

TUSCANY



THE SOUL OF CHIANTI

CELEBRATING VINTAGE, TRADITION
& THE MAGIC OF ALESSANDRO CELLAI

EXPLORING THE WINE REGION

Castellare, Vallepicolle
and Rocca Di Frassinello Vineyards

ALSO INSIDE: THE SUPER TUSCAN REVOLUTION

Redefining Excellence





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From the Editor

"GOOD CHIANTI, THAT AGED, MAJESTIC AND PROUD WINE, ENLIVENS MY HEART, AND FREES IT PAINLESSLY FROM ALL FATIGUE AND SADNESS."

— FRANCESCO REDI,

17TH-CENTURY ITALIAN PHYSICIAN AND POET



Chianti is far more than a point on a map; it is the beating heart of Italian viticulture, where centuries of history, sun-drenched hills, and iron-rich soils converge to create some of the world's most soulful wines. Immersing myself in these iconic vineyards—walking the terraced slopes, feeling the morning mist lift off the Sangiovese vines, and literally drenching my roots and toes in the ancient Tuscan dirt—was a transformative experience. Connecting with this land directly revealed why Chianti commands such enduring reverence. The terroir possesses a rare magic, an undeniable energy that anchors you to the earth and demands that any wine born here carry the unmistakable spirit of its birthplace.

It was precisely this profound connection that ignited a personal calling: to bridge the timeless perfection of Tuscan winemaking with the meticulous traditions of Jewish heritage. For too long, fine kosher wine was treated as a rarity rather than a standard. My passion was to challenge that standard by crafting a world-class kosher cuvée in direct partnership with Tuscany's most prestigious wineries. Bringing kosher production into these storied cellars required unwavering precision, absolute integrity, and a shared refusal to compromise on quality. ***The goal was never simply to make a wine that was kosher, but to make extraordinary Tuscan wines that could stand proudly alongside the finest vintages on the global stage.***

That ambitious vision became reality through an extraordinary partnership with the legendary winemaker **Alessandro Cellai**. From our initial meeting, Alessandro approached the complex demands of kosher winemaking not as an obstacle, but with a deep, humble reverence for the craft. Though he is not Jewish, his dedication to learning, respecting, and perfecting every step of the kosher process was nothing short of exemplary. ***Over long days in the vineyards and late nights in the cellar, our collaboration evolved into something far deeper than a business relationship. We forged a true brotherhood bound by a shared obsession with excellence, a mutual respect for tradition, and a deep love for the vine.*** Today, this cuvée stands not only as a testament to Tuscany's glorious terroir, but as the living proof of a bond between two brothers united by a shared passion.

Ralph Madeb, MD
The Wine Doctor

Correspondence



Dear Editor,

Q. If both Brunello di Montalcino and Chianti are made from Sangiovese, why do these two famous Tuscan wines look, taste, and age so differently in the glass?

**Benny Swed,
Brooklyn, NY**

A. While both wines celebrate Tuscany's signature grape, the fundamental differences between Brunello di Montalcino and Chianti come down to clone, microclimate, and mandatory aging. Brunello is made exclusively from Sangiovese Grosso (locally called Brunello), a specific thick-skinned clone grown in the hotter, drier, and windier Mediterranean climate of Montalcino, yielding smaller berries with immense concentration, high tannins, and massive aging potential—by law requiring at least five years of aging before release. Chianti, by contrast, relies primarily on the standard Sangiovese grape grown across the cooler, elevated, inland hills between Florence and Siena, where variations in soil (like galestro and alberese) produce a brighter, fruit-forward wine with higher acidity and lighter tannins. Furthermore, while Brunello must strictly be 100% Sangiovese, Chianti regulations permit blending up to 20% with other international or native red grapes (such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, or Canaiolo), resulting in a more approachable, food-friendly wine designed for earlier drinking rather than decades in a cellar.



Q. I often see bottles labeled simply as "Chianti" next to others featuring the phrase "Chianti Classico" and a prominent Black Rooster seal. Are these terms interchangeable, or is Chianti Classico a completely separate wine?

A. While both wines hail from Tuscany and showcase the Sangiovese grape, Chianti and Chianti Classico are distinct wine regions with vastly different histories, production rules, and quality standards. Chianti Classico is the original, historic heartland of the region. Basic Chianti, by contrast, refers to a much broader zone surrounding that historical core, created decades later to meet growing commercial demand. Beyond geography, Chianti Classico enforces far stricter rules: it requires a minimum of 80% Sangiovese (versus 70% for basic Chianti), forbids white grape blends entirely, demands higher minimum alcohol levels, and requires longer aging. The Black Rooster (Gallo Nero) emblem on a neck band guarantees the bottle originates strictly from this premium historic zone, yielding a wine with greater concentration, complex structure, and aging potential compared to its lighter, everyday-drinking counterpart.



**Jack Goldman,
New York, NY**

Tuscany - A Landscape Made for Wine

Few places on earth are as inseparable from wine as Tuscany. The region occupies the broad, hilly heart of central Italy, bounded by the Apennines to the north and east and the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west, and its vineyards have been in more or less continuous cultivation since the Etruscans tended vines here nearly three thousand years ago. Tuscany is a land of hills — roughly two-thirds of its surface is hillside — and it is on these slopes, between roughly 200 and 600 meters of elevation, that its greatest wines are born.



Cypress-lined ridges, medieval hill towns, olive groves, and oak and chestnut forests frame a viticultural landscape that produces some of the world's most celebrated reds: Brunello di Montalcino, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, the coastal wines of Bolgheri and the Maremma, and, most famously of all, Chianti. At the center of this world, both geographically and symbolically, lies the Chianti region — and within it the historic core known today as Chianti Classico, the stretch of high country between Florence and Siena that gave the wine its name, its identity, and its black rooster emblem. It is also the crucible in which, in the 1970s and 1980s, a group of restless producers ignited the Super Tuscan revolution that transformed Italian wine forever.

The Chianti Classico zone covers roughly 70,000 hectares of territory stretching about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from just south of Florence to just north of Siena, though only around 6,800–7,200 hectares are actually registered to DOCG vineyard, *producing on the order of 35–38 million bottles a year*. The zone embraces the communes of **Greve in Chianti, Radda in Chianti, Gaiole in Chianti, Castellina in Chianti, and Castelnuovo Berardenga, along with portions of San Casciano Val di Pesa, Barberino Tavarnelle, and Poggibonsi**. To the east, the zone is walled by the Monti del Chianti, a ridge of mountains rising toward 900 meters; to the west it descends through the valleys of the Pesa, Greve, and Elsa rivers.



"The spirit of place is still very much alive in Sardinia, Tuscany and Sicily, and it was there that I found my ideal environment – the one closest to my own spirit... because there was a deep bond between me and those places, an authentic friendship."

– Giacomo Tachis
(1933–2016)



Left; the highest point of the hilltop at Castellare di Castellina which is where the award winning i sodi di San Niccolò is harvested from. Right; aerial view of the hills and communes of Chianti.

This is emphatically hill country. Vineyards climb from about 250 meters to as high as 610 meters, with the appellation authorizing plantings up to roughly 700 meters — among the highest elevations for fine red wine in Italy. The topography is a corrugated patchwork of ridges, amphitheatres, and steep valley walls, which means that exposure, altitude, and soil can change dramatically within a few hundred meters. ***A vineyard in Lamole, perched at 600 meters on sandy, stony terraces, produces a fundamentally different Sangiovese from one on the warm clay slopes of Castelnuovo Berardenga an hour to the south.*** This mosaic quality is why the region has, in recent years, moved formally toward village-level identification of its wines.



The Geography of Chianti

The word Chianti can describe both a historical landscape and a legally defined wine. This creates understandable confusion because Chianti DOCG and Chianti Classico DOCG are separate denominations.

Chianti Classico occupies the historic heartland between Florence and Siena. It includes all or part of the communes of Castellina in Chianti, Gaiole in Chianti, Greve in Chianti, Radda in Chianti, Barberino Tavarnelle, Castelnuovo Berardenga, Poggibonsi, and San Casciano in Val di Pesa. The larger Chianti DOCG surrounds and extends beyond this central district, reaching across a broad portion of Tuscany through several named subzones. Chianti Classico is generally more geographically concentrated and governed by stricter production and aging standards

Soil

Chianti Classico is a mosaic rather than a single terroir. Its hills are built from alternating geological formations, and Sangiovese responds strongly to those changes. **Two terms recur constantly in discussions of the region: alberese and galestro.** **Alberese** generally refers to hard, pale calcareous marl and limestone-derived material; **Galestro** is a friable schistous or clay-shale formation that breaks into thin fragments. Sandstone, clay, marl, sand and pebbly deposits add further variation.

The practical effect is drainage and restraint. Many of the best vineyards are relatively poor in organic matter, forcing vines to work through fractured stone for water and nutrients. Low fertility can reduce vigor and yields while improving concentration. **Limestone-rich sites often contribute a sensation of firmness, precision and mineral tension; clay can add body and water-holding capacity; sandstone and more skeletal soils can favor perfume and finesse.** These are tendencies rather than rigid formulas, but they help explain why neighboring slopes can produce dramatically different Sangiovese.

Altitude and exposure

Elevation is one of Chianti Classico's defining tools.

Higher vineyards generally ripen later and retain more acidity, while lower and warmer sites can produce broader fruit and earlier accessibility. South and southwest exposures receive greater solar energy, but forest cover, slope angle and local wind corridors complicate the picture. The region's frequent day-night temperature swings help preserve aromatic compounds and acidity while allowing slow phenolic development.

