

An aerial photograph of a Tuscan landscape. In the foreground, there are rows of green vineyards on a hillside. In the middle ground, a small town with stone buildings is built on a hill. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a clear blue sky.

# *The* ART OF BRUNELLO

**Fabio Tassi and Tassi Estates**

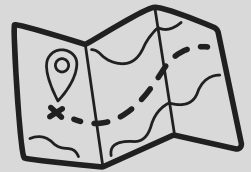
*A Story of Excellence*

Montalcino

Viticulture

King of Sangiovese

# TABLE



# of CONTENTS

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Letter from the Wine Doctor | 04 |
|-----------------------------|----|

---

Reflections on Montalcino

|                    |    |
|--------------------|----|
| King of Sangiovese | 06 |
|--------------------|----|

---

A Deep Dive into Brunello di Montalcino

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| Hills of Montalcino | 09 |
|---------------------|----|

---

The “Square” and Protective Climate

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| The Galestro Factor | 11 |
|---------------------|----|

---

Secret Soil of Montalcino

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| Viticulture and the Land | 13 |
|--------------------------|----|

---

Law of Montalcino and Grape Rules

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| The Latest Vintages | 15 |
|---------------------|----|

---

General Vintage Information in Montalcino

# TABLE



# of CONTENTS

## Tasting Profile 17

---

Characteristics of Young and Old Brunello's

## Tassi Estates 19

---

The Magic of Fabio Tassi and the Tassi Estates

## Key Vineyards and The Bettina Cuvee 22

---

The Development of the Award Winning Bettina Cuvee

## The Enoteca La Fortezza 26

---

The Historical Fortress of Montalcino

## Wine Pairings of Brunello 29

---

When and How to Drink Brunello's

## Epilogue 30

---

Why Tassi Matters to Montalcino



# LETTER *from the* DOCTOR

"A square of fortress, a circle of walls, and a heart of wine."

In all my years of chasing the best premium wines, few have left such an indelible mark on my memory—a true imprinting on the brain—as Brunello di Montalcino. I was first introduced to it during my early tastings of Italian wines, and while many enthusiasts get caught up in the power of Barolo, I found that the real elegance resides in Montalcino.

This elegance begins with the grape itself. Sangiovese is often called the "chameleon of wines," capable of shifting its character dramatically depending on where it is grown. While it may produce light, floral wines in Chianti, in the unique microclimate of Montalcino, it transforms into something darker, structured, and muscular.

The name Sangiovese is derived from the Latin Sanguis Jovis, literally meaning "The Blood of Jupiter"—a reference to the Roman king of gods that serves as the poetic foundation for the region's identity. To understand Brunello, however, is to understand time. There is a common local saying that "Brunello is a wine for patient people," a nod to the mandatory aging

period of five years for the Annata and six for the Riserva—one of the longest requirements in Italy. This patience is rewarded in the glass, echoing the philosophy often attributed to Franco Biondi Santi, the patriarch of the region: "Nature is capable of creating great things; man's task is just to wait." In Montalcino, the wine is not made by intervention, but perfected by the quiet passage of time.



Ralph Madeb, MD  
The Wine Doctor

# THE KING OF SANGIOVESE

A Deep Dive into Brunello di  
Montalcino



Brunello di Montalcino is widely regarded as one of Italy's most prestigious red wines. While Chianti Classico is the historic heart of Tuscany, Montalcino is its fortress of power and longevity. Due to its price structure Brunello is frequently compared to Barolo.

In truth, the wines are very different in their structure and tasting profile, but share a commonality in their ability to age for decades and its reputation in the pantheon of Italian wine. Barolo being the king of the North - and Brunello being the king of Tuscany.



To understand the "square" of Montalcino, you have to look at it as a rugged, high-altitude quadrilateral carved out by three distinct rivers. It is often described as one of the most clearly defined viticultural zones in the world because its borders are almost entirely natural.

## What is Brunello di Montalcino?

Brunello di Montalcino is produced exclusively from Sangiovese Grosso grapes, a local clone of Sangiovese known for its thick skins and intense flavors, often referred to as “Brunello” meaning “little dark one.”

Brunello di Montalcino is one of the rare wines that can feel both inevitable and surprising at the same time. ***Inevitable*** because it comes from a single grape—Sangiovese (locally, historically, “Brunello”)—grown in a defined hillside territory whose climate naturally lends itself to wines of structure and longevity. ***Surprising*** because within that single grape and a relatively compact corner of Tuscany, ***Brunello can taste dramatically different***: lifted and red-fruited from cooler exposures, darker and more muscular from warmer sectors, salty-mineral and balsamic from certain soils, or powerfully tannic when heat and drought compress the berries. The region’s best bottles are not just “big Tuscan reds.”

