with good concentration. New oak, though handled well, this has a big finish and needs some time. Best in 5-7 years.

### **PICCCINI**

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar and dried herbs. Medium-full with good concentration. Moderate tannins, balanced acidity and oak. Earthy, cedar finish in a traditional style. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years.

## **2003 CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

### **PANZANELLO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cherry, brown herbs and light black spice. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice complexity throughout and a lengthy finish with youthful tannins. Quite an elegant wine, considering the heat of this vintage. Best in 5-7 years.

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **CARPINETO**

Deep ruby red with earthy, herbal aromas and pleasant notes of cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good ripeness and complexity, although the tannins are a bit sharp, leaving a drying sensation in the mouth. Consume over the next 3-5 years.

## **2003 CHIANTI CLASSICO**

### **CASTELLO DI BROLIO**

While this wine is labeled as a Chianti Classico, it could be listed as a Chianti Classico Riserva. However, proprietor Francesco Ricasoli chooses not to use the Riserva term, opting to name this wine for the estate, as this represents the best wine he produces every year. A blend of 80% Sangiovese and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep ruby red with explosive aromas of black cherry, tobacco and oak. Medium-full with excellent concentration and a well defined mid-palate. The tannins are a bit sharp in the finish, but everything else in beautiful harmony. Just a notch below the best from this producer – this will be at its best in 10-12 years.



## **VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO**

I enjoy Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, but this wine always seems to get lost between the power of Brunello di Montalcino and the popularity of Chianti Classico. Perhaps the quality of the 2004 releases from Montepulciano will change all that. This was a wonderful vintage that was not overly warm, resulting in a long growing season that allowed for wines of beautiful aromatics as well as lively acidity.

**\*\*\*\*\* OUTSTANDING**

### **POLIZIANO**

Deep, bright ruby red with aromas of black cherry, black plum and violets. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Great mid-palate and depth of fruit- this is a wine that coats the palate and is a mouthful of wine. Great intensity! Lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. Best in 7-10 years. This is the finest Vino Nobile di Montepulciano I have tasted from Poliziano and it is clear the proprietor Federico Carletti is not resting on his laurels as the finest estate in Montepulciano.



**FEDERICO CARLETTI, PROPRIETOR, POLIZIANO**  
Photo ©Tom Hyland, 2007

## **2004 VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

### **DEI**

Deep, bright ruby red-light purple with aromas of vanilla, black plum and black licorice. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Nice fruit persistence in the beautifully structured finish, which features youthful tannins. Best in 7-10 years.

### **BOSCARELLI**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cedar, red cherry, currant and cumin. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Nicely defined mid-palate. Light herbal note in the finish with very good fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years. Another very dependable name in Montepulciano.

### **POGGIO ALLA SALA**

Bright, deep ruby red-light purple with aromas of black cherry, black plum, oak and violets. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Long finish with great fruit persistence, young tannins (which are balanced) and nicely integrated oak. Wonderful fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years.

### **FATTORIA DEL CERRO**

Bright ruby red with aromas of red cherry, currant and carnations – this really has a pleasant sweet nose! Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice structure and balance along with nicely integrated oak and very good fruit persistence in the finish. Best in 5-7 years and should drink well for a few years after that.

### **AVIGNONESI**

Bright ruby red with aromas of vanilla, black cherry and mint. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big wine with great fruit intensity and plenty of oak. There are rich tannins (especially for Sangiovese), so give this wine plenty of time. Best in 7-10 years.

### **GODIOLO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with a lovely aroma of red cherry, red plum and roses along with notes of thyme and caraway. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely balanced finish with subtle oak and lively acidity. Nice freshness and elegance. Best in 5-7 years.

The primary grape in Vino Nobile di Montepulciano is Sangiovese, which is known in the area as Prugnolo Gentile. This zone is also home to Chianti Colli Senesi, which several producers also bottle.



## **2004 VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO**

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **ROMEO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of red cherry, cumin and red flowers. Medium-full with very good concentration. Young, firm tannins, ample oak and lively acidity. Give this time – best in 5-7 years.

### **LODOLA NUOVA**

Lodola Nuova is the Vino Nobile estate of Ruffino. Deep garnet with aromas of maraschino cherry and rose petals. Medium-full with good to very good concentration. Very elegant with supple tannins and moderate oak. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years.