Climate

The climate is broadly **Mediterranean** with continental influences from the interior and the Apennines. Summers are warm and generally dry, but Chianti is cooler than coastal Tuscany. Spring rain supports early growth; summer heat drives ripening; and September weather can determine whether Sangiovese achieves the ideal balance between sugar, tannin and acidity. Climate change has made site selection, canopy management, harvest timing and water-retentive soils increasingly important.



"With rare exceptions, Sangiovese should be grateful to Cabernet because it softens, balances, and exalts the Tuscan variety."

- Giacomo Tachis

Sangiovese

/Sanguis Jovis/ - noun "Blood of Jove".

Highly mutation-prone with numerous clonal variants (such as Sangiovese in Chianti and Brunello/Sangiovese Grosso in Montalcino). Late-ripening, thin-skinned, highly sensitive to terroir and yield levels.



The Grapes of Chianti

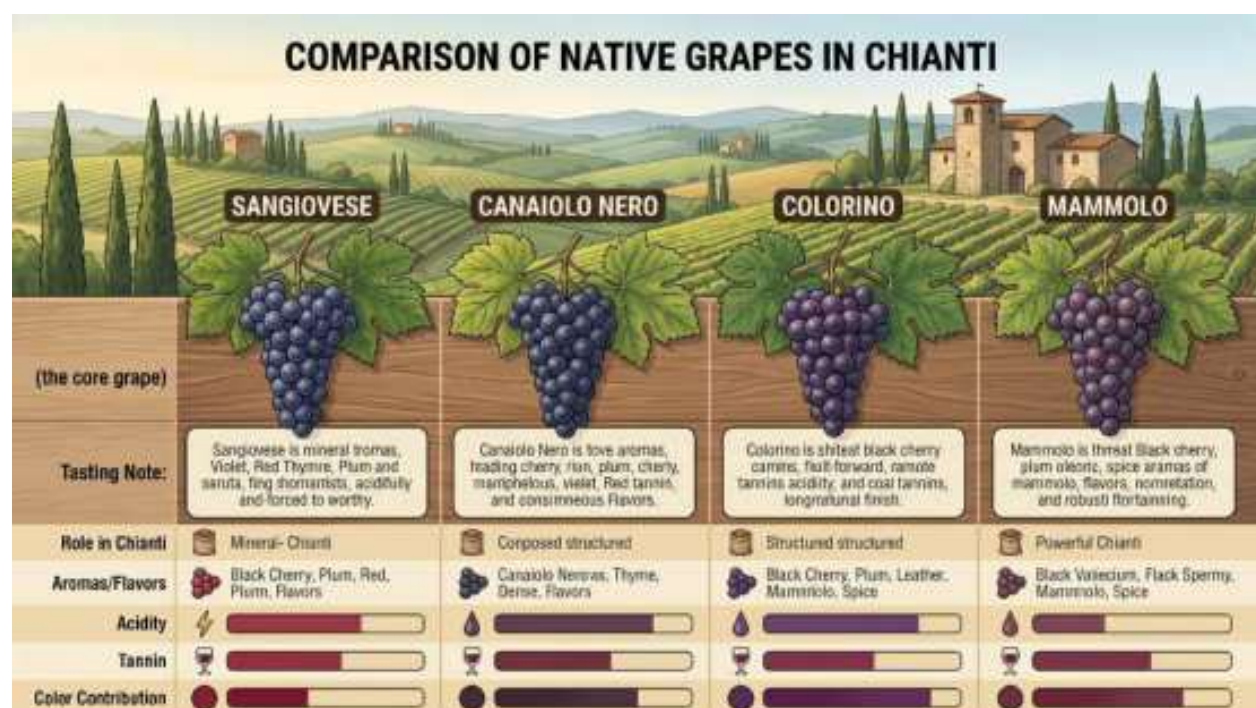
“Like Sangiovese, the grape that gives out the blood-red wine, it is the suffering soul that breathes the sweetest melodies.”

**— Mary Abigail Dodge
(1833–1896) 19th-century Author**

Sangiovese is Chianti's beating heart —

Italy's most planted grape and Tuscany's defining variety. Late-ripening, thin-skinned, high in acid and tannin, it is famously site-sensitive, translating soil and altitude with the fidelity of Pinot Noir. In and around Castellare's vineyards it is honored under its old local name Sangiovese, a historic Chianti clone that the estate has made its calling card. Sangiovese must comprise at least 80 percent of any Chianti Classico, and many of the finest modern bottlings are 100 percent varietal.

The traditional supporting cast consists of native varieties: **Canaiolo Nero**, which softens Sangiovese's edges; **Colorino**, prized for deep color; **Ciliegiolo**, **Mammolo**, **Pugnitello**, **Foglia Tonda**, and **Malvasia Nera**, the fragrant dark Malvasia that gives Castellare's Sodi di San Niccolò its haunting perfume. White grapes — Trebbiano Toscano and Malvasia Bianca — were once mandatory in the blend, a legacy of the nineteenth century, but have been banned from Chianti Classico since 2006. **Sangiovese is the protagonist. In Chianti it often shows sour cherry, red cherry, cranberry, red plum, violet, dried herbs, tea leaf and earthy or ferrous nuances.** Its naturally high acidity and substantial tannin make it exceptionally food-friendly and age-worthy. Canaiolo can soften texture and add perfume; Colorino contributes color and structure. International varieties, above all Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot (with some Syrah), entered the region's vineyards in the 1970s and 1980s as the raw material of the Super Tuscan, and remain permitted in Chianti Classico annata and Riserva up to 20 percent of the blend — though the appellation's direction of travel is decisively back toward Sangiovese and its native companions.



POWER OF SANGIOVESE



"The real challenge for me is to give every single vintage the real expression of the grape varietal without forgetting the terroir where the grape varietal was born. That is my real mission—to try to bring into the bottle the highest expression of the grapes with the flavor of the soil."

- Allesando Cellai

Sangiovese is a late-budding, relatively late-ripening grape with naturally high acidity and potentially substantial tannin. It is sensitive to site and can be vigorous if planted in fertile soil or cropped excessively. ***In favorable locations, it produces wines with aromas of sour cherry, red plum, violet, dried herbs, tea, earth, and spice.*** With age, these can develop notes of ***leather, tobacco, game, balsamic herbs, and forest floor.***

The grape is not uniform. Tuscany contains numerous clonal selections and local biotypes, including the Sangiovese Grosso associated with Montalcino. Improvements in massal selection, clonal research, vineyard density, canopy management, and lower yields have greatly raised quality since the late twentieth century.

White grapes such as Trebbiano Toscano and Malvasia Bianca were historically included in Chianti, but their obligatory use contributed to criticism of older regulations. They are no longer permitted in Chianti Classico, allowing producers to make 100% Sangiovese or to blend it only with approved red grapes.

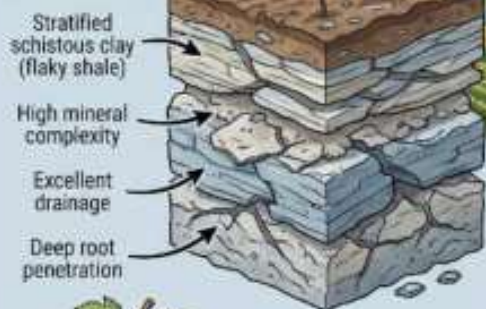
"You cannot understand Italian wine without understanding Sangiovese. It is the backbone of Chianti Classico, the muscle of Brunello di Montalcino, and the heart of Tuscan wine culture."

- Kerin O'Keefe

TRADITIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BLENDING GRAPES IN TUSCAN WINES		
Variety	Origin & Role	Typical Contribution
1. CANAILOLO NERO	Traditional Tuscan partner Chianti 1716	Softness, perfume, and red fruit
2. COLORINO	Traditional Tuscan variety Etruscan Heritage	Deep color, tannin, and structure
3. CILIEGIOLO	Indigenous central Italian variety	Cherry fruit and suppleness
4. CABERNET SAUVIGNON	Bordeaux variety Bordeaux Châteaux	Cassis, tannin, structure, and longevity
5. CABERNET FRANC	Bordeaux variety Bordeaux Châteaux	Floral, herbal, and graphite notes
6. MERLOT	Bordeaux variety Bordeaux Châteaux	Plum fruit, body, and softer texture
7. SYRAH	French variety Rhône Valley slope	Dark fruit, pepper, color, and richness

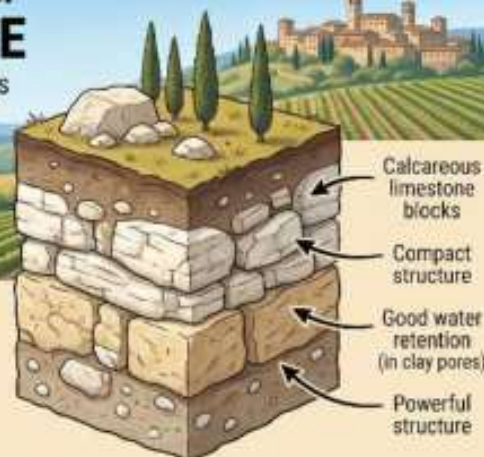
COMPARING TUSCAN SOIL TYPES: GALESTRO vs. ALBERESE

Key Components, Characteristics & Wine Profiles



COMPARING TUSCAN SOIL TYPES: GALESTRO vs. ALBERESE

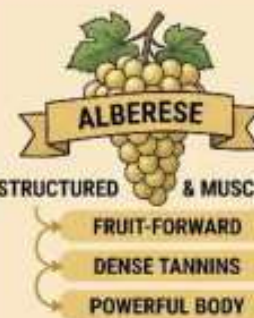
Key Components, Characteristics & Wine Profiles