They are site-driven wines with a long arc in bottle—wines that can spend a decade moving from stern, savory youth into an ***aromatic register of sour cherry, dried rose, tobacco, porcini, leather, forest floor, and a distinctly Tuscan Mediterranean scrub (macchia) character***. Born from the specific Sangiovese Grosso clone (locally called Brunello), this wine is defined by its ability to age for decades, evolving from a tannic, brooding powerhouse into a fluid, ethereal expression of leather, dried cherries, and spice.

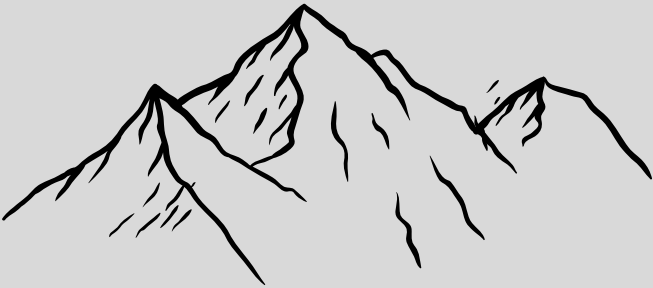
"Nature is capable of creating great things; man's task is just to wait"—a reminder that true Brunello is made in the vineyard and perfected by time, not intervention.

~ Franco Biondi Santi



# THE HILLS

# OF MONTALCINO



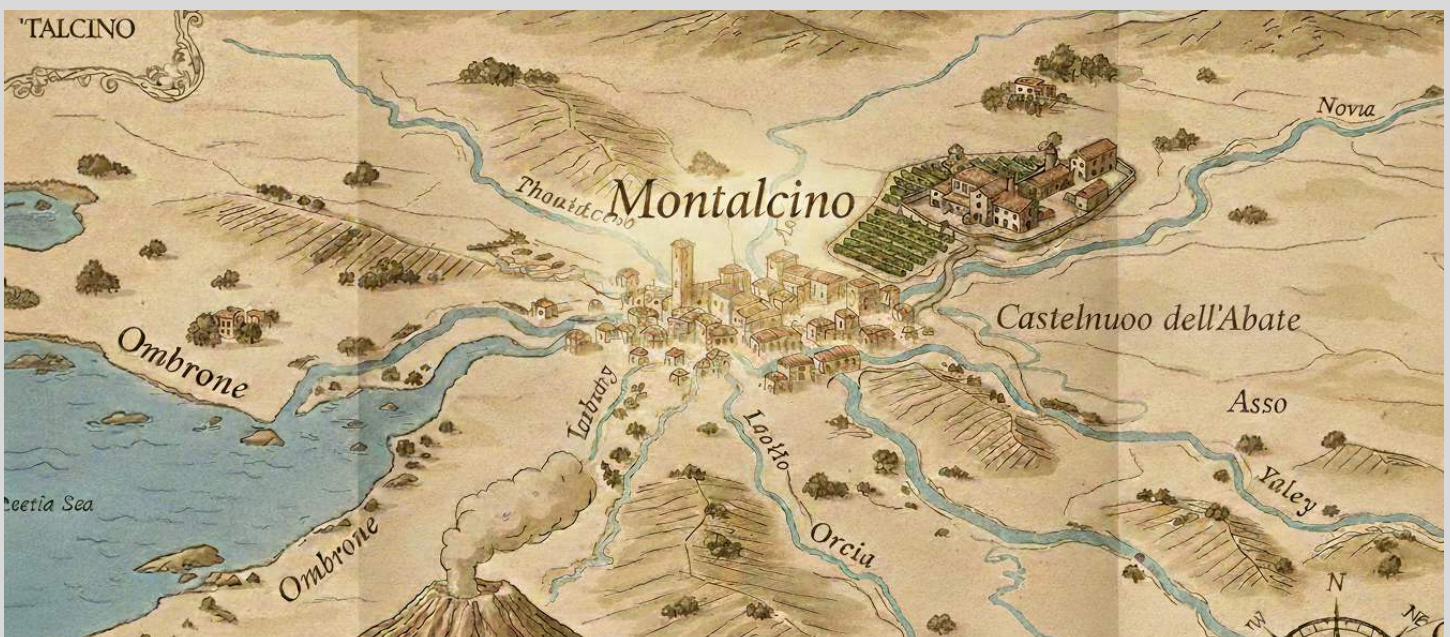
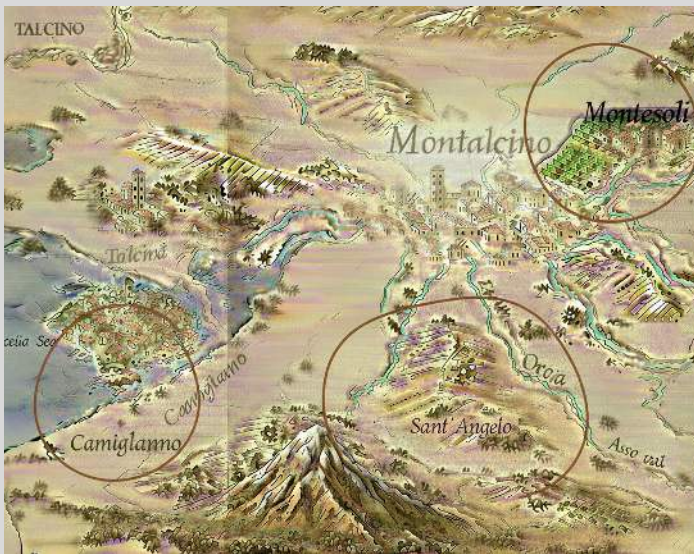
## Geography & The Land

