



# CELEBRATIONS WINE CLUB®

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Italian  
*Winery of the Month*



View from Sassotondo Vineyards

## In Praise of Family Farms



CelebrationsWineClub.com

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### Sassotondo

Located in Toscana in the Maremma zone, Sassotondo is an organically farmed 72-hectare estate between the Etruscan townships of Sorano and Pitigliano. The area is a series of highlands, divided by deep creeks carved into *tufo*, compressed volcanic sandstone that is the dominant soil type in the area. "The vineyards grow on *tufo*; our houses are made of *tufo*; our cellars are dug into *tufo* stone; and in the middle of our field, rounded by the weather, stands the *sasso tondo*, a large round stone," after which husband and wife Carla Benini and Edoardo Ventimiglia named their estate when they purchased it in 1990. The vineyards are included in the Bianco di Pitigliano DOC and in the new DOC Sovana and grow the reds Ciliegiolo, Sangiovese, and Merlot and the whites Trebbiano, Greco, and Sauvignon. The winery is credited with restoring the reputation of ancient Ciliegiolo, thought to have arrived from Spain.

Highly respected Attilio Pagli is the consulting enologist.

### Fattoria le Fonti

Located in Toscana's famed Chianti Classico zone, the Le Fonti 24-hectare estate lies just below the church in the small village of Panzano at 450 meters above sea level. The Schmitt-Vitali family has owned the property since 1994 and concentrates on Sangiovese, but Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot also have a place in the vineyard along with olive groves. Over the years, the family has implemented major renovations, replanting vineyards and remodeling the wine-making facility with the latest technology. The estate remains a small boutique style farm producing about 3300 cases of wine a year. In 2011, two wines in its small portfolio were awarded Gambero Rosso's most prestigious *Tre Bicchieri* award, the 2007 Chianti Classico Riserva and the 2006

See **WINERIES** inside

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## WINES OF THE MONTH



### ARTISAN SERIES

#### Sassotondo

##### *2010 Tuforosso*

Made from organically grown estate fruit, the 2010 Tuforosso is 85% Sangiovese and 10% Cilieggiolo. This warmly delicious wine has rich, soft flavors and a smooth texture. Serve it with tasty foods, like dark bean stews, braised meats, and pasta sauces with dried mushrooms and rosemary.

#### Ciu' Ciu'

##### *2010 Evoie' Passerina Offida*

Passerina is a little known white grape that is planted mainly in the Le Marche region. The Ciu' Ciu' 2010 Evoie, produced from organically farmed fruit, is elegantly fresh with aromas of flowers and herbs. Serve chilled with appetizers and delicately flavored main courses like oven-baked trout stuffed with onion, lemon, and parsley.



Ciu' Ciu' Winery surrounded by its vineyards

#### WINERIES from previous page

Fontissimo. The consulting enologist is Dr. Stefano Chioccioli.

#### Ciu' Ciu'

Very few of Toscana's vineyards are devoted to white grapes, so we crossed the border into the Le Marche region for this month's white wine offering. The organically farmed Ciu' Ciu' estate was founded in 1970 by husband and wife Natalino Bartolomei and Anna Maria Lobbi

### WINEMAKER SERIES

#### Sassotondo

##### *2009 Cilieggiolo Rosso*

The name *Cilieggiolo* is an adaptation of the word *cilieggi*, which means "cherry," so named because the wine has vibrant cherry flavors. Some research indicates that the grape is related to Sangiovese. Harvested from organically grown vineyards, the 2009 Cilieggiolo Rosso is 80% Cilieggiolo, 10% Sangiovese, and 10% Alicante, which adds pigment to the blend. The grapes are fermented with indigenous yeasts, and the wine is aged for 12 months in barrel. Ruby red in color, the bouquet is intense with notes of white berry and red cherry, plum, and a touch of white pepper. The taste is dry, warm, and soft with non-intrusive tannins and a touch of balsamic on the finish.

#### Le Fonte

##### *2008 Chianti Classico*

The grapes for the 2008 Chianti Classico consist mainly of Sangiovese but with small additions of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Aged for 12 months in large French oak barrels, the 2008 Chianti Classico is characterized by ruby red color and aromas of black cherry and blackberry. The palate is soft with a long black fruit finish balanced with refreshing acid.

near the medieval village of Offida. Today brothers Massimiliano and Walter continue their parents' vine-growing enterprise and cultivate 98 hectares, which comprise the largest vineyards in the Rosso Piceno Superiore production area. The Bartolomei family cultivates the traditional grapes of the zone, especially the red Rosso Piceno and the whites Passerina, Pecorino, and Trebbiano.

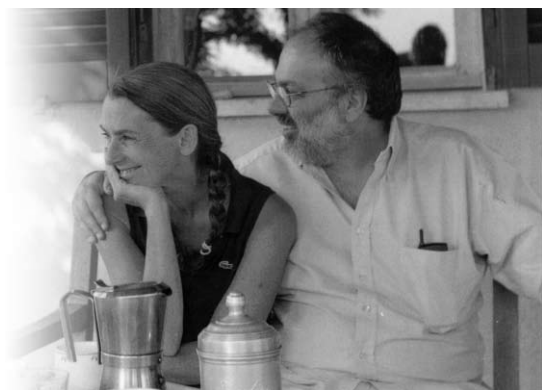
## WINES OF THE MONTH

### COLLECTOR SERIES

#### Sassotondo

##### 2007 Ciliegolo Riserva San Lorenzo

The name *Ciliegolo* is an adaptation of the word *cilieg*, which means "cherry," so named because the wine has pronounced cherry flavors. Some research indicates that the grape is related to Sangiovese, but whether it is a forbearer or offspring is still unknown. Made with organically farmed Ciliegolo grapes harvested from 40 year-old vines, the San Lorenzo Riserva is the flagship wine of the Sassotondo estate. Ruby red in color, cherries dominate the fragrance followed by black currants, white pepper, and cloves. Fermented with its natural yeasts, the San Lorenzo Riserva is aged for 18 to 24 months in French oak barrels, and the result is a deep and beautifully balanced wine.



Sassotondo owners Edoardo Ventimiglia and his wife, Carla Benini

#### Le Fonti

##### 2006 Fontissimo

"Gambero Rosso" wine guide has honored the Le Fonti 2006 Fontissimo with its highest *Tre Bicchi* accolade with the following remarks: "This award-winning wine is made from Sangiovese, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon and has a very assertive bouquet of well-integrated raspberries and redcurrants laced with hints of cinnamon and nutmeg, all delicately shaded with mint. The supple, rich body is well balanced and full of succulence, the tannins well tucked in, and the finish juicy." The wine was aged for 20 months in French oak barrels. Serve at cool room temperature.



Familia Fonti

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JUST CALIFORNIAN?  
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COMBINATION?

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Collector Series:  
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Artisan red–Winemaker red:  
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Winemaker red–Collector red:  
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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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> Century while Tuscans went for quantity instead of quality. The world came to know Toscana principally for its mass-produced Chianti in *fiasci*,

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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