Representative winery



Primary Aromas:
Violet, Red Cherry, Dried Thyme
Structural Notes:
Firm but fine tannins, long mineral finish



Winery



Primary Aromas:
Black Cherry, Plum, Leather, Spice
Structural Notes:
Grippy tannins, rich concentration, robust finish



The Soil Of Chianti

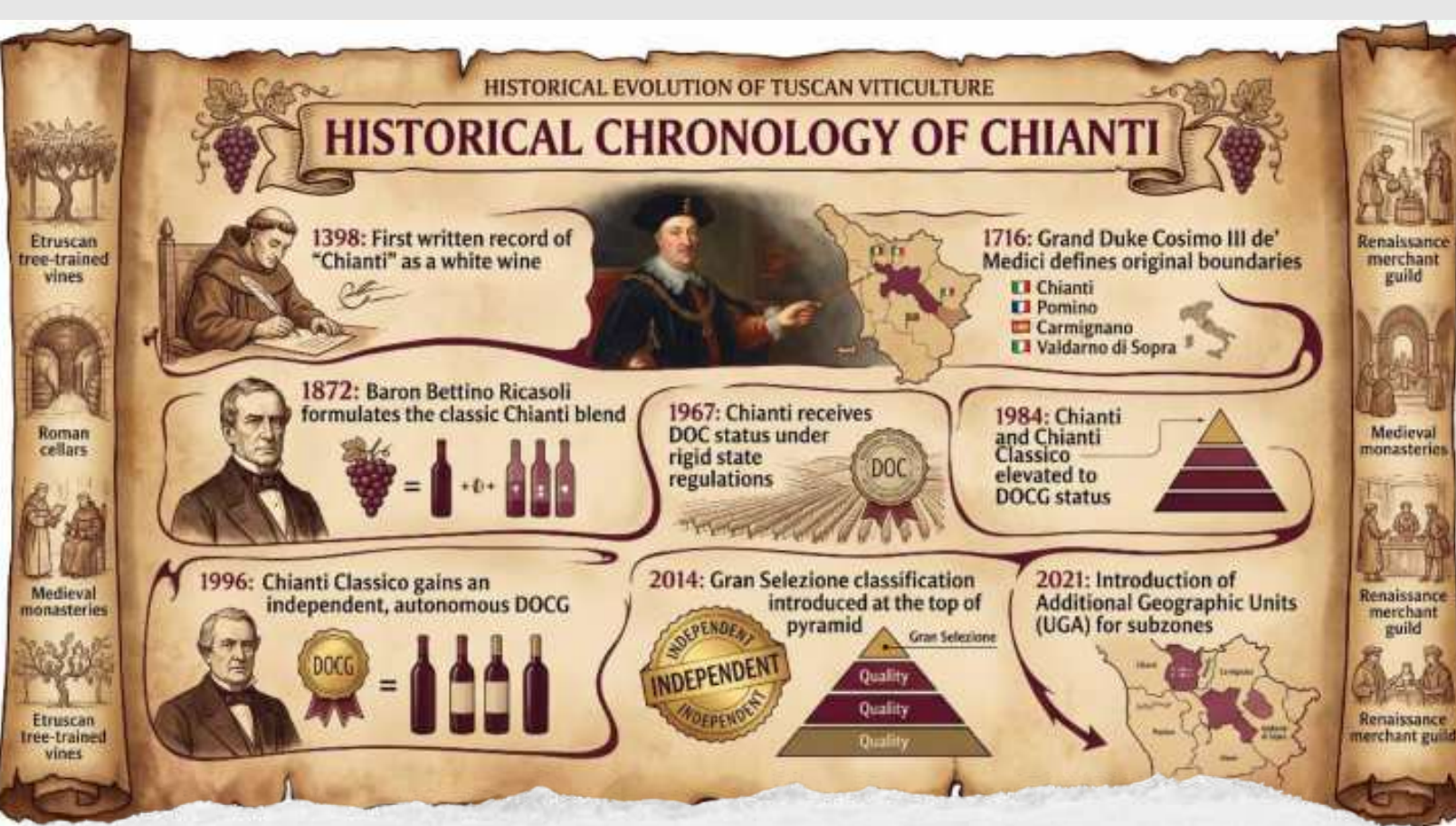
Two soil families are especially associated with Chianti Classico:

- Galestro is a friable, schistous clay-marl that fractures readily. It generally provides good drainage and is often associated with aromatic, refined wines of marked acidity.
- Alberese is a hard, pale limestone-rich marl. Wines from these soils are often described as structured, mineral, and capable of long aging.
- Clay-rich soils can retain more water and encourage broader, more powerful wines, especially where summers are dry.
- Sandstone and sandy deposits tend to drain quickly and may contribute fragrance and finesse, although results depend on elevation, exposure, vine age, and farming.



Galestro is a flaky shale-clay soil found at higher elevations that imparts high natural acidity, delicate floral aromatics, and fine, linear tannins to Sangiovese. In contrast, Alberese is a compact, calcareous limestone found in warmer, lower zones that produces muscular, deeply concentrated wines with firm structure, dark fruit, and pronounced minerality.

Galestro soil is critical in Chianti Classico because its flaky schist structure enables deep root penetration and superior drainage while supplying essential trace minerals to the vines. This unique geology directly shapes the region's finest Sangiovese, imparting bright acidity, fragrant floral aromatics, fine-grained tannins, and exceptional long-term ageability.



"The Gallo Nero is not merely a brand on a bottle; it is a seal of territory, history, and uncompromising quality."



The history of Tuscan wine-making spans nearly three millennia, originating with the ancient Etruscans. By the 8th century BCE, Etruscan viticultural practices were well established across the undulating hills of central Italy. They utilized indigenous vines trained directly onto living trees—a method known as *alberata*. Following the decline of the Etruscan civilization, the Romans codified local viticulture, introducing advanced pruning techniques, cellaring practices, and barrel storage.

With the fall of the Western Roman Empire, wine production survived largely through monastic orders. Benedictine and Franciscan Tuscan monks preserved vineyards for sacramental use and cultivated refined agricultural techniques. The term Chianti appears in historical documentation as early as 1398, originally referencing a light white wine. During the Renaissance, local merchant guilds—most ***notably the Lega del Chianti (formed by the townships of Castellina, Gaiole, and Radda)***—formalized agricultural protections. In 1716, **Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici** issued an edict delimiting the Chianti production zone — one of the first legal appellations of origin in the history of wine, predating the French system by more than two centuries.





In 1872, **Baron Bettino Ricasoli, the 'Iron Baron'** and later prime minister of Italy, codified from decades of experiments at his **Castello di Brolio** the classic Chianti formula: predominantly Sangiovese, seasoned with Canaiolo and a measure of Malvasia for wines meant to be drunk young. The twentieth century brought both consecration and crisis. In 1932 a ministerial decree defined the historic zone as 'Chianti Classico,' distinguishing it from the vast surrounding territories entitled to use the name Chianti. Chianti Classico later achieved autonomous DOCG status in 1996, legally separating it from the broader Chianti denomination. ***This distinction is essential: Chianti Classico is not simply a premium tier of Chianti; it is a separate denomination with its own production zone and rules.***



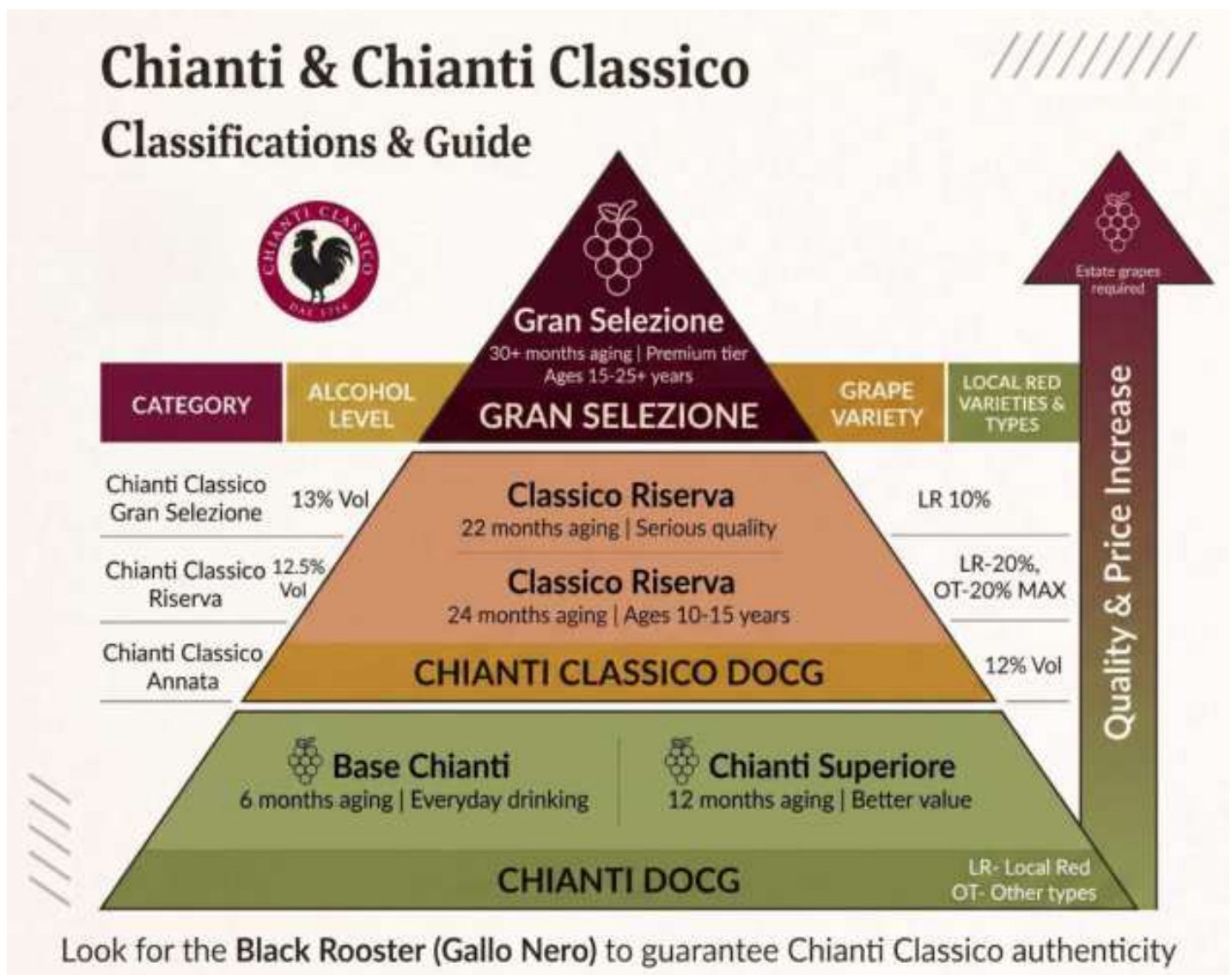
Development of the Chianti Gallo Nero symbol overtime.