### **BINDELLA**

Deep, dark ruby red with ripe black fruit aromas – black cherry, black plum – and notes of tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich oak and firm tannins in the finish. Best in 5-7 years.

### **LUNADORO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with lovely aromas of cherry red flowers and a hint of red spice. Medium-full with very good concentration. Elegant tannins and lively acidity with a round, supple finish. Nice food wine to be consumed over the next 3-5 years. Aged in botti (large barrels), this is preferable to their wine aged in barriques.

## **2003 VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO RISERVA**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

### **LODOLA NUOVA**

Bright ruby red with aromas of vanilla, cedar, dried cherry and plum. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely defined mid-palate and an elegant finish with round tannins. Many of the examples of 2003 Vino Nobile di Montepulciano Riserva that I tasted at this Anteprema event were very tannic, which is not surprising, given the hot temperatures of the 2003 growing year. So is it nice to taste an elegant 2003 Vino Nobile Riserva and this was my favorite example! This estate has been on quite a roll as of late and they even produced a lovely example from the difficult 2002 vintage. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.



## **2003 VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO RISERVA**

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **POGGIO ALLA SALA**

Bright, deep ruby red-light purple with aromas of ripe black cherry, coffee and oak. Medium-full with very good concentration. This is a bit oaky and a bit sharp and tannic in the finish, although there is good fruit persistence in the finish. Best in 5-7 years.

### **ROMEO “RISERVA DEI MANDORLI”**

A blend of 85% Prugnolo Gentile, 10% Colorino and 5% Mammolo. Deep ruby red with aromas of currant, black cherry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. A bit sharp in the finish with firm tannins. 5-7 years.

## **OTHER BOTTLINGS**

### **2004 POLIZIANO VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO “ASINONE”**

The premier bottling of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano from Poliziano is Asinone, from a single vineyard. First produced in 1983, this wine always represents the best qualities of the vintage and the 2004 is quite special. 100% Prugnolo Gentile. Deep ruby red-light purple with aromas of black cherry, licorice, black plum and vanilla. Full-bodied with excellent concentration. Great fruit persistence and a beautifully structured finish with lively acidity, refined tannins and nicely integrated oak. This is so well made and has a great future ahead of it. Right now, you can enjoy the wine for its delicious fruit and gorgeous aromas, but this will be at its best in 12-15 years. It is difficult to say if this is the finest bottling of Asinone to date, but it certainly ranks with the 1999 and 2001 as superb examples! \*\*\*\*\*

## **VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO VIN SANTO**

### **1997 POGGIO ALLA SALA**

Deep gold with lovely aromas of apricot, honey and a hint of caramel. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very good acidity and a clean, elegant finish of good length. Quite tasty! Enjoy over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

### **1992 ROMEO**

Tawny, amber gold color with beautiful aromas of floral notes, dried apricot and honey. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Long, long finish with great fruit persistence, lively acidity and a light nuttiness. Massimo Romeo ages his Vin Santo for 11 years before bottling it and the results are usually spectacular. As you can imagine, there is not much available – only 500 half-bottles were produced and the price is not inexpensive – 35 Euro per half-bottle – but this is worth the search. Enjoy over the next 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*\*



## **BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO 2002 NORMALE AND 2001 RISERVA**

The new vintage of Brunello di Montalcino that I tasted in February (and which will be released in the fall) is 2002. This was a difficult growing season with cool temperatures and too much rain, and the result was that some producers either did not make a Brunello from this year or put all their Riserva grapes into a regular bottling. For the first time in many years, I do not have a five-star (outstanding) rating for any bottlings of Brunello from a particular year, although there are quite a few four-star (excellent wines). In short, the finest examples of Brunello di Montalcino from 2002 are excellent wines that will offer pleasure over the next 5-10 years. This is a far cry from the 20-25 years of aging potential for a vintage such as 1999 or 2001, but the wines are not as bad as some might have you believe.