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The production zone of Montalcino is a square of approximately 24,000 hectares, but only a fraction (about 2,100 ha or 11.5%) is planted to Brunello. The geography is unique in Tuscany because it forms a single, isolated hill that rises 564 meters (1,850 ft) above sea level, surrounded by four valleys (Orcia, Arbia, Asso, and Ombrone).

### *The "Umbrella" of Monte Amiata*

The single most important geographical feature is Monte Amiata, an extinct volcano located to the southeast. Rising to 1,738 meters, it acts as a massive natural barrier against storms and hail coming from the southeast. This creates a protective "umbrella" effect, giving Montalcino a drier, warmer, and more reliable climate than Chianti to the north.



## “The Quadrants of Montalcino”

### “The Square”

To understand the wine, one must understand the four slopes of the hill which formulates “the square microclimate” and the specialized soil in Montalcino as they produce drastically different expressions of Sangiovese:

#### North (Montosoli area):

- Cooler, with less direct sunlight.
- The wines here are celebrated for their aromatic perfume, high acidity, and elegance rather than sheer power.
- They are often described as “**Burgundian**” in style.

#### South (Castelnuovo dell’Abate / Sant’Angelo):

- Facing the sea and receiving intense afternoon sun.
- These areas are significantly warmer, producing wines with darker fruit, higher alcohol, and a **muscular, fleshy texture**.

#### West (Camigliano):

- Rocky and exposed to maritime breezes from the Tyrrhenian Sea.
- The wines are often **mineral-driven** and tense.

#### East (Mountainous Side):

- A **middle ground**, often combining the structure of the south with the elegance of the north.

## UNDERSTANDING GALESTRO SOIL: THE FOUNDATION OF TUSCAN FINE WINES



## SOIL: *The* GALESTRO FACTOR

Galestro is the local Italian name for a specific type of rocky, flaky schist-like marlstone (argillite) found predominantly in Tuscany, Italy.



While the lower valleys contain clay (argilla) which produces broader wines, the most prized vineyards are located at higher elevations (300m–500m) on Galestro soil. Galestro is a crumbly, schist-like marl that provides excellent drainage. It forces the vine roots to dig deep for water, limiting vigor and concentrating flavors. ***This soil is the secret behind the "mineral drive" and saline finish of the best Brunellos.***



"This combination—dryness, wind, and a long ripening window—matters because Sangiovese is a grape that punishes haste."

#### In Summary:

- **Climate:** Mediterranean-leaning and relatively dry (the Consorzio cites average annual rainfall around 700 mm), with rain concentrated mainly in spring and late autumn. Wind reduces fog and late frost risk and helps maintain grape health.
- **Altitude and exposure:** Vineyards range widely in elevation (the Consorzio notes height differences from about 120 to 650 meters above sea level), creating a patchwork of mesoclimates even at short distances.
- **Monte Amiata:** The mountain (to the south) acts as a protective influence and helps moderate hazards like storms and hail; it also plays a major role in airflow and diurnal shifts in the southeast.

#### *Montalcino And The Tassi Vineyards*

Montalcino's soils are not uniform, and that is the key to why Brunello is so fascinating. Zoom in a little and you see why producers (and critics) constantly talk about "zones" even though official subzones are not on labels. A particularly important area is Castelnuovo dell'Abate, southeast of Montalcino hill overlooking the Orcia River. This is the exact location of where the Tassi Family developed their farming lands and subsequently their vineyards. Club Oenologique describes it as an "unofficial subzone" whose identity is strengthened by:

- Breezes along the Orcia valley and cool airflows from Monte Amiata, producing meaningful diurnal range that supports acidity and aromatics.
- Constant air circulation reducing disease pressure.
- A diverse soil mosaic—sands, limestones, and white clays—and vineyard elevations broadly in the 150–400 m band.