DOC status arrived in 1967 and DOCG — Italy's highest legal classification — in 1984; in 1996 Chianti Classico was finally recognized as an autonomous DOCG, fully separate from the broader Chianti appellation. But the mid-century rules had entrenched a fatal flaw: they required white grapes in the blend and tolerated enormous yields. The straw-wrapped fiasco of the 1960s and 1970s became a symbol of cheap, thin, oxidized wine, and Chianti's reputation sank even as its history deepened. It was this gap — between what the land could do and what the law required — that produced the Super Tuscan rebellion.

DOCG Rules & Regulations

"In 1716, Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici recognized that this specific, elevated patch of Tuscany was producing wines unlike anywhere else in the world. Chianti Classico isn't an invention of modern marketing—it is one of the oldest legally defined wine regions on Earth."

— Bill Nester





chianti versus chianti classico

Two recent reforms mark Chianti Classico's decisive turn toward terroir. First, in 2021 the Consorzio approved eleven Unità Geografiche Aggiuntive (UGAs) — additional geographical units, in effect village appellations: San Casciano, Montefioralle, Greve, Lamole, Panzano, San Donato in Poggio, Radda, Gaiole, Castellina, Vagliagli, and Castelnuovo Berardenga. Legally effective from 2023 and initially reserved to Gran Selezione labels, they allow a wine to declare its village the way a Burgundy declares its commune. Second, beginning with the 2027 vintage, Gran Selezione must contain at least 90 percent Sangiovese, with the balance drawn exclusively from native varieties such as Canaiolo, Colorino, Ciliegio, Mammolo, Pugnitello, Malvasia Nera, Foglia Tonda, and Sanforte — international grapes will be excluded from the category entirely. The message is unmistakable: the future of the appellation's summit is Sangiovese and place, the very principles the traditionalists never abandoned.

CHIANTI VS. CHIANTI CLASSICO

REQUIREMENT	CHIANTI DOCG	CHIANTI CLASSICO DOCG
 PRODUCTION ZONE 	Larger Tuscan region spanning 7 sub-zones	Specific historical 'Heartland' area (Gaiole, Castellina, Radda, etc.) between Florence & Siena, identified by Gallo Nero
 SANGIOVESE %	Min. 70% (80% for some sub-zones)	Min. 80% (Often 100%, white grapes forbidden since 2006)
 ALLOWED GRAPES	Max 15% Cab Sauvignon/Franc; Max 30% others (Merlot, Syrah, etc.)	Max 20% other red varieties (Merlot, Cab Sauvignon, Colorino)
 AGING (GENERAL)	Released Oct 1 st following harvest (Riserva: 2 yrs total, 3 mos in bottle)	Released Oct 1 st following harvest (Riserva: 24 mos, 3 mos bottle, Gran Selezione: 30 mos, 3 mos bottle)
 STYLE & CHARACTER	Fruit-forward, brighter acidity, more varied quality & styles, earlier consumption	Complex, structured, robust, elegant, age-worthy, prominent tannins, cherry, earth notes
 QUALITY CLASSIFICATION	Chianti DOCG	Chianti Classico DOCG (Classico, Riserva, Gran Selezione)



Italy's appellation hierarchy links a wine's name to its origin, authorized varieties, yields, production methods, aging, chemical composition, and sensory profile. DOCG, or Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita, is the country's highest traditional appellation category. ***The designation does not guarantee that every bottle is superior to every IGT wine, but it does certify adherence to a detailed production code and governmental controls.*** Chianti received DOC status during the 1960s and was elevated to DOCG in 1984. Chianti Classico subsequently became an autonomous DOCG rather than merely a subzone of Chianti. ***Its familiar black-rooster mark identifies the historic district.***

Chianti Classico DOCG today produces red wine only, in a three-tier pyramid. The base tier, **annata**, requires a minimum of 80 percent Sangiovese (the remainder from approved red varieties, native or international), minimum 12 percent alcohol, and about one year of aging before release. **Riserva** demands 24 months of aging, including three in bottle, and 12.5 percent alcohol.

At the summit stands **Gran Selezione**, created in 2014 as the first new top tier in any Italian DOCG: estate-grown fruit only, a minimum of 30 months' aging including three in bottle, 13 percent alcohol, and approval by an official tasting panel. Gran Selezione accounts for only about five to six percent of production but roughly 13 percent of the denomination's value. The exact rules differ among Chianti's subzones and can be amended, so producers and students should consult the current official production codes for legal detail. The central principles, however, are clear: Chianti DOCG requires a Sangiovese majority, while Chianti Classico requires at least 80% Sangiovese and permits the grape to constitute the entire wine. Within Chianti Classico, Annata represents the basic category, Riserva requires longer maturation, and Gran Selezione sits at the top of the official hierarchy. Gran Selezione must be made from estate-grown fruit and undergo longer aging and stricter approval. DOCG status is therefore both protective and restrictive. It secures the geographical name and establishes a shared standard, but it can also constrain experimentation. ***That tension lies at the heart of the Super Tuscan story.***



Tasting Profile: What Chianti Classico Tastes Like

Great Chianti Classico is a wine of transparency rather than mass. In the glass it shows a translucent ruby that garnets with age. **The nose leads with sour red cherry, ripe morello and plum, violets and dried rose**, then the region's signature savory chorus: **sun-dried tomato and balsamic herbs, sweet tobacco, leather, iron** and terracotta dust, a curl of smoke or espresso in oak-aged examples. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, propelled by bright, **mouthwatering acidity** and firm, fine-grained, slightly dusty tannins that demand food and reward patience.

Annata bottlings emphasize crunchy fruit and drinkability; Riserva adds depth, spice, and structure; Gran Selezione at its best delivers layered complexity — black cherry, dried fig, balsamic notes, forest floor — with a long mineral finish and two decades or more of graceful evolution. High-altitude wines (Lamole, Radda, Vagliagli) tend toward perfume, tension, and lift; warmer, lower sites give darker fruit, flesh, and power.



The Perfect Match

BISTECCA ALLA
FIORENTINA

PORCINI

PEPOSO

PAPPARDELLE CON
RAGÙ DI VITELLO

RIBOLLITA

AGED PECORINO TOSCANO

AT THE TABLE: PAIRING CHIANTI

Chianti Classico's acidity and savory tannin make it one of the world's great food wines, engineered by centuries of co-evolution with Tuscan cooking. The classic matches are bistecca alla fiorentina — the vast, rare rib-eye steaks grilled over coals — veal ragù with pappardelle, peposo (peppery slow-braised beef), roast lamb arista, grilled sausages, and porcini in every form.

The wine's acid slices through tomato-based sauces that flatten softer reds, making it the natural companion to pasta al pomodoro, pizza margherita, and eggplant parmigiana.

PAIRING FOOD AND DRINKS FOR BALANCE AND CONTRAST

Aged pecorino toscano, finocchiona salami, and prosciutto flatter younger annata wines, while Riserva and Gran Selezione have the stature for braised game, roast duck, wild mushroom risotto, and aged cheeses. Even Tuscany's rustic bean-and-bread soups, like ribollita, find in Chianti a rustic echo of themselves.

WINE PAIRING GUIDE: CASTELLARE CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA

CLASSIC TUSCAN MATCHES

(Broadly Applicable to Chianti Classico)



BISTECCA ALLA FIORENTINA
(Rare rib-eye steaks grilled over coals)



VEAL RAGÙ WITH PAPPARDELLE



PEPOSO
(Peppery slow-braised beef)



ROAST LAMB ARISTA



GRILLED SAUSAGES



PORCINI IN EVERY FORM

Tomato-based sauces:
Pasta al pomodoro
Pizza Margherita
Eggplant Parmigiana

Acid slices through tomato-based sauces.



CHIANTI CLASSICO'S ACIDITY & SAVORY TANNIN
make it one of the world's great food wines, engineered by centuries of co-evolution with Tuscan cooking.

PERFECT FOR CASTELLARE CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA

(Deeper Structure for Richer Dishes)



BRAISED GAME
(e.g., Venison Stew)



ROAST DUCK
(e.g., with herbs and oranges)



WILD MUSHROOM RISOTTO



AGED CHEESES
(e.g., Parmigiano Reggiano, Aged Pecorino)

FLATTER YOUNGER ANNATA WINES
Aged Pecorino Toscano
Finocchiona Salami
Prosciutto

EVEN TUSCANY'S RUSTIC BEAN-AND-BREAD SOUPS
(like Ribollita) find a rustic echo in Chianti.

