



## TOSCANA

The name Toscana comes from the Latin *Tuscia*, which the Romans called the area in honor of 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, which 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 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 princi-

pally 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 some of 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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Castello di Fonterutoli

Italian

## Wineries of the Month

### Tuscan Treasures

#### Marchesi Antinori

The Marchesi Antinori family has been in the wine business since Giovanni di Piero Antinori joined the Florentine Guild of Vintners in 1385, more than 26 generations ago. Throughout the company's long history, it has remained family owned and operated and today is directed by Marchese Piero Antinori. Though Antinori has played an important role in preserving Italy's enological traditions, he is also one of Italy's most dynamic and visionary producers of fine wines, the first to eliminate white grapes from the traditional Chianti blend, thus elevating the wine to premium status, the first to blend the French variety Cabernet Sauvignon with traditional Sangiovese in the highly esteemed Tignanello wine, and one of the first to age wines in small oak barrels instead of the traditional large oak casks.

#### Castello di Fonterutoli

Situated on hills overlooking the valley of

the Elsa River, in the province of Siena, Castello di Fonterutoli has belonged to the Mazzei family since 1435, and the history of the family is closely woven with the history and culture of Toscana itself. Ser Lapo Mazzei (1350-1412) was an Ambassador, writer, and renowned winemaker. Filippo Mazzei (1770-1816) was a close friend of Thomas Jefferson and helped Jefferson cultivate vines in Virginia. Lapo Mazzei, who currently directs the business together with two of his five children, served as President of the Chianti Classico Consortium for 20 years.

#### Azienda Agricola Poliziano

Located on the slopes below Montepulciano near the village of Gracciano, Poliziano was founded in 1961 when Federico Carletti's father purchased 55 acres. Today the estate consists of over 500 acres. After earning a degree in agriculture, Federico began to work full time at the estate in See **TREASURES**, *inside*



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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES



**Fonterutoli 2003 Badiola**

This wine is 75% Sangiovese, 15% Merlot, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. From Fonterutoli's Badiola vineyard, the wine was aged in stainless steel tanks and then in small French and American oak barrels for nine months before release from the winery.

With a combination of aroma, softness, and good structure, the wine is both modern and gratifying. Serve at cool room temperature.

**Antinori 2003 Scalabrone Rosato**

White wine is white, not because the grape skins are light, but because the juice is fermented without the skins, unlike red wine which is fermented with its skins. Rosato has its characteristic pink color because the juice and skins are macerated together only long enough so that the juice obtains a bit of color from the skins. At that point, juice and skins are separated and the juice alone is fermented like white wine. This wine is made from 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and 10% Syrah and other red varieties from the Scalabrone vineyard, situated on the Tenuta Guado al Tasso estate, 60 miles SW of Florence, near the medieval village of Bolgheri in the Maremma zone. The 900-hectare estate stretches from the shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea to the hills and cultivates vineyards as well as wheat, corn, sunflowers, tomatoes, and olive groves. It was named Scalabrone after a bandit who lived in the area in the early 1800s. The aromas are intense with strawberry fruit, and on the palate the wine is well balanced with good structure. Serve chilled as you would a white wine.

WINEMAKER SERIES



**Castello di Volpaia 2000 Chianti Classico Riserva**

This wine is 90% Sangiovese and 10% Merlot, Pinot Nero, and Syrah. The wine was aged for two years in larger Slovenian oak casks and in smaller French oak barriques.

Ruby red with a trace of garnet, the wine has an elegantly intense nose with hints of spice and fruit. The prestigious Gambero Rosso wine guide describes the wine as follows: "After some initial hesitation, the nose unveils appetizing hints of green peppers together with ripe fruit, then the intriguingly seductive palate flaunts nicely integrated tannins and a good long finish."

**Castello di Volpaia 1999 Chianti Classico Coltassala**

This wine is primarily Sangiovese with a small amount of Mammolo from the single Coltassala vineyard and was aged in French Allier oak barriques for 18 months before bottling. Vivid ruby red, the nose is elegant and intense with hints of vanilla, cacao, and fruit. Serve at cool room temperature.

COLLECTOR SERIES

**Castello di Fonterutoli 2000 Chianti Classico**

This wine is 90% Sangiovese and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cabernet was aged for 18 months in small French oak barrels and the Sangiovese for 16 months. With its extraordinary combination of power and elegance, the wine interprets the estate's capacity to produce red wines with outstanding personality and ample body. Intensely deep ruby, almost purple in color, the ripe fruit aromas are perfectly fused with notes of oak. The wine has a powerful structure, dense and rich, with a very long finish and complements rich game dishes.

**TREASURES, from cover**

1980. In the past two decades, he has produced some of the finest wines in this top quality wine-producing area. Federico chose the name "Poliziano" because he loved the work of native poet Angelo Ambrogini known as Il Poliziano, someone who comes from Montepulciano. Born in 1454, he lived at the court of his patron, Lorenzo the Magnificent, Duke of Tuscany. Angelo's portrait hangs in the tasting room in the center of the estate.

**Castello di Volpaia**

Standing high on a hilltop above 45 hectares of vines, the Volpaia castle (Volpaia, meaning fox's lair) is located in the heart of Chianti between Florence and Siena and was constructed in the

WINES OF THE MONTH

**Poliziano 2000 Asinone Vino Nobile di Montepulciano**

This wine is 90% Prugnolo Gentile, a clone of Sangiovese, and 10% Canaiolo Nero and Mammolo from the single Asinone vineyard. The wine was aged for 18 months in French oak barriques and for 8 months in bottle before release from the winery. Very dark in color, berries, vanilla, and cinnamon are in the nose and on the palate with force and elegance in impressive balance. The winery says that the wine will cellar for 15 years although you will enjoy it now as well.

10th Century. Evidence suggests that the fortifications were built not only to protect the inhabitants, but also to protect the area's rural economy, already devoted to growing grapes and making wines. In the early 1970s, the present owners Carlo and Giovannella Stianti Mascheroni modernized the winery without changing the external structure of the 11th century village. They added no new buildings and instead painstakingly converted several historical sites to cellars, offices, and apartments. Within the Castle, whole floors were removed, roofs were raised and carefully re-laid with their original tiles, while abandoned churches were fitted with the latest stainless steel equipment. ■

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