Meanwhile, the Riserva bottlings from the great 2001 vintage were also tasted during this year's Benvenuto Brunello event. This vintage was rated 4 stars (excellent) by the Consorzio Brunello di Montalcino, although some people (myself included) think this should have been a 5 star vintage (outstanding), as the wines have tremendous concentration and vibrant acidity. The finest of the regular offerings of Brunello from 2001 can age for 15-20 years, so look for 20-25 years and even longer with the best Riservas. These wines will be released this autumn and will be expensive (\$90-125 and higher in the United States), but they are remarkable wines and should be sought out by true Brunello lovers looking for wines that they can return to over the next two decades.

### **2002 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

#### **IL POGGIONE**

Beautiful garnet color with a lovely aroma of red cherry, violets and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lovely mid-palate and a long, long finish with excellent fruit persistence, lively acidity and a note of orange peel. Typical classy offering from one of Montalcino's greatest producers. Enjoy over the next 7-10 years.

#### **FOSSACOLLE**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe cherry, cedar, vanilla and a hint of tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. A stylish wine with tasty fruit and a lengthy finish with beautifully defined acidity and an appealing note of orange peel. Enjoy over the next 7-10 years.



## **2002 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO**

**\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

### **IL PALAZZONE**

This small estate, owned by American businessman Richard Parsons, has been on quite a roll as of late. The 2002 is an excellent wine with a deep garnet-light ruby red color and offers a lovely nose of dried cherry, a hint of vanilla and red spice. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice mid-palate and a graceful finish with lively acidity, good fruit persistence and subtle oak. Enjoy this elegant wine over the next 7-10 years.

### **CAPARZO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with lovely aromas of cedar, red cherry, and currant. Medium-full with very good concentration. Richly flavored finish with nice fruit persistence, lively acidity and balanced tannins. This estate is not producing a bottling of “La Casa” Brunello this year; instead those grapes went into this wine. Enjoy over the next 7-10 years.

### **TALENTI**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cherry, cumin and dried brown herbs. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long finish with lively acidity and polished tannins. Best in 7-10 years. Famed Tuscan winemaker Carlo Ferrini is the enologist here; this is a more refined and subtle style of Brunello than several of the other examples he produces for different local estates.



**CARLO FERRINI, WINEMAKER, TALENTI**  
Photo ©Tom Hyland 2007

## **2002 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO**

**\*\*\*\*EXCELLENT**

### **ARGIANO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cedar, currant and tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich and full-flavored with very good fruit persistence. Earthy finish with moderate tannins and lively acidity. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

### **SESTA DI SOPRA**

Deep garnet with aromas of currant, strawberry and red cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. The finish is a bit light, but this is an elegantly styled wine with lively acidity and stylish oak. As usual with this first-rate producer, this wine represents a lovely expression of terroir. Enjoy over the next 7-10 years.

### **UCCELLIERA**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with attractive aromas of red cherry, cedar and a hint of red plum. Medium-full with very good concentration. Round, flavorful finish with young tannins and lively acidity. Give this a bit of time to round out; best in 5-7 years.

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **TIEZZI**

Deep garnet with lovely aromas of wild strawberry, currant and cedar. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Elegant finish with lively acidity and moderate tannins. Lovely food wine to be enjoyed over the next 5-7 years.

### **TENUTA OLIVETO**

Bright, deep ruby red with aromas of cherry, currant, cedar and cumin. Medium-full with very good concentration. Elegant finish with good depth of fruit, young tannins and lively acidity. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

### **INNOCENTI**

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry, vanilla and red flowers. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good length in the finish, moderate tannins and lively acidity. Stylish and elegant- enjoy this over the next 5-7 years.

### **BANFI**

Bright, deep ruby red with aromas of ripe black cherry, tar and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good fruit persistence and nicely integrated oak. Enjoy this over the next 5-7 years. A typical bottling (if a bit lighter due to the vintage) from this ultra consistent producer.



## **2002 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO**

**\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

### **CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE**

Deep garnet with aromas of cherry, tar, vanilla and mint. Medium-full with good to very good concentration. Good length in the finish with lively acidity and balanced tannins. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

### **COL D'ORCIA**

Deep garnet with a lovely nose of currant, wild cherry and cedar. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Nicely balanced with subtle oak and lively acidity. Not a powerhouse, but nicely styled for food. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

### **LA GERLA**

Bright, deep ruby red with aromas of vanilla, spiced cherry and a light nuttiness. Medium-full with very good concentration. Big ripe fruit and rich oak, though the finish is a bit short. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years.

