

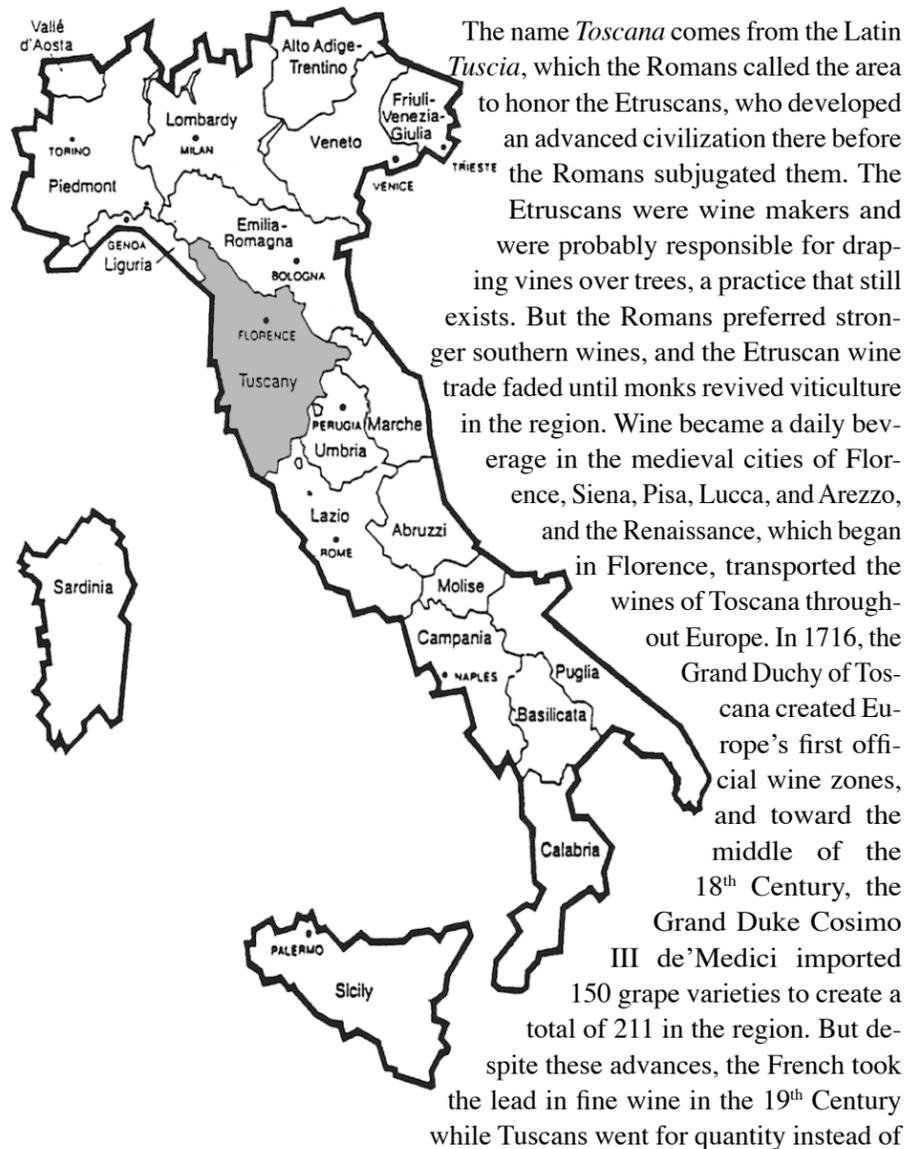
REGION OF THE MONTH



CELEBRATIONS WINE CLUB

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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 *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 di San Gimignano is the most prestigious white wine in Toscana, and Vin Santo is a highly prized dessert wine.

Italian
Winery of the Month



Castello di Nipozzano Estate of Marchesi de Frescobaldi

One Family's 700 Year History of Making Wine in Toscana

Marchesi de Frescobaldi

For more than 700 years, the Frescobaldi family has participated in the history, culture, and commerce of Italy, but agriculture and wine production have always been the family's primary business activity. With 1000 hectares and nine estates, the Frescobaldi's own the largest expanse of vineyards in Toscana. Today, many family members continue to be active in the business. Vittorio Frescobaldi is president of the winery, in charge of operations and management together with his brothers Leonardo and Ferdinando, both vice-presidents. A younger generation is now involved, Vittorio's children, Lamberto and Diana, along with their cousins Tiziana Frescobaldi and Stefano Benini, all contributing to ongoing success. Frescobaldi holdings include the Castelfiocondo Estate, the Castiglioni Estate, the Castello di Nipozzano

Estate, and the Castello di Pomino Estate. In 1995, the Frescobaldi's and Robert Mondavi created a joint venture and combined their viticulture experience to produce Luce della Vite in Montalcino. The Frescobaldi estates are not only some of the oldest in Toscana but also some of the most prestigious.