***That single paragraph is basically a blueprint for how great Sangiovese is made: enough warmth to ripen tannins, enough cooling and airflow to keep the wine fresh, and enough soil variation to give nuance beyond "fruit + oak."***

# VITICULTURE & THE LAW



The Brunello di Montalcino appellation is centered around the medieval hilltop town of Montalcino in the province of Siena, approximately 40 km south of Siena, 80 km south of Florence, and 200 km northwest of Rome



Brunello di Montalcino has some of the strictest production rules in Italy (DOCG), designed to ensure quality and longevity.



- **Grape Variety:** 100% Sangiovese (specifically the Sangiovese Grosso biotype). No blending is permitted.

- **Yields:** Maximum 8 tons per hectare (though top estates like Tassi often harvest significantly less to ensure concentration).

- **Aging Requirements:**

- Normale: Minimum 5 years total aging before release (with at least 2 years in oak).
- Riserva: Minimum 6 years total aging before release (with at least 2 years in oak).

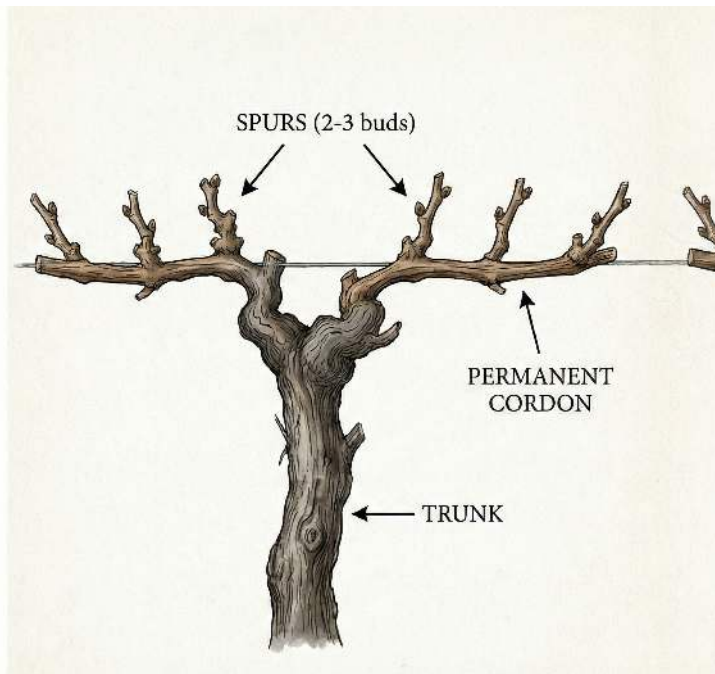
- **The Oak Regime:** Traditionally, Brunello is aged in large Slavonian oak casks (botti) which allow for slow micro-oxygenation without imparting excessive vanilla or toasted wood flavors. However, modern interpretations may use smaller French barriques, though the trend is swinging back toward the traditional large casks to preserve fruit purity.



# *the Land*

Brunello's greatness is largely decided before the grapes hit the cellar. The Consorzio explicitly frames quality as beginning in the vineyard, highlighting manual labor and decisions like pruning, canopy management, and bunch selection, all aimed at harvesting the best fruit.

A few viticultural themes define modern top-tier Brunello:



## 01

### ***Site selection and exposure management***

In a warming climate era, exposure is strategy. Cooler, higher sites and north-facing slopes can preserve perfume and acidity; warmer slopes can build power and tannin. Many elite producers blend across exposures to create completeness.

## 02

### ***Yield control and canopy discipline***

Sangiovese is sensitive to over-cropping: too many bunches can lead to thin mid-palate and green tannins. Canopy work also influences tannin ripeness and sunburn risk in hot years.



**The land: Soils, slope, and why “one Brunello style” doesn’t exist**

## 03

### ***Disease pressure vs. airflow***

One of Montalcino's advantages is wind. In areas like Castelnuovo dell'Abate, airflow is a “natural assistant,” helping growers reduce rot pressure and pick later for ripeness without losing freshness.

## 04

### ***Training systems***

The Consorzio notes spurred cordon as a widespread training method in Montalcino. This is relevant because spur pruning and cordon management can help regulate vigor and yields—important in a region where producers want physiological ripeness without excessive sugar accumulation.



# THE LATEST VINTAGES



Brunello is unusually vintage-sensitive because it is a single-grape wine whose structure depends on balanced ripening. Several sources consistently flag a short list of modern standouts.