**\*\* GOOD**

### **CAPANNE RICCI**

Bright, deep ruby red with aromas of ripe black cherry and dried plum – the fruit is a bit raisiny. Medium-full with very good concentration, but the finish is a bit sharp and the oak is rather dominant. Best in 5-7 years.

### **BARBI**

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, thyme and dried herbs. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Short mid-palate. The finish has distinct herbal notes and offers lively acidity. A bit light – enjoy over the next 3-5 years.

### **ROSSO DI MONTALCINO**

Rosso di Montalcino is the baby brother of Brunello di Montalcino, as it is also made exclusively from Sangiovese Grosso, but it is much lighter and is released sooner, as soon as one year after the harvest. The new vintage of Rosso is 2005, which I tasted in February. The wines have beautiful fresh cherry and strawberry fruit and striking acidity. While Brunello is a powerful wine, Rosso is more of a charming wine, especially those from 2005. Among the finest are **VALDICAVA** (quite rich for a Rosso), **IL POGGIONE**, **UCCELLIERA** (a lovely food wine), **FOSSACOLLE**, **POGGIO ANTICO** (especially delicious), **CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE** and **COL D'ORCIA**.

## 2001 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVA

**\*\*\*\*OUTSTANDING**

### **IL POGGIONE**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of red cherries, currant and violets. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Beautiful fruit persistence throughout. Lengthy, beautifully structured finish with lively acidity, refined tannins, well integrated oak and notes of black spice. Typical classy bottling from this producer. The Riserva Brunello from Il Poggione is always a remarkable wine and the 2001 is another great bottling! Enjoy over the next 12-15 years.

### **CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE**

Deep ruby red-light purple with rich aromas of black cherry, mint, tobacco, clove and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Great persistence of fruit in the finish with lively acidity, refined tannins and nicely integrated oak. Big and rich with beautiful harmony throughout. This is one of the very best examples of a modern style of Brunello di Montalcino. This has the stuffing to age for 15-20 years- perhaps longer.

### **POGGIO ANTICO**

Deep, bright ruby red with aromas of black cherry, currant, vanilla and tar. Full-bodied with excellent concentration. Big fruit and a big finish with youthful tannins and lively acidity. Big, complex wine with outstanding fruit persistence. Give this plenty of time. Best in 15-20 years.

### **VALDICAVA "MADDONA DEL PIANO"**

Bright, deep ruby red-light purple with aromas of black plum, black cherry and a hint of chocolate. Full-bodied with excellent concentration. Tons of fruit from start to finish and a beautifully structured finish with lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. This will be at its best in 12-15 years.

**\*\*\*\*EXCELLENT**

### **LE CHIUSE**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cedar, cherry, currant and dried brown herbs. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long finish with lively acidity and very good fruit persistence. Nice expression of terroir, which is typical for this traditional producer. Best in 10-12 years.

### **CAPARZO**

Bright garnet with aromas of red cherry, currant, strawberry and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice persistence of fruit, although the tannins are a bit drying now and there is ample oak. Best in 12-15 years.



## **2001 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVA**

**\*\*\*\*EXCELLENT**

### **TALENTI**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cherry, tobacco, cedar and dried brown herbs. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Richly flavored, elegant finish with lively acidity and refined tannins. Very graceful and finesseful wine. Best in 10-12 years.

### **IL PALAZZONE**

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, thyme and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely defined mid-palate. Lengthy finish with nicely integrated oak and balanced tannins. Best in 12-15 years.

### **TENUTA OLIVETO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with a lovely aroma of cedar, dried cherry, cumin and vanilla. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Ample oak and lively acidity. This will be at its best in 10-12 years.

### **UCCELLIERA**

Deep ruby red with aromas of cedar, cherry and a distinct earthiness. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich oak and youthful tannins and a finish with excellent fruit persistence. Best in 12-15 years.