CHIANTI & CENTRAL TUSCANY WINE VINTAGES

1997: Elegant, complex, red berries, fine structure
1999: Robust, powerful, dark fruit, age-worthy
2001: Balanced, velvety, cherry, spice, tobacco
2004: Fresh, vibrant, harmonious, red fruit, smooth
2006: Structured, intense, blackberry, firm tannins
2010: Exceptional, deep color, ripe plum, sophisticated
2010: Exceptional, deep color, ripe plum, sophisticated
2013: Finesse, elegant acidity, black cherry, leather
2013: Finesse, elegant acidity, black cherry, leather
2015: Opulent, concentrated, dark fruit, long finish
2016: Outstanding, complex, harmony, vibrant, legendary
2016: Expressive, fresh, floral notes, youthful, promising
2019: Expressive, fresh, floral notes, youthful, promising
2021: Aromatic, bright, ripe tannins, red fruits, dynamic

Chianti Classico's vintage record over the past three decades is the story of a region hitting its stride. Among older years, 1990, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, and 2007 remain reference points, with 2004 and 2006 especially prized for classical balance. The **modern golden run begins with 2010**, a cool, late year of great finesse and longevity, and 2013, elegant and aromatic. 2015 delivered opulent, generous wines from a warm, even season, and **2016 — widely hailed as one of the finest vintages in the appellation's history** — combined that ripeness with electric acidity and perfect tannic definition. 2019 is another modern benchmark: complex, fresh, and built to age, as Alessandro Cellai himself predicted at harvest. The warm 2020 produced round, charming wines of earlier appeal; **2021, a low-yield year of concentration and vibrancy, has been celebrated at every level of the pyramid** — it was Vallepiciola's Chianti Classico 2021 that entered Wine Spectator's Top 100. Early assessments of 2022 (hot, generous) and 2023 (fresher, more classical) suggest the region's new high-altitude consciousness is serving it well in a warming climate.

The Great Vintages



the art of remembering

THE SUPERTUSCAN REVOLUTION



The revolution began, ironically, outside Chianti. At Tenuta San Guido in Bolgheri, on the Tuscan coast, **Marchese Mario Incisa della Rocchetta** had been growing Cabernet Sauvignon since the 1940s for family consumption; in 1968 his Sassicaia was released commercially, a Bordeaux-styled Tuscan wine of astonishing quality that fit no Italian legal category. Its architect in the cellar was **Giacomo Tachis**, the Piedmontese enologist of the house of Antinori, who would come to be called the **father of the Super Tuscans**.

The Super Tuscan movement emerged from dissatisfaction with appellation rules rather than rejection of Tuscan identity. During the 1960s and 1970s, producers who excluded compulsory white grapes, used Cabernet, matured wine in small French oak barrels, or made a nonconforming varietal wine could lose the Chianti name.

Some of Tuscany's most ambitious wines were consequently sold as *Vino da Tavola*, the lowest legal category. **Inside Chianti, Marchese Piero Antinori and Tachis followed with Tignanello** (first modern vintage 1971), a Sangiovese from the Chianti Classico heartland blended with Cabernet, aged in French barriques, and made without white grapes — a wine that deliberately violated Chianti's rules and therefore had to be sold as humble *vino da tavola*. Solaia, Ornellaia, Masseto, and dozens of others followed.



TIMELESS TRENDS

Birth of SuperTuscans

Vintage 1968

Why Tuscany Never Goes Out of Style



WINE	PRODUCER	FIRST VINTAGE	BLEND OVERVIEW
Sassicaia	Tenuta San Guido	1968	Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc
Tignanello	Marchesi Antinori	1971	Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc
Vigorello	San Felice	1968	100% Sangiovese (original)
Solaia	Marchesi Antinori	1978	Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese
Ornellaia	Tenuta dell'Ornellaia	1985	Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot
I Sodi di San Niccolò	Castellare	1977	87% Sangiovese, 13% Malvasia Nera
Il Falterello	Bosca di Fraschetti	2007	100% Merlot

Sassicaia is usually treated as the movement's pioneer. Cabernet vines were planted at Tenuta San Guido in Bolgheri during the 1940s, initially for private consumption, and the first commercial vintage was 1968. Marchesi Antinori shaped the modern history of Tuscan wine through Tignanello and Solaia while remaining deeply involved in Chianti Classico. Critics and collectors were captivated; the world's press coined the term 'Super Tuscan' for these outlaw wines that outscored and outpriced the appellation that disowned them.

The paradox — Italy's most exciting wines legally ranked below its most ordinary — forced reform. In 1992 the Goria law created the Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT) category, and IGT Toscana became the Super Tuscans' natural home; Sassicaia eventually received its own DOC, Bolgheri Sassicaia, the only single-estate DOC in Italy. Just as importantly, the rebellion remade Chianti itself: white grapes were phased out, yields fell, barrique and modern cellar practice arrived, and Sangiovese was replanted with selected clones on the best sites. ***The Super Tuscans did not destroy Chianti Classico — they saved it.***

Why the movement mattered?



The Super Tuscans changed more than grape blends. They accelerated lower yields, cleaner cellar practices, temperature-controlled fermentation, rigorous selection, French oak use, vineyard research and international benchmarking. They also created a lasting debate about identity. Was Tuscany greatest when it resembled Bordeaux, or when Sangiovese spoke most clearly? The best contemporary answer is that Tuscany learned from international technique without needing to surrender its native voice.

A useful paradox

One of the most compelling Tuscan wines for understanding this paradox is Castellare's I Sodi di S. Niccolò. Classified Toscana IGT, it is not built around Cabernet. Instead, it demonstrates the potential of Sangiovese with Malvasia Nera. The wine therefore uses the freedom associated with the Super Tuscan era to make an argument for indigenous Tuscan identity. At roughly 430 meters on limestone soils, it combines cherry and spice with concentration, acidity and long aging potential.



KEY TUSCAN GRAPE VARIETALS		
VARIETAL	ORIGIN	ROLE IN TUSCANY
Sangiovese	Indigenous	Core varietal of Chianti, Brunello, and noble Tuscan blends.
Canaiolo Nero	Indigenous	Blending component; softens tannins and adds floral lift.
Colorino	Indigenous	Provides deep ruby color, extraction, and structure.
Ciliegiolo	Indigenous	Adds cherry notes, fresh fruitiness, and mid-palate warmth.
Cabernet Sauvignon	Bordeaux	Super Tuscan staple; adds dark fruit, tannin, and structure.
Merlot	Bordeaux	Super Tuscan staple; adds plushness, volume, and velvet balance.
Cabernet Franc	Bordeaux	Super Tuscan staple; adds herbaceous nuance, spice, length.
Syrah	Rhône	Utilized in coastal and southern Tuscan IGF/DOC blends.
Petit Verdot	Bordeaux	Used sparingly for structural depth and color stability.

The Super Tuscan movement emerged from dissatisfaction with appellation rules rather than rejection of Tuscan identity. During the 1960s and 1970s, producers who excluded compulsory white grapes, used Cabernet, matured wine in small French oak barrels, or made a nonconforming varietal wine could lose the Chianti name. Some of Tuscany's most ambitious wines were consequently sold as *Vino da Tavola*, the lowest legal category.

Sassicaia is usually treated as the movement's pioneer. Specifically, it is regarded as the trailblazer of the Super Tuscan movement; Sassicaia began taking root in the 1940s when Cabernet vines were first planted at Tenuta San Guido in Bolgheri. Though initially intended strictly for family consumption, the wine made its commercial debut with the 1968 vintage. Its subsequent global acclaim proved that the gravelly, maritime terroir of the Tuscan coast was perfectly suited for crafting world-class, Cabernet-driven wines.



Tignanello, was then created by Marchese Piero Antinori. Tignanello didn't just break the rules; it rewrote them. Crafted by Marchese Piero Antinori alongside visionary enologist Giacomo Tachis, this trailblazing wine completely revolutionized the Chianti region. Debuting with the 1971 vintage, Tignanello boldly discarded mandatory white grapes, seamlessly blended Sangiovese with Cabernet, and embraced aging in barriques. Soon after, this legendary duo pushed boundaries even further with Solaia, an iconic masterpiece that placed Cabernet squarely at the center of the blend.