La Carraia

Except for Vernaccia di San Gimignano, Toscana produces very little white wine. So this month, we've crossed into neighboring Umbria for our white wine, an Orvieto Classico from La Carraia. Founded in 1976, the estate is owned by the Cotarella and Gialletti families. Riccardo Cotarella is a highly respected winemaker, who consults for some of the best wineries in Italy. The estate is comprised of 198 acres, lo-

See **WINERIES** next page

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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

La Carraia

2008 Orvieto Classico

Orvieto Classico is one of the best known white wines from Central Italy. It boasts a long history that dates back to medieval times, when it was the favorite wine of the Papacy. But its history goes back even further to the time of the Etruscans, a population that inhabited the area thousands of years ago. This La Carraia Orvieto Classico is 40% Grechetto, 30% Trebbiano, and 30% Malvasia, all native grapes of the area, grown in vineyards surrounding the historic hilltown of Orvieto. At 11.5% alcohol, this Orvieto is deliciously crisp with a full, rich taste of roasted almonds and would pair well with the Thanksgiving meal.



Marchesi di Frescobaldi

2007 Castiglioni Chianti

The first 700 years of Frescobaldi wine history began in the properties and vineyards of Castiglioni in Val di Pesa. The estate covers an area of 513 hectares, 115 of which are devoted to vineyards at an average altitude of 200 meters. Castiglioni Chianti is a blend of Sangiovese and Merlot. Recent vintages provide an expressive nose with appealing fruit and a palate of light tannins complemented by a judicious balance of alcohol and crisp acidity with a luscious finish.

WINEMAKER SERIES

Castello di Nipozzano

2006 Chianti Rufina Riserva

The Nipozzano Castle is in the heart of the Chianti Rufina zone, stretching across 550 hectares at an altitude of 300 to 450 meters, with 160 acres devoted to the cultivation of Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Syrah. The most famous wine from the estate is the Chianti Rufina Riserva, which defines the appellation, a classic wine consisting of mostly Sangiovese with small amounts of Malvasia Nera, Colorino, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon. In accordance with regulations, the wine is aged for 24 months in barrels. It's subtle collection of fragrances exhibits considerable complexity, opening to dark fruit, then enriched by pungent spiciness. On the palate the wine is dense with fine-grained tannins. The result is a solidly built wine but not heavy or overly extracted with a seamless, lingering finish.

Castelgiocondo

2007 Campo ai Sassi Rosso

Erected in 1100 to defend the road between the port of Talamone and the town of Siena, the castle was acquired by the Frescobaldi's in 1989. From Castelgiocondo vineyards, this Rosso di Montalcino, often called the "little brother of noble Brunello," was aged for 12 months in barrel and for 15 months in bottle. A lovely, deep ruby color, the 2007 Campo ai Sassi Rosso shows crisp aromas with initial dried plum fragrances that give way to more minerally impressions and finally suggestions of tanned leather. The wine boasts a firmly structured palate with an impressive balance between tannins, fruit, and acid and delivers a long,

WINERIES from cover

cated in the heart of the Orvieto Classico appellation. One hundred seventy two acres are dedicated to the production of Orvieto Classico and the remainder are planted with Merlot, Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Montepulciano grapes. La Carraia's Bordeaux blend, the Fobiano, won the coveted *Tre Bicchieri* award from *Gambero Rosso* in 1998, 1999, and 2003.

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

Castelgiocondo

2004 Brunello di Montalcino

Castelgiocondo was one of the first four wineries since 1509 to produce and bottle Brunello. The estate is located on the sea-side of Montalcino at an altitude of 250 to 450 meters and includes some 807 hectares, 202 of which are planted to vines, with 152 hectares devoted to Brunello. The Frescobaldi Castelgiocondo Brunello di Montalcino has consistently been one of the most highly acclaimed wines in Italy. The wine exudes expansive, multi-layered aromas, ripe fruit fragrances of dark cherry and dried plum, melding into a more pronounced, minerally essence of pencil lead and stone, while suggestions of tobacco leaf bring a sense of balance and completeness. Dense fruit comes to the fore with tannins that are expressive but not invasive. They balance a vein of crisp acidity that makes the flavors sing. The lingering finish flaunts a rich mosaic of nuanced flavors.



Castello di Nipozzano

2005 Montesodi

The Nipozzano Castle was constructed about the year 1000 as a defensive stronghold. Today, the Castle houses the central wine making facilities at the estate. Nipozzano is also the center for hospitality and culinary programs. A section of the estate's Montesodi vineyard is bottled separately because it produces perhaps the most powerful Chianti in the entire region. The wine is 100% Sangiovese and spent 18 months in 100% new oak barrels. The nose shows rich, concentrated fruit with abundant black currant and blueberry preceding clean impressions of plum preserves while black pepper and cinnamon nuances mark a lengthy finish. The wine develops quite full-bodied on the palate, warm and generous, with a well-built, velvety tannin structure. The progression through the finish is complex and lingering, complemented throughout by a judicious acidity that balances the alcohol.

Aging cellars at Castello di Pamino of Marchesi de Frescobaldi

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JUST ITALIAN?
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Artisan Series: \$34/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

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