## **OTHER BRUNELLO**

### **2001 POGGIO ANTICO BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO “ALTERO”**

Bright, deep ruby red with aromas of black plum, black cherry and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Ample oak and lively acidity in the finish that offers excellent fruit persistence. Quite modern in its approach, this has layers of flavor, but it needs time. Best in 10-12 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2001 ANGELINI “VIGNA SPUNTALI”**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of red cherry, cedar and hints of tobacco. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nice mid-palate and a nicely structured finish with elegant tannins and lively acidity. Best in 10-12 years. \*\*\*\*

### **1999 COL D’ORCIA RISERVA “POGGIO AL VENTO”**

Deep garnet with beautiful aromas of red cherry, red spice and carnations. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Long finish with moderate tannins, lively acidity and subtle oak. Lovely, elegant wine to be enjoyed over the next 10-12 years – perhaps longer. \*\*\*\*



## **LE CHIUSE**

Brunello di Montalcino has become incredibly popular these days, as witnessed by the increasing number of producers of this wine. Today, there are more than 130 estates that make a Brunello, compared to just 30 a dozen years ago.

Many estates are quite small, producing only a few thousand bottles per year, so it's understandable that there are some excellent producers that do not get the attention they deserve. One of these is **LE CHIUSE**, owned by Simonetta Valiani and her husband Nicolo Magnelli. This property is located on the border with the famous Biondi-Santi property and was actually once part of that famed estate. The name Le Chiuse is translated as "the locks" in reference to a nearby river.

The first Brunellos were made here in the 1993 vintage, with the first Riserva from the outstanding 1995 vintage. The average age of the vines is 15 years, with the oldest between 60 and 70 years of age. The wines are made in a traditional style and focus on the alluring cherry and currant fruit of the Sangiovese Grosso grape, while offering excellent natural acidity. This is an estate to watch!

### **2005 ROSSO DI MONTALCINO**

Bright garnet with aromas of fresh cherry and a touch of dried herbs. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Tart acidity and light tannins in the finish, which is a little bit short. Overall, a nicely made, pleasant Rosso to enjoy over the next year or two. \*\*

### **2001 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVA**

See review on page 15.

### **2000 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVA**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of cherry, cedar, currant and dried brown herbs. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long finish with lively acidity, this is elegant and will be at its best in 10-12 years. \*\*\*\*

### **1999 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVA**

Deep garnet with aromas of cherry, roses and violets. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long finish with graceful tannins, lively acidity and subtle oak. This is a lovely wine that offers a beautiful expression of terroir! Classic Brunello- this will be at its best in another 10-12 years. \*\*\*\*\*

### **1997 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVA**

Deep garnet with aromas of cherry, currant, leather and toasted spice. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Nice expression of terroir and a lengthy finish with excellent persistence of fruit. Balanced acidity and refined tannins. Quite big and ripe- best in 12-15 years. \*\*\*\*\*



## **PUGNITELLO**

Perhaps the most fascinating wine I tasted during my recent trip to Tuscany was the 2003 **Pugnitello** from **San Felice**, a beautiful estate located in Castelnuovo Beradenga in the southern reaches of Chianti Classico. Pugnitello is an ancient Tuscan red varietal that was discovered in a few areas of Tuscany by the University of Florence twenty years ago. The University and the owners of San Felice agreed to work with dozens of rare varieties and had them planted at San Felice. The research over the years demonstrated that Pugnitello was the only one of these rare varieties that was good enough to stand on its own, so San Felice decided to produce a 100% bottling of this wine. The 2003 is the first release as a stand-alone variety and only 9000 bottles were produced. As it stands now, the wine will only be sold in Italy, though future vintages may be exported to the United States.

### **2003 SAN FELICE PUGNITELLO (TOSCANA IGT)**

100% Pugnitello. Bright ruby red with aromas of coffee, caramel, black cherry and tar. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Lively acidity and polished tannins with well-integrated oak (the wine was aged in tonneau and barriques for 18-20 months). Nice spice box of flavors. The name Pugnitello comes from the word *pugno*, which means, “fist” in Italian; thus *pugnitello* means “little fist,” which describes the shape of the cluster of this varietal. Approachable now, best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

## **CASTELVECCHIO**

During my brief stay in Tuscany, I met two of my favorite people, Stefania and Filippo Rocchi of **Castelvecchio** Winery, located in the Chianti Colli Fiorentini district (this is just a bit south of Florence and is slightly west and north of the Chianti Classico district). We enjoyed a beautiful dinner at a quaint restaurant in Florence called “Il Santo Bevitore”, which means “the drunken saint” (what a great name!). At dinner, we tried the new releases from Castelvecchio, which has become one of the leading wineries of the Chianti Colli Fiorentini district.

