



TUSCANY



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 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 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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Italian Wineries of the Month



Ca' del Vispo

Founded in 1994, Ca' del Vispo is a relatively new winery at San Gimignano in Toscana. Roberto, originally from Piedmont, and brothers Marco and Massimo, who had been growers in Trentino, decided to create their partnership after visiting the wine regions of France in 1989. Originally, their aspirations were simply to make good every-day wines. Instead, the quality of their wines almost immediately catapulted them into the awareness of the wine press. They specialize in Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese, and Vernaccia di San Gimignano. The Gambero Rosso wine guide honored two of their wines, the 1999 Basolo and Crueter, with the prestigious "two glasses" award.



er cities in Italy. Today, the estate is owned by Romanelli's four grandsons. Presently, 25 hectares of vineyards are in production, about one quarter being old vines. The rest of the estate covers a total of 115 hectares, mostly consisting of olive groves and Mediterranean forests. The vineyards, all of which are southwest facing, are divided between parcels of Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot.

La Poderina

The winery is located in Toscana in the Castelnuovo dell'Abate district in the southeast of Montalcino. The name of Montalcino is intrinsically linked with that of its most esteemed and prestigious wine: Brunello. Today it ranks as one of Italy's premier red wines, in both Italian and international markets. The La Poderina estate covers a total of 54 hectares with 26 hectares planted to Brunello, eight hectares reserved for the grapes used for Rosso di Montalcino, and 11 hectares for the sweet, light Moscadello di Montalcino, vineyards which follow the road to the wonderful Abby of Saint Antimo. The estate also includes 2.5 hectares of olive groves and 24.5 of woodland. ■



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Tenuta di Riseccoli

The property is located three kilometers from Greve in Chianti at an average altitude of 425 meters above sea level. Since the 1900s, this property has remained in the family of renowned Florentine artist Romano Romanelli, whose works can be seen in museums all over the world and in public spaces in Rome, Florence, and oth-

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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES



**Ca' del Vispo
2001 Chianti Colli Senesi**

The fruit for this Chianti wine is 90% Sangiovese and 10% other grape varieties from vineyards in Fugnano and Casaglia in the Senesi Hills, the largest and most important sub-zone of Chianti. With many excellent wineries, the Colli Senesi sub-zone is comparable to the more prestigious Chianti Classico zone. This delicious wine was aged for seven months in stainless steel tanks without exposure to oak barrels. So what you taste is pure Sangiovese fruit without any of the flavors that barrels impart. The winemaker is Giorgio Baldi.



**Ca' del Vispo
2002 Vernaccia di San Gimignano**

The fruit for this Vernaccia di San Gimignano is 90% Vernaccia and 10% other grape varieties from vineyards in Fugnano and Casaglia in the Senesi Hills. The wine was aged for six months in stainless steel tanks before release from the winery. The winemaker is Giorgio Baldi. This most honored white grape of Tuscany, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, if full of rich flavor, and because it's only 12% alcohol, you can enjoy even more of it.

WINEMAKER SERIES

**Tenuta di Riseccoli
1998 Chianti Classico**

This wine is 85% Sangiovese, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Merlot from estate vineyards located at Greve in Chianti. Bright garnet, traditional leather, and dried fruit aromas jump from the glass. A firm entry on the palate leads to a lush, rounded, medium-bodied sensation and signals a well-balanced and flavorful wine with a lengthy finish. The wine was aged for 18 months, including barrel aging in French oak and cellaring before release. The winemaker is Giorgio Marone.



La Poderina

2001 Rosso di Montalcino

This wine is 100% Sangiovese from vineyards at Castelnuovo dell'Abate. Considered the little brother of Brunello, the Rosso di Montalcino expresses itself with considerable class and youthful vigor. It has an intense ruby color and pronounced fragrance with notes of cherry and raspberry, slightly underlined with vanilla. The wine was aged for nine months in Slavonian oak casks, followed by three months in bottle. The winemaker is Lorenzo Landi. The wine will age gracefully for five years according to the winery.



COLLECTOR SERIES

**Tenuta di Riseccoli
2000 Saeculum**

Saeculum is 60% Sangiovese, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon from estate vineyards at Greve in Chianti. Dark ruby-red in color, the wine has intense red fruit and vanilla aromas. A lush entry on the palate leads to rich full-bodied flavors with a wave of velvety tannins. The wine was aged for 24 months in French oak barrels and for 18 months in bottle before release. The winemaker is Giorgio Marone. Robert Parker awarded the wine 93 points.



**La Poderina
1999 Brunello di Montalcino**

This wine is 100% Sangiovese from the estate vineyard at Castelnuovo dell'Abate at 350 meters above sea level, facing southwest. Dark ruby-red in color, the wine has intense red fruit and vanilla aromas. The wine was aged for three years in 60% Slavonian oak barrels and 40% French oak barrels, followed by one year in bottle before its release from the winery. Its color is deep ruby red with garnet shades, while the bouquet is intensely fragrant with notes of wild berries, vanilla, and cinnamon. The winemaker is Lorenzo Landi. The wine became highly allocated after April of this year when Wine Spectator awarded it 96 points. The wine will age gracefully for 15 to 20 years according to the winery.



WINES OF THE MONTH

PICK & CHOOSE

JUST RED? JUST WHITE?
JUST CALIFORNIAN?
JUST ITALIAN?
HOW ABOUT A COMBINATION?

CALIFORNIA WINES

Artisan Series: \$29.50/month, a red and a white
Winemaker Series: \$59.50/month, 2 reserve reds
Artisan red-Winemaker red: \$46/month

ITALIAN WINES

Artisan Series: \$32/month, a red and a white
Winemaker Series: \$62/month, 2 reserve reds
Collector Series: \$112/month, 2 collectable reds
Artisan red-Winemaker red: \$48/month
Winemaker red-Collector red: \$87/month

CALIFORNIA-ITALIAN COMBINATIONS

CA Artisan red-IT Artisan red: \$33/month
CA Artisan white-IT Artisan white: \$29.50/month
CA Winemaker-IT Winemaker: \$62/month
Alternate CA & IT Artisan Series: \$29.50/\$32/month
Alternate CA & IT Winemaker Series: \$59.50/\$62/month

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