## 2016

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### 01

Currently, is widely considered a "perfect" vintage. It combines the power of 2015 with the elegance and acidity of 2010. These wines are structured, classic, and built for the very long haul. A benchmark of modern vintage: precision + power



## 2015

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### 02

A warmer, solar vintage. The wines are ripe, fleshy, and fruit-forward, but with enough structure to age well. They are generally more approachable young than the 2016s. Resulting is a ripe, generous, strong balance in top hands



# 2019

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## 03

The most recent "5-star" vintage. It offers a beautiful balance—classicism meets fruit. The tannins are refined, and the acidity is vibrant. Resulting is a ripe berry/plum fruit, spice and coffee-bean notes, and a chalky, chewy tannin feel, recommending patience.



# 2020

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## 04

The ““drinkers vintage”. A warm year that produced surprisingly graceful, open-knit wines. While they may not have the eternal lifespan of the '16s, they are silky and delicious right now.



# 2017 ~ 2018

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## 05

The “Rainy Vintage”. Rainy spring led to elegant, fresh wines with aromatic profiles; ideal for mid-term drinking. This is where regions in the subzones mentioned earlier kicks in. Those can still be excellent—especially in cooler sites, or in zones with beneficial airflow and diurnal range (again, Castelnovo dell’Abate often performs well here). The takeaway: in Brunello, producer and site can matter as much as “stars” next to a vintage.



# TASTING

## Brunello di Montalcino Tasting Notes



Wild Berries



Star Anise



Licorice



Figs



Leather



Chocolate

# PROFILE



**Brunello is unusually vintage-sensitive because it is a single-grape wine whose structure depends on balanced ripening.**

Classic description of a Brunello di Montalcino is a powerful and age-worthy wine showing ***sour cherry, dried roses, leather, and tobacco.*** High acidity and firm tannins give structure, while earthy and balsamic notes add Tuscan character. Long, savory and one of the main identifiers is a ***saline and salty finish!***

# TASTING PROFILE DIFFERENCE: BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO

## YOUNG BRUNELLO (3-10 YEARS)



**FRESH BERRIES**  
(Cherry, Raspberry)



**FLORAL**  
(Violet)



**FIRM TANNINS**



**HIGH ACIDITY**

## OLD BRUNELLO (15-30+ YEARS)



**DRIED FRUIT**  
(Fig, Prune)



**LEATHER & TOBACCO**



**EARTHY**  
(Truffle, Spice)



**SOFTENED TANNINS**

Brunello di Montalcino is a DOCG wine made from Sangiovese in the Montalcino municipality. It is designed for aging, and its release rules are famously strict. One summary of the regulations notes that Brunello must be aged a minimum period including at least two years in wood and at least four months in bottle, with release on January 1 of the fifth year after harvest; Riserva has longer bottle requirements and later release.

These rules matter because they shape Brunello's personality: tannin integration is not optional. The category is structurally built for long-term development. While every estate differs, great Brunello often moves through recognizable phases:

- Young (0–6 years post-vintage): sour cherry, black cherry, plum skin; violet/rose; fresh herbs; assertive tannins; a savory edge (tomato leaf, iron, tea).

Middle (7–15 years): tannins soften into suede; aromatics broaden—tobacco, cedar, dried flowers, porcini, truffle hints; acidity becomes the backbone that keeps the wine alive.

- Mature (15–30+ years in strong vintages): tertiary complexity dominates; fruit becomes dried and sweet-sour; balsamic and forest-floor tones; the finish turns long and “salty.”





# *The Magic* **TASSI ESTATES**



While many famous Montalcino estates have been producing wine for centuries, Tassi represents a fascinating evolution of the region: a local family moving from agriculture and service to elite winemaking. In short his family can be described as a modern star with deep historical roots.

**Fabio Tassi Enjoying his 2015 Brunello Riserva that won 100 points by James Suckling**

# HISTORY: FROM HONEY TO WINE

The Tassi family history is anchored by Guido Franci, who worked as a sharecropper for the legendary Biondi-Santi family (the inventors of Brunello). For years, the family was known for beekeeping and high-quality honey production. It was Guido's grandson, Fabio Tassi, who transformed the family business. Known affectionately as the "unofficial Mayor of Montalcino," Fabio runs the famous Drogheria Franci and Enoteca la Fortezza (the wine shop inside the medieval fortress). Fabio Tassi is a prominent vintner and entrepreneur based in Montalcino, Tuscany, known for his dynamic presence in the region's wine and hospitality sectors. He is the owner of the Tassi winery (often referred to as Tassi di Franci Franca), which has garnered acclaim for its distinct expressions of Sangiovese, including high-end Brunello di Montalcino.

Tassi's family has deep roots in the area; his grandfather, Guido Franci, was a sharecropper for the legendary Biondi-Santi estate before establishing a beekeeping business. Fabio eventually steered the family enterprise back toward viticulture, modernizing their operations and converting to organic farming to produce wines that emphasize the specific terroir of their vineyards.