### **2005 CHIANTI “SANTA CATERINA”**

100% Sangiovese, this is the entry-level wine for Castelvecchio. Light purple-deep ruby red with aromas of fresh plums and cherry. Medium-bodied, this has a round finish, lively acidity, very soft tannins and fresh, tasty sour cherry fruit. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2005 CHIANTI COLLI FIORENTINI “IL CASTELVECCHIO”**

A blend of 90% Sangiovese and 10% Colorino. Bright ruby red with lovely aromas of currant and red cherry. Medium-bodied, this has elegant tannins, lively acidity and delicious fruit along with a hint of tobacco in the finish. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*

**MORE REVIEWS OF CASTELVECCHIO WINES ON THE NEXT PAGE**



## **CASTELVECCHIO (continued)**

### **2005 NUMERO OTTO (IGT Toscana)**

100% Canaiolo. Bright garnet with aromas of strawberry and anise with hints of chocolate and menthol. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Lively acidity and soft tannins. Very well made- this is quite elegant. Enjoy this over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2004 CHIANTI COLLI RISERVA "VIGNA LA QUERCIA"**

A blend of 90% Sangiovese and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet -light ruby red with aromas of black cherry, black currant and thyme. Medium-full with very good concentration. Young tannins, good natural acidity and perhaps a touch too much oak. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*

### **2003 IL BRECCIOLINO (IGT Toscana)**

A blend of 85% Sangiovese, 7% Merlot and 8% Petit Verdot. Deep, bright ruby red with aromas of cherry, plum and a hint of myrtle. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich, refined tannins, balanced acidity and nicely integrated oak. The finish offers very good fruit persistence along with notes of cigar box. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

**Imported by Aventine Hill Wines, Westport, CT**

## **SARTARELLI VERDICCHIO**

I recently had the pleasure of tasting the wines of **Sartarelli**, a medium-sized producer of Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi from Marche. Thanks to producers such as Bucci and Sartarelli, Verdicchio is a wine that is being taken seriously again. The Tralivio bottling at \$15 retail is an excellent value.

### **2004 VERDICCHIO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI**

Straw-light yellow with aromas of pear and apple peel. Medium-bodied with a clean, tasty finish with crisp acidity, this is a straightforward example of Verdicchio to be enjoyed over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2004 VERDICCHIO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI "TRALIVIO"**

Light yellow with aromas of pear and yellow flowers with a light nuttiness. Medium-full with very good concentration. This has a rich finish with good fruit persistence and a distinct minerality. Beautiful texture- enjoy this over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2004 VERDICCHIO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI SUPERIORE "BALCIANA"**

Medium yellow with lovely aromas of chamomile, spiced pear and yellow flowers. Medium-full with very good concentration. Beautifully defined mid-palate and a long, long finish with very good fruit persistence and subtle notes of ginger. Enjoy this over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*\*\*

**Imported by Domaine Select, New York, NY**



## **THE BEST ITALIAN WINES OF 2006**

Here is my list of the Best Italian Wines of 2006 – although it should more correctly be labeled as “My Favorite Italian Wines of 2006”, as I could never hope to try even 20% of all the wines produced in Italy each year!

