



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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century while Tuscans went for quanti-

ty 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.



YOUR ACCESS TO OUTSTANDING WINES FROM CALIFORNIA AND ITALY

Italian Wineries of the Month



Castello Banfi

Premio Speciale

Castello Banfi

One of the most unusual stories in the Italian wine world, Castello Banfi was founded in 1978 by John and Harry Mariani, successful American wine importers from New York, whose company Banfi Vintners had been founded by their Italian American father John Mariani, Sr. in 1919. Brothers John and Harry decided that they wanted not only to sell Italian wine but to be Italian winemakers. They joined forces with leading Italian enologist Ezio Rivella and purchased 7,100 acres in Toscana's prestigious Montalcino zone. Today, 2,400 acres are planted to vines whose fruit produces some of Italy's best wines. Over time, many foreign companies have developed wine businesses on Italian soil, but none have achieved the excellence that Banfi consistently demonstrates year after year. Its offerings have garnered numerous medals and awards, including an unprecedented four-time presentation of VinItaly's *Gran Premio Cup*, Italy's highest honor. In

the latest competition, some 100 international wine experts at the annual wine fair in Verona awarded more medals and honors to Castello Banfi wines than to those of any other Italian vintner, winning for the firm the competition's coveted "Premio Speciale" prize.

Cecchi & Figli

In 1893, Luigi Cecchi set up a business as a wine taster and broker in Siena. Today his grandson Luigi runs the company with his two sons, Andrea on the technical side and Cesare on the business side, the fourth generation to participate in the family business. Cecchi & Figli has three vineyards in Toscana: Villa Cerna in the Chianti Classico region, Castello di Montauto at San Gimignano, the production area for Vernaccia, and Val delle Rose near Grosseto in the Tuscan Maremma, where Morellino di Scansano is produced. A fourth vineyard is located in Umbria at Montefalco, the production area for Sagrantino.



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Agosto 2005

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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

**Cecchi**  
**2003 Sangiovese di Toscana**

This wine is 100% Sangiovese from estate vineyards at Villa Cerna in the Chianti Classico zone. Ruby red in color with violet highlights, the wine has a delicately fruity bouquet with hints of violets and iris. On the palate it is well-structured and balanced with fruit flavors, tannin, and acidity. Serve at cool room temperature.



**Cecchi**  
**2003 Vernaccia di San Gimignano**

From the Castello di Montauto vineyard at San Gimignano, this wine is 100% Vernaccia, which is characterized by a light straw color that tends to become golden with ageing. Its fine aroma is fresh and harmonious with a light aftertaste reminiscent of almonds. It is ideally paired to fish dishes, even those in elaborate sauces, but because of its full body, it also pairs very well with simple meat dishes. Serve chilled.

WINEMAKER SERIES

**Banfi**  
**2002 Rosso di Montalcino**

Made from 100% Sangiovese clones, Rosso di Montalcino is considered Brunello's younger sibling. The wine is aged less than Brunello, 12 months in French and Slavonian oak barrels, followed by at least six months in bottle before release from the winery. Deep ruby-red in color, the wine has a dry, round, velvety taste with good body, characteristics similar to Brunello.



**Banfi**  
**2001 Chianti Classico Riserva**

Chianti may well be the single best-known wine in the world. The Classico Riserva is produced from a blend of select grapes, including 85% Sangiovese and the rest Canaiolo Nero and Cabernet Sauvignon, grown in the *Classico* region of Chianti, between Siena and Florence. After aging for 12 months in Slavonian oak casks, this elegant, well-balanced wine has flavors of vanilla, cocoa, and spice.

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

**Banfi**  
**2000 Brunello di Montalcino**

One of Italy's finest wines, the name *Brunello* was recently patented by the EU, so that it must refer to a wine whose grapes were grown in the Brunello appellation at Montalcino. Over 45 Brunello clones are grown in the appellation, all of which are site-specific clones of the Sangiovese grape. Aged for a total of four years, including two years in oak barrels, The 2000 Brunello possesses a rich garnet color and a depth, complexity, and opulence that is softened by an elegant, lingering finish. Decant and serve with game, red meats, and aged cheeses.



**Banfi**  
**1999 Summus**

Summus is blend of 40% Sangiovese, used regionally to make Brunello, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 20% Syrah. Sangiovese contributes body, Cabernet Sauvignon, fruit and structure, and Syrah, elegance, character, and a fruity bouquet. Each wine is individually vinified and aged 12 months in French oak barrique to develop its unique character and then blended with the others. The wine ages in bottle for an additional 16 months to bring forth a fragrant bouquet of fruit, oak, and spice. Decant and serve at cool room temperature.



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JUST CALIFORNIAN?  
JUST ITALIAN?  
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Artisan red-Winemaker red:  
\$46/month

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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:  
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CA Artisan white-IT Artisan white:  
\$29.50/month  
CA Winemaker-IT Winemaker:  
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\$29.50/\$32/month  
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