Beyond winemaking, Tassi is a central figure in Montalcino's social and commercial life, often managing the historic Enoteca La Fortezza, a landmark wine shop located inside the town's 14th-century fortress. His management of this venue has made him a key ambassador for the region's wines, curating selections that showcase not just his own labels but the breadth of Montalcino's production.



Fabio is often characterized by his high energy and "unofficial mayor" persona, balancing his role as a serious producer of single-vineyard Brunellos (such as the "Franci" and "Colombaio" crus and a specialized elite kosher production "Bettina Cuvee") with his work as a restaurateur and retailer.

## THE TASSI LEGACY: FROM SHARECROPPERS TO ELITE BRUNELLO PRODUCERS

### I. THE ROOTS (1910–1960)



Guido Franci born (1910).  
Sharecropper at Biondi Santi.  
Shifts to beekeeping; founds  
Franci honey co. (1960).

### II. TRANSITIONAL GENERATION (1960s–1990)



*Giuseppe Tassi & Franca Franci*  
Giuseppe marries Franca (1965).  
Focus on high-quality honey.  
Small landholdings maintained.

### III. FABIO TASSI ERA (1990–2000)



Fabio pivots to hospitality.  
Opens Drogheria Franci wine  
shop (c. 1993) & Locanda di  
Sant'Antimo hotel.

### IV. RETURN TO WINE (2000–Present)



First vines planted (2000).  
First Vintage (2004). Franci  
Riserva 2015 gets 100 points.  
New gravity winery (2018).  
Certified Organic.

# *Philosophy & Winemaking*

Fabio Tassi's approach is defined by "obsessive precision." He is not interested in making bulk wine; he produces limited-quantity, terroir-driven Sangiovese.

**Consultant:** He has worked with renowned oenologist **Carlo Ferrini**, (see below) bringing a layer of polish and sophistication to the wines. Born in Florence in 1954, Carlo Ferrini trained as an agronomist and first made his mark as the Technical Director of the Chianti Classico Consorzio, where he led the revolutionary "Chianti 2000" project that modernized Tuscan viticulture through superior clone research and high-density planting. Transitioning to independent consulting in the early 1990s, he became one of Italy's most influential oenologists, crafting powerful, critical darlings for prestigious estates like Marchesi Mazzei, Casanova di Neri, and San Leonardo, eventually winning "Winemaker of the Year" titles from Gambero Rosso, Wine Enthusiast, and the AIS.

After decades of shaping the international success of other wineries, he established his own personal estate, Giodo, in Montalcino and Sicily, where he now works with his daughter Bianca to produce wines defined by elegance and finesse rather than the extraction typical of his earlier consulting work.

**Style:** Tassi wines are often described as "contemporary classic." They utilize traditional aging (large wood) to respect the Sangiovese character but are vinified with a modern cleanliness that avoids the rustic, "farmyard" defects sometimes found in older-style Brunellos. They are known for their silky tannins and purity of fruit.



**Carlo Ferrini served  
as a consultant for  
Tassi Estates**





# The key Vineyards

"Style Evolution and Influences"



## 1. Tassi Brunello di Montalcino (Annata):

The estate flagship. Often sourced from the Vigna Franci and other plots. It is designed to be a quintessential expression of Montalcino—balanced, savory, and red-fruited.



## 2. Vigna Colombaiolo:

A prestigious single-vineyard cru. The Colombaiolo plot is known for producing wines of extreme elegance and perfume. It is often the most expensive and highly rated wine in their portfolio, competing with the top "Grand Crus" of the region.



## 3. Tassi "Franci" Riserva:

A tribute to Fabio's grandfather. This wine is produced only in top vintages from the estate's oldest vines. It sees longer aging (often 36 months in cask). It is deeper, brooding, with notes of balsamic, cured meat, and forest floor. It requires patience.

# Bettina Cuvee -The Kosher Cuvee

The *Tassi "Bettina Cuvée" Franci Brunello* di Montalcino serves as a profound tribute to the Franci family's deep roots in the Montalcino terroir. Visually, it presents a brilliant, intense ruby red that slowly transitions to garnet with age. The nose is expansive and ethereal, weaving together a complex tapestry of ripe wild cherries, blackberries, and plums with sophisticated savory notes of sandalwood, cured tobacco, and a distinct balsam-like freshness typical of high-altitude Sangiovese. On the palate, it is the epitome of "iron in a velvet glove"—full-bodied and authoritative, yet possessed of a silky, polished texture. The tannins are dense but fine-grained, supporting a core of dark fruit and minerality that extends into a long, chewy, and spicy finish.

**The Essence:** The Bettina Cuvée represents *"Heritage and Harmony."* It is a wine that bridges the rustic, agricultural history of the Franci family (originally beekeepers) with the aristocratic elegance of modern Brunello, offering a soulful expression that is both powerful and incredibly precise.