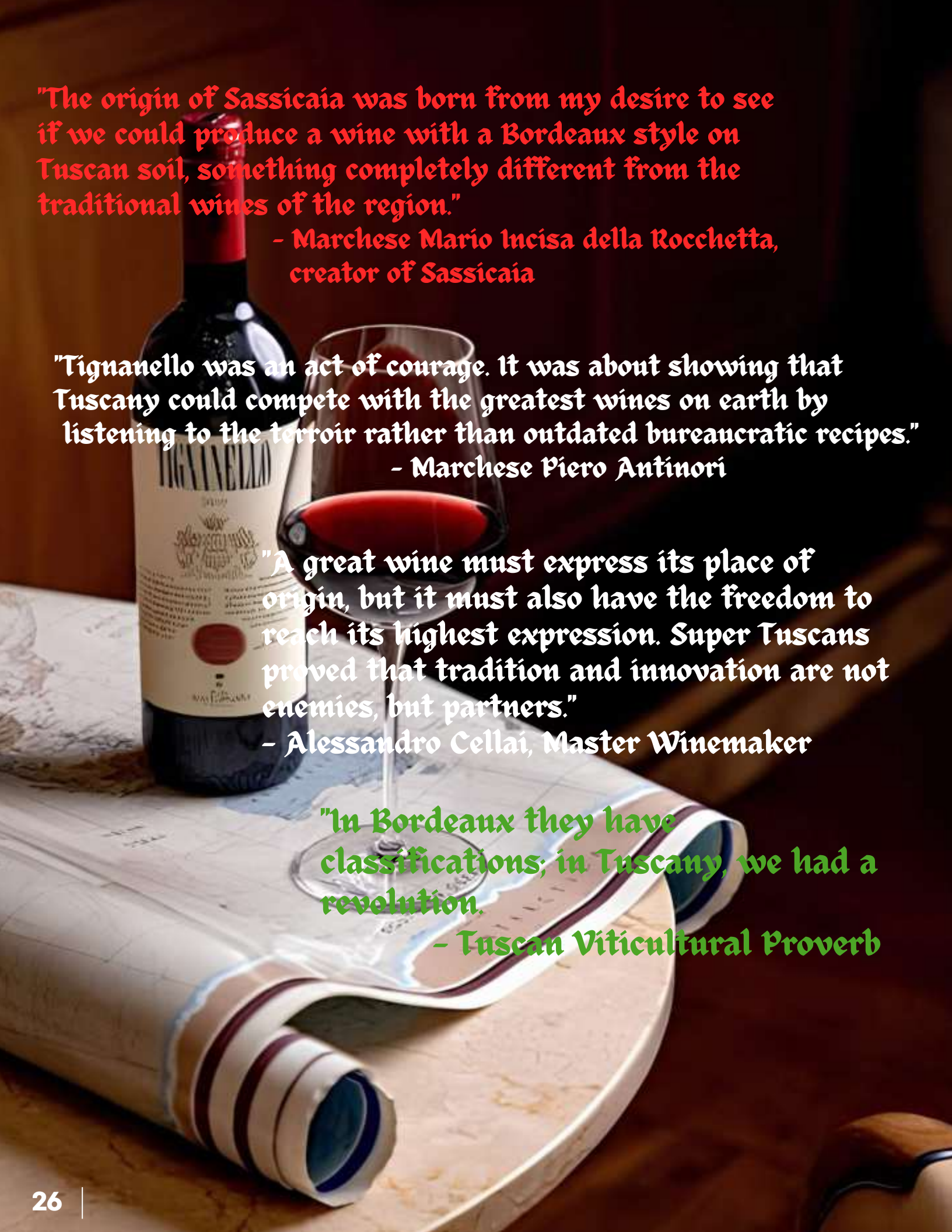


Other landmark wines followed, including Ornellaia, Masseto, Le Macchiole's Paleo, Fontodi's Flaccianello della Pieve, Isole e Olena's Cepparello, and Monteverte's Le Pergole Torte. Not all Super Tuscan wines are Bordeaux blends. Some are 100% Sangiovese wines that historically fell outside appellation rules or whose producers deliberately preferred IGT status. The term has never been an official legal designation; it is a market and critical category covering ambitious Tuscan wines made outside, or beyond, traditional denominational formulas.



"Wine is like a person: it needs character, personality, and soul. In Tuscany, we realized that to achieve greatness, we had to break free from the rules that held quality back."

— Giacomo Tachis, father of modern Italian oenology (creator of Sassicaia and Tignanello)

A bottle of Sassicaia wine stands next to a glass filled with red wine. They are placed on a wooden surface. In the background, a map of Tuscany is visible, showing the region's coastline and internal boundaries. The lighting is warm, highlighting the bottle and glass.

"The origin of Sassicaia was born from my desire to see if we could produce a wine with a Bordeaux style on Tuscan soil, something completely different from the traditional wines of the region."

- Marchese Mario Incisa della Rocchetta, creator of Sassicaia

"Tignanello was an act of courage. It was about showing that Tuscany could compete with the greatest wines on earth by listening to the terroir rather than outdated bureaucratic recipes."

- Marchese Piero Antinori

"A great wine must express its place of origin, but it must also have the freedom to reach its highest expression. Super Tuscans proved that tradition and innovation are not enemies, but partners."

- Alessandro Cellai, Master Winemaker

"In Bordeaux they have classifications; in Tuscany, we had a revolution."

- Tuscan Viticultural Proverb

The Art of Pairing

SUPERTUSCANS

Super Tuscan wines—defined by their opulent fruit concentration, ripe yet firm tannins, and elevated acidity—demand rich, savory fare with ample protein and fat to balance their powerful structure. Bold Bordeaux blends and Merlot-driven cuvées (such as Sassicaia or Baffonero) pair seamlessly with prime cuts of red meat, such as a thick, charred Bistecca alla Fiorentina, dry-aged ribeye, or roasted rack of lamb, where the rendered fat softens the wine's French oak tannins.

For Sangiovese-dominant expressions (like I Sodi di San Niccolò or Tignanello), the natural high acidity and savory herbal undertones make them exceptional partners for traditional Tuscan game dishes, including slow-braised beef stew, roast duck with rosemary, or fresh pappardelle tossed in a rich ragù di veal.

To finish, these structured reds harmonize effortlessly with porcin rissoto and aged, crystallized cheeses like Pecorino Toscano Stagionato or 36-month Parmigiano-Reggiano, which highlight the wine's tertiary notes of leather, graphite, and dark cocoa.



King Winamkers of *Italy*

The legacy of the Super Tuscan movement and modern refined Chianti Classico is tied to key winemakers and historic estates.



Giacomo Tachis and His Successor, Alessandro Cellai

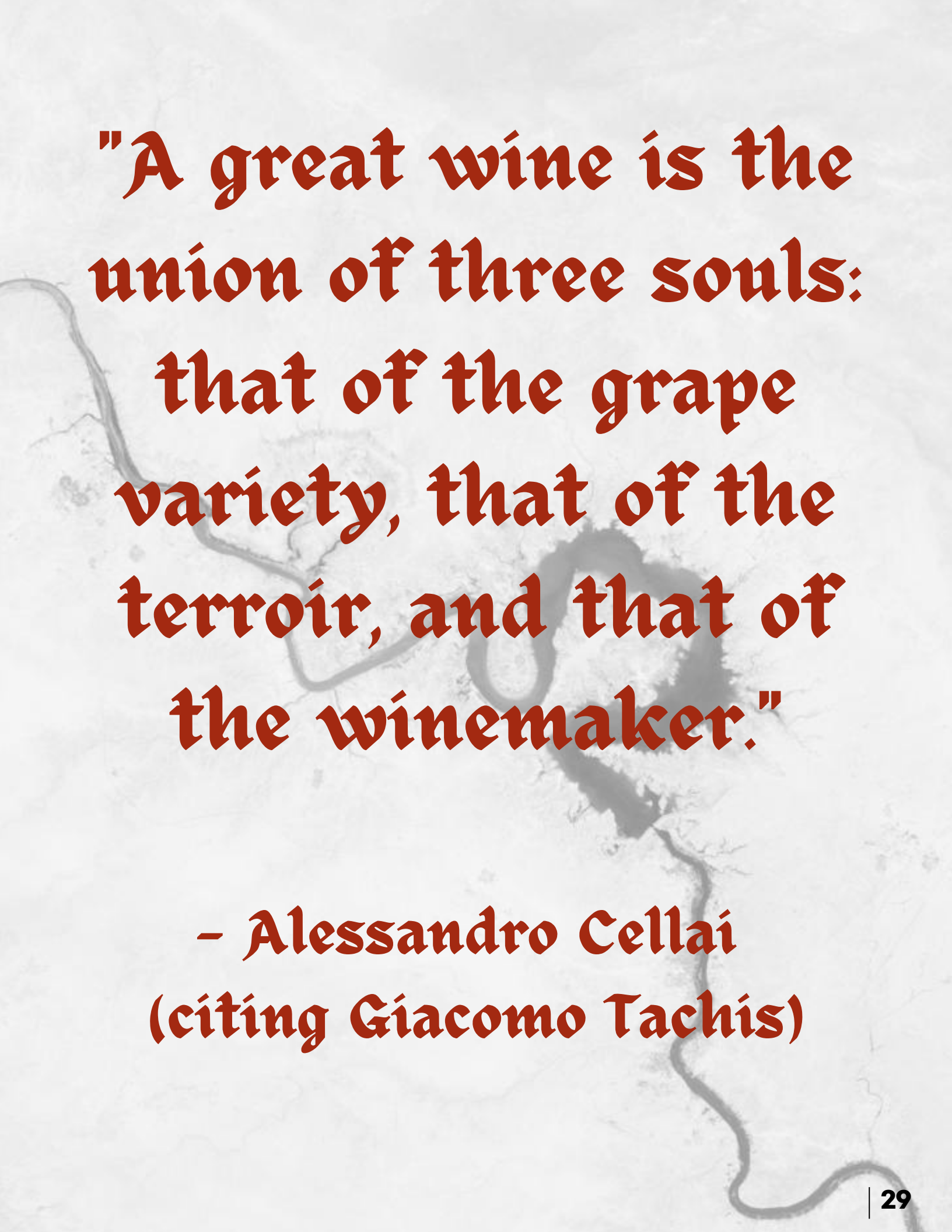
Giacomo Tachis & Alessandro Cellai

Giacomo Tachis (1933–2016) is widely recognized as the father of modern Italian wine renaissance. He introduced temperature-controlled fermentation, malolactic conversion, French barrique maturation, and precise blending of Sangiovese with Cabernet and Merlot.

Alessandro Cellai represents Tachis's direct lineage and enological philosophy.

Cellai grew up in Castellina in Chianti and studied enology in Siena and chemistry in Florence. Under the mentorship of Tachis, Cellai developed a winemaking philosophy based on balance, elegance, and respect for terroir.





