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Italian
Winery of the Month



Fanti Family San Filippo Estate

Mythic Crops of Toscana, Grapes, Olives, and Wheat



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Fanti

The 750-acre San Filippo estate has belonged to the Fanti family since the beginning of the 18th Century and is located near Montalcino in the Castelnuovo dell'Abate district of Toscana. The current director is Filippo Fanti, who took over in 1996 and is the past President of the Consortium of Brunello di Montalcino, the organization that regulates wine production in the zone. Over the last ten years, the family has expanded its olive groves to 260 acres and its vineyards to 128 acres and built a new winery, dug into a hill facing the historic Roman Basilica of Sant'Antimo. The Fanti family produces Brunello di Montalcino, Rosso di Montalcino, and Sant'Antimo. Dr. Stefano Chioccioli, who also works for Tua Rita and Tenimanti d'Alessandro, is the consulting winemaker.

Renzo Marinai

The 75-acre Renzo Marinai estate at Panzano is very much a farm and specializes in the three mythic crops that for centuries have been the focus of Italian agriculture, grapes, olives, and wheat. The property includes 15 acres of vineyards, 30 of olive groves, and eight of wheat, especially the Cappelli and Verna varieties that were traditional in Southern Italy and the Islands until the more productive and easier to harvest shorter varieties started spreading in the last century. The estate is located in the heart of the Chianti Classico zone, where Sangiovese reigns, but vineyards also include indigenous Caniolo, Mammolo, Cilegiolo, Prugnolo, and Colorino, as well as Cabernet Sauvignon. The white varieties include Trebbiano, Malvasia, and Chardonnay. Wine Spectator has scored Renzo Marinai wines in the 90s.

See **WINERIES** inside

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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

Corte alla Flora

2010 Giuggiolo Bianco

This crisp Giuggiolo Bianco is a blend of Incrocio Manzoni, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc in equal parts. The wine projects obvious fragrances of lemon and grapefruit and complements appetizers and main courses with white fish and shell fish. Serve chilled.

Fanti 2007

Sant'Antimo Rosso, Sassomagno

A blend of 60% Sangiovese, 25% Merlot, 10% Syrah, and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, this Sant'Antimo Rosso was aged for eight months in oak barrels and larger casks. The wine is deep ruby red from highly pigmented Merlot, Syrah, and Cabernet, and has aromas of red and black fruits with spicy notes which carry over to the palate and finish with hints of balsamic. The wine is wonderfully balanced with fruit flavors, acidity, and soft tannins. Serve at cool room temperature.

WINEMAKER SERIES

Corte alla Flora

2005 Vino Nobile di Montepulciano Riserva

This Vino Nobile is 80% Prugnolo Gentile, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Merlot. Aged for two years in French oak barriques, the wine is full bodied with spicy notes that are typical of Prugnolo Gentile, a clone of Sangiovese. Cabernet and Merlot contribute violet, blackberry, and raspberry to the blend as well as deeper color. Serve at room temperature with barbecued meats, eggplant dishes, and mature cheeses.

Renzo Marinai

2007 Chianti Classico

With 90% Sangiovese and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, this ruby red Chianti Classico has a full and lingering perfume that infuses the palate with rich cherry flavor. Aged for 12 months in French oak barrels, the wine will release more of its delicious flavors as it rests in the glass or is decanted.



Renzo Marinai

WINERIES from previous page

Corte alla Flora

In the early 1990s, the Cragnotti family purchased the 200-acre property in Southern Tuscany in the Montepulciano zone, creating the Corte alla Flora estate. Almost half of the property is planted to vineyards, making it one of the top

ten producers in Montepulciano. In addition to grapes, the family also tends a large olive grove, harvesting all the trees by hand and making fine olive oil. Sergio Cragnotti is best known for having been President of the winning Lazio soccer team and head of the food conglomerate Cirio. His son Massimo runs the wine estate.

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

Fanti 2005

Brunello di Montalcino

Wine guide "Gambero Rosso" describes the Fanti 2005 Brunello as follows: "The '05 Brunello, possibly helped by a good growing year, has a certain finesse and elegance, very different from the muscular, highly concentrated style that was typical of these wines in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The nose is stylish and offers fresh overtones of black cherry, medicinal herbs, and tanned leather. Lively tannins and vivacious acidity fill the mouth as the glycerin sweetness struggles to offset them as they surge through to a broad, consistent finish." In other words, this Brunello among others is trending back to a more traditional, elegant style rather than the boldly concentrated one that had been popular before the 2003 scandal that rocked the region when winemakers were caught blending undisclosed international varieties to amp up color and density that were not typical of Brunello. Beautifully balanced, this wine is pure pleasure. Serve at cool room temperature.

Renzo Marinai

2005 Chianti Classico Riserva

This Marinai Riserva is 100% Sangiovese from Panzano in Chianti and was aged for 14 months in French oak barrels. Both this Riserva and the Classico have remarkably intense aromas worth lingering over. They will expand even further if you decant the wine, which is ruby red in color, warm and elegant on the palate, and with considerable body. Pair with roasted, braised, and grilled meats and serve at cool room temperature.



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REGION OF THE MONTH



TOSCANA

The name *Toscana* comes from the Latin *Tuscia*, which the Romans called the area to honor the Etruscans, who developed an advanced civilization there before the Romans subjugated them. The Etruscans were wine makers and were probably responsible for draping vines over trees, a practice that still exists. But the Romans preferred stronger southern wines, and the Etruscan wine trade faded until monks revived viticulture in the region. Wine became a daily beverage in the medieval cities of Florence, Siena, Pisa, Lucca, and Arezzo, and the Renaissance, which began in Florence, transported the wines of Toscana throughout Europe.

In 1716, the Grand Duchy of Toscana created Europe's first official wine zones, and toward the middle of the 18th Century, the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici imported 150 grape varieties to create a total of 211 in the region. But despite these advances, the French took the lead in fine wine in the 19th Century while Tuscans went for quantity instead of quality. The world came to know Toscana principally for its mass-produced Chianti in *fi-asci*, the straw flasks.

But Chianti, the dominant force in Tuscan viticulture, diminished production and improved quality in 1984 when it was elevated to DOCG, one of 13 regions in the nation, which the government defines geographically in its system of laws, controlling origins and protecting names of wines of "particular reputation and worth." In addition to DOCG, *denominazione di origine controllata e garantita*, the law specifies another 240 DOC regions, *denominazione di origine controllata*.

What Chianti has in common with the noble reds of Toscana is the grape variety Sangiovese. Although many clones of Sangiovese exist, the superior ones are among the world's noblest vines, such as Montalcino's Brunello, Chianti's Sangiovese, and Montepulciano's Prugnolo Gentile. Among other fine Sangiovese based wines are Rosso di Montalcino, Vino Nobile, and Carmignano. But the renaissance of Tuscan wines also includes the "Super Tuscans" such as Sassicaia, which is 100% Cabernet and Antinori's Sangiovese-Cabernet blend, Tignanello. Vernaccia de San Gimignano is the most prestigious white wine in Toscana, and Vin Santo is a highly prized dessert wine.



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