It should be noted that The Bettina cuvee is an **exclusively Kosher Cuvee** made in Honor of Betty Sitt by her husband and Children. Betty is a loyal philanthropist and leader in the Sephardic community of Brooklyn and the Jewish community at large. She is warm-hearted, generous, and deeply devoted to the Jewish People. There is no greater match to honor Betty than this unique wine made from one the finest regions of Italy.

It is also important to note that in a blind submission for review with the other single vineyards from Franchi the Bettina outperformed all the other single vineyards for the same vintage. It reportedly received 97 Points by James Suckling and 98 points for the riserva; and 96 points by Robert Parker.



JAMESSUCKLING.COM  
**97pts**

A ripe, opulent wine with plum, cherry and citrus character with some toasted oak and spice. It's full-bodied with layers of tannins and exotic fruit. Generous, but not overdone. Velvety and very seductive. Drink after 2024

*Robert Parker*  
WINE ADVOCATE  
**96pts**

This is one of three new wines presented by Fabio Tassi this year. The 2016 Brunello di Montalcino Bettina Cuvée Franci shows illness and generous fruit with ripe cherry, plum, sweet spice and forest floor. This wine is aged in 20-hectoliter bottle for 30 months, and this gives it ample time to soften and integrate. This special cuvée shows a pretty use of purity and depth with a punchy, lively that peels back slowly and elegantly. Drink 2024 - 2044.

TASSI



*Brunello di Montalcino*  
DENOMINAZIONE DI ORIGINE CONTROLLATA

*Bettina Cuvée*

FRANCI

2016

# THE VINTAGES OF BETTINA CUVÉE

## 2106 BETTINA CUVÉE

### First Kosher Vintage

The 2016 Brunello di Montalcino Bettina Cuvée is a powerful, full-bodied wine celebrated for its "velvety" texture and immense aging potential. On the nose, it offers an opulent bouquet of ripe cherries, plums, and citrus, accented by sophisticated layers of sandalwood, toasted oak, and exotic spices. The palate is equally concentrated, featuring dense, chewy tannins and a punchy acidity that carries flavors of blackberry, leather, and tobacco. Critics, including James Suckling who awarded it 97 points, note a long and seductive finish marked by notes of dark chocolate-covered coffee beans and dried mushrooms. While it is approachable now with significant decanting, experts suggest its peak drinking window extends through 2038. This specific cuvée is also notable for being produced as a high-quality Kosher (non-mevushal) wine, aged for 30 months in large oak casks to refine its formidable structure.

### General Profile:

Tassi wines are distinct for their texture. While some Brunellos can be austere and drying in their youth, Tassi wines often exhibit a "cashmere" tannin quality—firm but polished. The aromatic profile typically leans toward crushed rocks, wild strawberries, blood orange, and sweet pipe tobacco.





## 2016 FRANCHI BETTINA CUVEE RESERVA

**Profile:** A powerhouse from a legendary year.

**Notes:** "Darker and more brooding than the Annata and the 2016 Bettina Cuvee. Black cherries, tar, and licorice. The structure is massive, requiring time to resolve. A wine of serious pedigree that echoes the Biondi-Santi influence of the family's past."

Score Range: consistently 96–98 points from major critics.

## 2019 VINTAGE

**Profile:** A standout wine. Critics have praised its energy and tension and have already named it a 5/5 vintage alongside the 2016 vintage.

**Notes:** "Opens with high-toned aromas of red currants and dried mint. The palate is medium-bodied but tense, with a saline, mineral core that drives the finish. The tannins are fine-grained and chalky."

**Drinking Window:** Approachable with a decant now, but peaking 2028–2040.

## 2017-2018 VINATGES

What about “challenging” years like 2017 or 2018? Those can still be excellent—especially in cooler sites, or in zones with beneficial airflow and diurnal range (again, Castelnuovo dell’Abate often performs well here). This is a prime example why the 2017 Franchi Brunello did well in the estate. In fact, its much denser and heavier on the palette but yet approachable and excellent for those just starting to appreciate and understanding Brunello’s.



# The Enoteca La Fortezza

## Landmark Wineshop in the Montalcino Fortress



### *Origins and Location*

**The Setting:** The enoteca is situated directly inside the Fortress of Montalcino (Rocca di Montalcino), a massive defensive structure built in 1361 by Mino Foresi and Domenico di Feo. The fortress itself is a symbol of the town, historically used to defend the Republic of Siena.

**Establishment:** The enoteca “wine shop” itself was founded in 1980, making it one of the first and most historic wine shops in Montalcino. Its creation marked a shift in the fortress's purpose from military defense to cultural and oenological promotion.