**"A great wine is the
union of three souls:
that of the grape
variety, that of the
terroir, and that of
the winemaker."**

**– Alessandro Cellai
(citing Giacomo Tachis)**

Allesandro Cellai: King Winemaker of Tuscany

If the Super Tuscan era was fathered by Giacomo Tachis, its inheritance in Chianti Classico runs through winemakers like Alessandro Cellai, a Tuscan enologist whose career links the traditionalist and modernist poles of the region. Cellai directs winemaking and management across premier Tuscan estates for decades—most notably at Castellare di Castellina and Rocca di Frassinello—before stepping into the General Manager and Winemaker role at Vallepicciola. As an ultimate testament to his talent, Cellai has now received the prestigious 2027 Winemaker of the Year award from Daniele Cernilli's DoctorWine.





HISTORY & PHILOSOPHY

Trained first at the enological school in Siena and then in chemistry at university in Pisa — where he came into the orbit of Tachis, who became his mentor — Cellai served his apprenticeship at Rocca delle Macie in Castellina in Chianti before being named, in 1996, winemaker and general manager of Castellare di Castellina. He would remain the guiding technical hand of Paolo Panerai's Domini Castellare di Castellina (DCC) group for nearly a quarter century, ultimately serving as managing director, executive vice president, and head winemaker across all four DCC estates: Castellare in Chianti Classico, Rocca di Frassinello in the Maremma, and Feudi del Pisciotto and Gurra di Mare in Sicily.

Cellai's philosophy is deceptively simple: a winemaker's signature is made of small, decisive interventions, and some 70 percent of the work is finished in the vineyard before the wine ever exists — above all in the judgment of when to pick. He has also proven unusually bilingual in style, practicing strict native-grape traditionalism at Castellare while directing a resolutely modern, Bordeaux-inflected project at Rocca di Frassinello. In 2019–2020 he stepped down from DCC administrative positions (remaining as winemaker) after almost thirty years to take on a new challenge as **winemaker and general manager of Vallepicciola**, the Bolfo family's ambitious young estate near Siena, where he leads a team he calls a 'dream team' alongside agronomist Francesco Beni and cellar master Erasmo Mazzone. Within four years, **Vallepicciola's Chianti Classico 2021 had placed 37th in Wine Spectator's Top 100** — a landmark for the estate and a vindication of Cellai's belief that territory, grape, and the winemaker's style should all be legible in the glass. To cap off this incredible rise, Cellai was also awarded the prestigious 2027 Winemaker of the Year title by Daniele Cernilli of DoctorWine.



CASTELLARE
Tradition & Terroir
(Sangiovese focus)

ROCCA DI FRASSINELLO
Innovation
(Maremma Toscana)

GRANITI CLASSICO
COFESIO
GALLO NERO

VALLEPICCOLA
Elegance & Precision

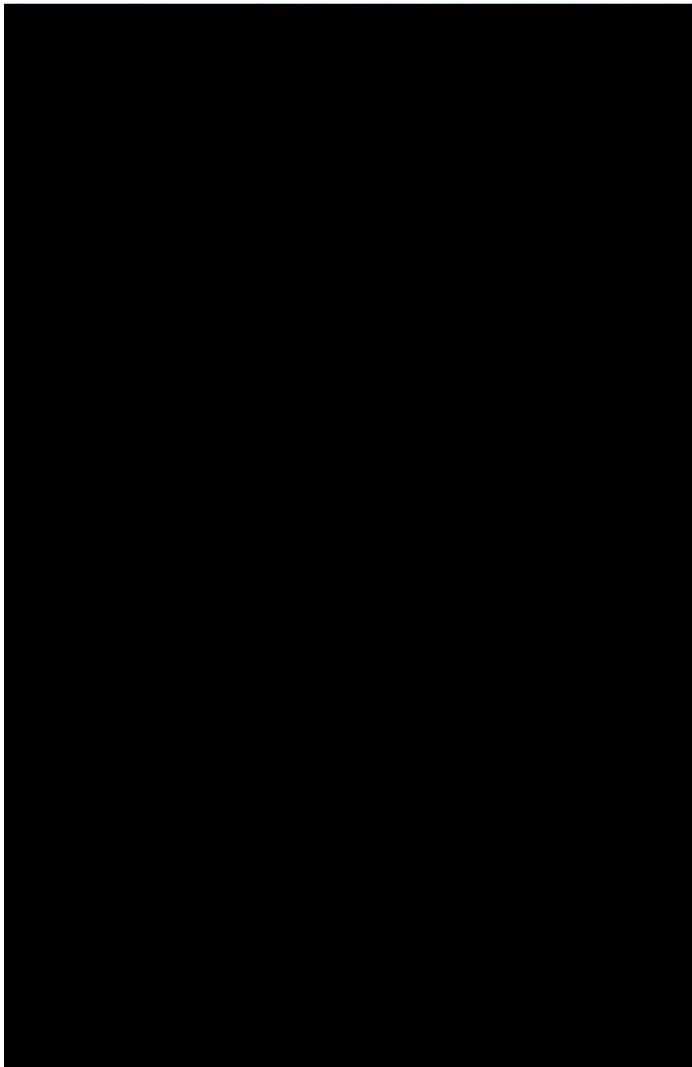
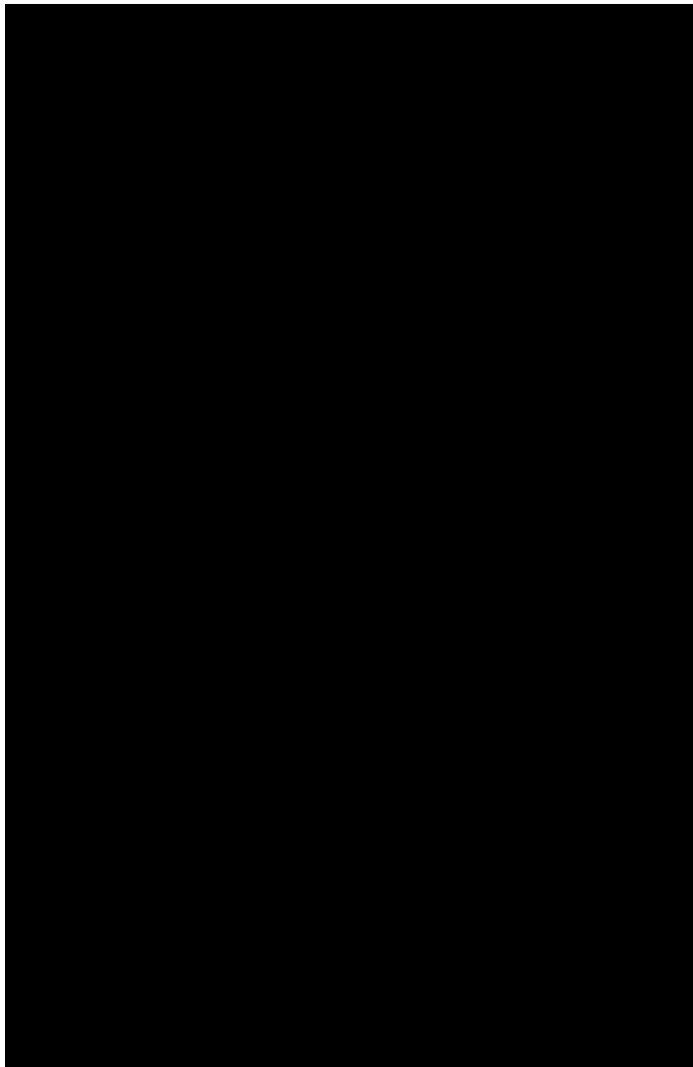
THREE ESTATES, ONE THREAD

ALLESANDRO CELLAI-WINEMAKER



"A winemaker's true mission is not to invent a style in the cellar, but to translate the authentic voice of the soil and the purity of the grape directly into the bottle."

-Alessandro Cellai



CASTELLARE di CASTELLINA

Alessandro Cellai, one of contemporary Tuscany's prominent winemakers and the long-serving enological figure associated with Castellare di Castellina, Rocca di Frassinello and now Vallepica in Tuscany. His career is especially relevant because it links three different Tuscan landscapes: the high, historic Sangiovese country of Chianti Classico and the warmer coastal environment of Maremma. Castellare was founded in the late 1970s by Paolo Panerai, the Milanese publisher of Italy's leading financial press. Castellare di Castellina comprises roughly 33 hectares of vineyard in a natural amphitheater near Castellina in Chianti, farmed without chemical herbicides and **famous for the endangered songbirds that grace each vintage's label — a symbol of the estate's environmental commitments.**

Castellare di Castellina lies in the commune of Castellina in Chianti, within the Chianti Classico zone. The estate became an important figure in the qualitative renaissance that restored confidence in the denomination during the late twentieth century. ***Its philosophy has emphasized Sangiovese and traditional complementary grapes*** rather than relying heavily on international varieties in its Chianti Classico. The estate is recognized for labels featuring images of birds, a visual statement connected to environmental awareness and the preservation of species. In the vineyard, low yields and careful selection support wines that emphasize red fruit, acidity, and Tuscan savoriness.

CASTELLARE'S MAGIC IS IN THE SOIL

As mentioned Castellare is in **Tuscany's Chianti Classico area**, near **Castellina in Chianti**, where the landscape is defined by rolling hills, vineyards on slopes, and long sightlines across the valleys. The estate's **specific soil profile** plays a major role in the character of its wines: it's largely **limestone-rich with substantial clay and marl**, often interspersed with **stony/gravelly layers**. This combination helps vines maintain a healthy balance—**excellent drainage** from the rocky portions, paired with **water retention** from the clay/marl—so the vines can endure seasonal shifts while still ripening grapes with strong structure and freshness. The **altitude and exposure** of the vineyards (many planted on hillside sites) also contribute to cooler nights and gradual ripening, which is especially important for maintaining acidity and aromatic intensity in Sangiovese-based wines.