### **WHITE**

#### **ALTO ADIGE**

CANTINA TERLANO SAUVIGNON “QUARTZ” 2004  
CANTINA TERLANO PINOT BIANCO “VORBERG” 2003  
  
CANTINA TRAMIN GEWURZTRAMINER “NUSSBAUMER” 2004  
  
COLTERENZIO SAUVIGNON “LAFOA” 2005  
  
J. HOFSTATTER GEWURZTRAMINER “KOBLENHOF”  
  
ALOIS LAGEDER SAUVIGNON “LEHENHOF” 2004  
  
ELENA WALCH GEWURZTRAMINER “KASTELAZ” 2005  
  
ELENA WALCH SAUVIGNON “CASTEL RINGBERG” 2005

#### **CAMPANIA**

FEUDI DI SAN GREGORIO GRECO DI TUFO “CUTIZZI” 2005  
  
LUIGI MAFFINI KRATOS 2005  
  
TERREDORA FIANO DI AVELLINO “TERRE DI DORA” 2005  
  
VILLA RAIANO GRECO DI TUFO 2005

#### **FRIULI**

BASTIANICH VESPA BIANCO 2003  
  
LIVIO FELLUGA TERRE ALTE 2004  
  
MARCO FELLUGA RUSSIZ SUPERIORE SAUVIGNON (COLLIO) 2005



## **WHITES (continued)**

### **MARCHE**

SARTARELLI VERDICCHIO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI "BALCIANA" 2004

### **PIEMONTE**

GIANNI VOERZIO LANGHE ARNEIS "BRICCO CAPPELLINA" 2005

### **VENETO**

CA' RUGATE SOAVE CLASSICO "MONTE FIORENTINE" 2005

AGOSTINI VICENTINI SOAVE SUPERIORE "IL CASALE" 2004

## **REDS**

### **ALTO ADIGE**

CANTINA SANTA MADDALENA LAGREIN "TABER"

CANTINA TERLANO LAGREIN "PORPHYR" 2003

COLTERENZIO LAGREIN "CORNELL" 2002

ALOIS LAGEDER CABERNET SAUVIGNON "COR ROMIGBERG" 2002

ELENA WALCH CABERNET SAUVIGNON RISERVA 2001

### **CAMPANIA**

FONTANAVECCHIA GRAVE MORA 2003

GALARDI TERRE DI LAVORO 2004



## **CAMPANIAN REDS (continued)**

MASTROBERARDINO NATURALIS HISTORIA 2001

VINOSIA MARZIA CANALE 2004

## **PIEMONTE**

PICO MACCARIO BARBERA D'ASTI SUPERIORE "TRE ROVERI" 2003

PIERINO VELLANO BARBERA DEL MONFERRATO SUPERIORE "PIERIN" 2001

BRAIDA DI GIACOMO BOLOGNA BARBERA D'ASTI "BRICCO  
DELL'UCCELLONE" 2003

VIETTI BARBERA D'ALBA "SCARRONE VIGNE VECCHIE" 2004

TENUTA GARETTO BARBERA D'ASTI NIZZA "FAVA" 2003

## **SICILY**

BENANTI ROVITTELLO 2001

DONNAFUGATA MILLE E UNA NOTTE 2003

PLANETA SANTA CECILIA 2005

## **TUSCANY**

CASA EMMA CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA 2003

GUADO AL MELO JASSARTE 2003

POGGIO ANTICO BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVA 2000

**Tuscany continued on the next page**



## **BEST WINES OF 2006**

### **TUSCANY (continued)**

#### **2001 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO**

CAPARZO "LA CASA"  
CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE  
COL D'ORCIA  
FOSSACOLLE  
IL POGGIONE  
INNOCENTI  
SESTADISOPRA  
TALENTI  
UCCELLIERA



**SERGIO MARCHETTI, OWNER OF FOSSACOLLE, MONTALCINO**  
Photo by Tom Hyland ©2007

## **BEST WINES OF 2006**

### **DESSERT**

IGINO ACCORDINI RECIOTO DELLA VALPOLICELLA 2003

CANTINA TRAMIN GEWURZTRAMINER VENDEMMIA TARDIVA 2005

DONNAFUGATA BEN RYE 2005

LIVIO FELLUGA PICOLIT RISERVA 2003

ROCCA DI MONTEGROSSI VIN SANTO 1998

ROMEO VIN SANTO DI MONTEPULCIANO 1992

VILLA MATILDE ELEUSI 2005

## **BEST PRODUCERS OF 2006**

CANTINA TERLANO – ALTO ADIGE

CANTINA TRAMIN – ALTO ADIGE

ELENA WALCH – ALTO ADIGE

LIVIO FELLUGA – FRIULI

SARTARELLI – MARCHE

BRAIDA DI GIACOMO BOLOGNA – PIEDMONT

DONNAFUGATA – SICILY

COL D'ORCIA – TUSCANY

POGGIO ANTICO – TUSCANY

AGOSTINI VICENTINI – VENETO