CONSORZIO DEL VINO





## A "Temple" of Brunello: Since its opening, the enoteca has served as a primary showcase for Brunello di Montalcino.

### ***Role In the Wine World***

The restored Enoteca was designed to be a reference point where visitors could taste and purchase wines from producers across the entire territory, rather than just a single estate.

**Management:** Since 2002, the enoteca has been managed by Fabio Tassi. Under his direction, the venue has expanded its prestige, organizing high-level tastings, shipping wine globally, and hosting exclusive events.

**Cultural Hub:** Beyond selling wine, the location serves as a cultural hub for the town. The courtyard of the fortress (where the enoteca is located) is often used for the Jazz & Wine Festival and other major local events.

### ***The Experience***

**Atmosphere:** Visitors typically enter through the ancient fortress walls. The enoteca offers a combination of history and wine culture, allowing guests to climb the fortress ramparts for a 360-degree view of the Val d'Orcia (a UNESCO World Heritage site) before or after a tasting.

**Selection:** It is famous for housing a massive selection of local labels, including rare vintages of Brunello and Rosso di Montalcino, as well as Super Tuscans.





TASSI



*Brunello di Montalcino*

DENOMINAZIONE DI ORIGINE  
CONTROLLATA E GARANTITA

FRANCI RISERVA

2015

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COLOMBAIO

2016

# The Art of Wine Pairing

Discover how the right food can elevate your Wine experience.

As always when I discuss food pairings I always refer to our great and dear friend Aldo Sohm. My close friend, Master Sommelier Aldo Sohm of Le Bernardin and Aldo's Wine Bar, has recently released his second book, *Wine Simple: Perfect Pairings*. In his chapter on Sangiovese, he feels that it best pairs with bold, rich, and savory dishes that can stand up to its firm tannins and bright acidity. Brunello di Montalcino, particularly structured vintages like the 2016 Tassi Bettina Cuvée, Traditional Tuscan pairings are considered the most authentic, featuring regional specialties "peposo" (slow-cooked beef stew with black pepper and red wine), and bistecca alla fiorentina. The wine's earthy, truffle-like aromatics also make it an excellent partner for dishes highlighting umami, such as mushroom risottos, pasta with black truffles, or aged cheeses like Pecorino Toscano and Parmigiano-Reggiano.



## Top Food Pairings for Brunello

**Meat-Based Dishes:** Roasted or grilled meats such as prime rib, lamb chops with rosemary, and grass-fed beef are ideal because the meat's fat balances the wine's tannins. For lean cuts like filet mignon, Brunello's depth can bring out subtle nuances.

**Savory Pastas:** Hearty pasta dishes like pappardelle with a game or beef ragù are classic choices. The acidity in the wine cuts through rich sauces, while its dark fruit tones enhance the dish's complexity.

**Vegetarian Options:** Earthy, rustic vegetable dishes such as eggplant Parmesan, oven-roasted root vegetables, or mushroom-stuffed starters complement the wine's spicy and herbal undertones.

**Matured Cheeses:** Aged, hard cheeses with high salt content, such as Pecorino di Pienza aged in barriques or mature Gorgonzola, balance the wine's robust texture.

## Pairings to Avoid

While versatile, Brunello di Montalcino is generally not recommended for lighter fare like delicate white fish, simple salads, or very spicy (piquant) foods, as the high alcohol and tannins can clash with heat or overwhelm subtle flavors. Some experts also advise against standard pizzas, as the tomato acidity and mild mozzarella can "disappear" under the wine's powerful impact.

*Brunello di Montalcino is not great because it is famous; it is famous because the place repeatedly produces wines with the structure to age and the nuance to reward aging.*

# why Tassi Matters

Tassi is currently in a "sweet spot." They have the vine age and the prime terroir to compete with the historic giants (like Biondi-Santi or Valdicava), but they maintain the agility and passion of a grower-producer. For a collector or importer, Tassi offers a narrative of authentic Montalcino—rooted in the sharecropping history but executed with modern mastery.

Tassi's portrait of Montalcino—variable altitudes, wind, a mostly dry climate, and soils that shift from loose to stony marl/limestone-derived matrices—explains why the region can produce both power and precision.

Tassi, meanwhile, offers a compelling "modern classic" proposition: real vineyard transparency (site data, altitude, soils), a home base in Castelnuovo dell'Abate—an area increasingly recognized for balancing ripeness with freshness—and tasting profiles that align with what serious Brunello drinkers chase: **cherry/plum fruit, spice, savory earth, mineral structure, and long mineral finishes.**

If one were to summarize the Tassi estate in the context of Montalcino geography: They manage to capture the warmth of the southern slopes without losing the aromatic complexity usually reserved for the north. Their management of tannins—achieving ripeness without heaviness—is their defining technical achievement in recent vintages.



Tassi Estate  
Visits



# *The* ART OF BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO



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