What makes Castellare especially compelling versus many neighboring estates is the way it leverages its micro-territories: vineyards are not treated as

uniform blocks, but instead managed with attention to parcel variation, resulting in wines that more clearly reflect differences in elevation, slope, and soil depth. The winery is also known for a refined, high-quality winemaking approach that consistently emphasizes balance—polished tannins, lifted aromatics, and aging potential—which helps its releases stand out in a region where many wines can sometimes feel more straightforward or less precise. **With Sangiovese, that balance supports fresh acidity and structured tannins—so the Riserva doesn't just feel powerful, but also refined and age-worthy.** Castellare wines—including the Chianti Classico Riserva and I Sodi—are widely recognized by major international critics and wine guides, typically scoring well in tastings and earning medals and high ratings from publications such as Gambero Rosso, Wine Advocate (Robert Parker/Antonio Galloni), and other respected wine reviewers.

I SODI

FLAGSHIP WINE OF THE CASTELLARE FAMILY

Castellare's Flagship, **I Sodi di San Niccolò** (roughly **85 percent Sangiovese and 15 percent Malvasia Nera**), is that rarest thing – a Super Tuscan built entirely from native grapes, named for the steep 'sodi' plots workable only by hand. First produced in the late 1970s, **it became the first Italian wine to enter Wine Spectator's Top 10 and has never changed its blend**. Alongside it stand the estate's Chianti Classico annata – itself a Wine Spectator Top 20 wine in the 2017 vintage – and the Riserva Il Poggiale. Under Cellai's long tenure, Castellare proved that fidelity to Sangiovese and Malvasia Nera could compete with any Cabernet in Tuscany.

The name is a compound of two local references: "I Sodi" is the term for ground that's hard to work (hence the wine must be hand-picked), and San Niccolò is a disused church on the property. The vineyard sits on the Castellare hillside outside Castellina, in the western sector of Chianti Classico, on the ridge that separates the Elsa and Pesa valleys. Published altitude figures vary by vintage sheet: 350–400 m is the commonly cited range, though the 2019 tech sheet gives 430 m. Exposure is broadly south/south-west, giving full ripening for Sangiovese at altitudes that preserve acidity and aromatic lift. Soil is the classic Castellina mix of galestro (friable marly schist) and alberese (compact limestone) – poor, stony, well drained, and the reason yields are naturally low.

The estate uses the archaic name "Sangiovese" for its Sangiovese, from selected old-vine clones propagated on the property. The classic recipe is 85–90% Sangiovese and 10–15% Malvasia Nera. Malvasia Nera is a deliberate choice over Canaiolo or international grapes: it deepens colour, adds a floral, slightly aromatic note, and contributes tannic backbone and energy that balances Sangiovese's natural richness.

"I Sodi di San Niccolò represents the soul of Castellare — powerful yet refined, rustic yet sophisticated." — Wine Spectator



Creation of I Sodi



Viticulture and Fermentation

The estate's approach is quasi-organic and long predates certification fashions: synthetic chemical products and hunting are both banned on the property, and the vineyards are surrounded by woodland that functions as a wildlife reserve. Each vintage's label carries a different bird species, chosen from the rarest birds of Chianti threatened by pesticides and hunting, as a symbol of that commitment. Vines are trained mostly in spurred cordon at fairly high density, with green harvesting to keep yields low; harvest is manual, with cluster selection in the vineyard and again on the sorting table. Fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled stainless steel, with a long maceration (roughly three weeks or more) to extract Sangiovese's tannin; malolactic is completed. Ageing is in French oak barriques, half of them new, for 24 to 30 months depending on vintage, followed by a further 12 months in bottle before release. Production is small for a wine of its reputation — roughly 55,000 bottles in 2019.

Organoleptic Profile

The wine appears deep, saturated ruby shading to garnet and purple — darker than most Sangiovese thanks to the Malvasia Nera. The Nose aromatically layered rather than simply fruity. Recurrent descriptors across critics are *black cherry and plum, wild rose and violet, then a savoury-spice register — patchouli, incense, cinders, black tea leaf and cedar — along with tobacco, liquorice, anise and sometimes a balsamic or mentholated edge* in warmer years. The palette explodes with flavor — full-bodied and densely extracted but built on Sangiovese's acid spine; it shows real extraction yet never feels weighed down by that mass. Tannins are firm and fine-grained, often quite assertive on release, softening into a silky, sweet texture with age. The finish is long, with a mineral, crushed-stone quality that reads as the galestro speaking.



In terms of tasting characteristics and awards, i Sodi di San Nicolo often stands out for its consistency, depth, and the way it marries tradition with modern refinement. Judges and wine lovers appreciate its precision—the aromas feel vivid, the palate feels structured but never heavy, and the overall impression is one of quiet excellence. What makes it special is the combination of authentic regional character with a style that remains accessible and food-friendly, while still delivering enough complexity to reward slower tasting and pairing experiments.



VALLEPICCOLA

A MODERN CHIANTI

On the opposite, southeastern edge of the appellation, in the Val di Picciola near the hamlet of Pievasciata in Castelnuovo Berardenga – within the high Vagliagli UGA, about 15 kilometers from Siena – lies Vallepiciola, one of Chianti Classico's most closely watched young estates. The Bolfo family, led by steel industrialist Bruno Bolfo, began restoring a seventeenth-century convent and its lands in the late 1990s; the estate now spans some 265 hectares, with around 107–110 under vine in nine distinct parcels between roughly 380 and 450 meters of altitude, on complex soils of limestone, galestro, clay, and alberese ideal for perfumed, high-tension Sangiovese.

A gravity-flow winery of striking organic architecture opened in 2016, part of an investment of some 50 million euros. After early years guided by consulting enologist Riccardo Cotarella, Alessandro Cellai assumed direction in 2020, sharpening the estate's focus on parcel-by-parcel vinification, sustainability, and Sangiovese purity – from the fragrant annata through the Riserva to the single-vineyard Gran Selezione Vigneto Lapina and a boldly conceived 'Grand Cru' line launched in 2023. ***The Wine Spectator Top 100 recognition of its 2021 Chianti Classico announced Vallepiciola's arrival among the appellation's elite.***

REWRITING HISTORY



"At Vallepicciola, we must talk about location. We are in the southernmost, warmest part of Chianti Classico, in Castelnuovo Berardenga. The unique microclimate here—influenced by the proximity to the Arbia stream and the Ombrone Valley—creates exceptionally well-ripened Sangiovese. Our Chianti has a unique character, distinct from the higher, cooler areas of Castellina or Radda."

-Allesandro Cellai

Vallepicciola is a comparatively modern, technologically ambitious estate. ***Its portfolio reflects the breadth of contemporary Tuscan wine, encompassing Chianti Classico expressions alongside wines made from grapes such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Pinot Noir.*** This diversity makes the estate a useful example of the coexistence of DOCG tradition and IGT experimentation.

Its Chianti Classico wines are expected to retain Sangiovese's cherry, violet, herbal, and mineral character, while its international-variety wines tend toward darker fruit, fuller body, and polished tannins. The estate's significance lies less in rebellion against Chianti than in the confidence to operate simultaneously within several stylistic frameworks. It demonstrates how modern estates can respect appellation rules where those rules suit the wine while using IGT categories for varieties or blends that require greater freedom.

"Vallepicciola is a synergy of tradition and innovation. We respect the historical legacy of the Black Rooster (Gallo Nero), but use every modern enological tool to ensure our wines meet a modern standard of excellence that honors that legacy."

- Allesandro Cellai



whispers of tuscan y



Grand Cru

/lush



Chianti Classico

/Power



International Varieties

/Strength

DREAM UNFOLDS

The Vallepiciola Rosso Toscana IGT is one of the flagship wines of the estate, and is a standout as a **pure Sangiovese expression** of Tuscany. While wines like the Migliorè showcase international varietals, the Rosso IGT is **designed to highlight the sheer verticality, cleanliness, and crisp fruit of the region's native grape**. It beautifully illustrates Alessandro Cellai's meticulous precision in the cellar—coaxing out the classic, structural elegance of Sangiovese without overwhelming its natural aromatics. He leverages temperature-controlled concrete vats for initial fermentations and meticulously manages the French oak regime to ensure that the wood never masks the purity of the fruit.

The Vallepiciola Rosso Toscana IGT pours an intense, almost impenetrable ruby red that shows a subtle brightening along the rim. **On the nose, it is highly aromatic and deeply layered, leading with vibrant notes of ripe cherry, pomegranate, plum, and redcurrant.** As the wine opens in the glass, these primary fruit aromas seamlessly give way to delicate **floral hints of violet and fresh thyme, anchored by richer, darker undertones of chocolate** and subtle tobacco. The palate is compact, dense, and **remarkably juicy**. It showcases well-integrated but gripping tannins that are perfectly balanced by an animating, acid-saline backbone, leading into a savory, deeply drinkable finish highlighted by a unique, lingering note of blood orange.

This exceptional pure Sangiovese has rightfully captured the attention of top critics, standing as a true testament to Alessandro Cellai's meticulous precision and vision in the cellar. **Gardini Notes notably awarded the 2020 vintage a perfect 100 points**, hailing it as a "real gem" and a "Sangiovese of yesteryear." The wine consistently impresses across the board, earning 92 to 93 points from Falstaff for recent vintages, which praised its lasting complexity and juicy palate. Domestic Italian guides are equally enthusiastic, with VITAE awarding it 96 points and Luca Maroni granting it 93 points.

THE NEXT BIG THING IN CHIANTI



Rocca di Frassinello

“ The SuperTuscan ”



Rocca di Frassinello represents the Super Tuscan idea carried to the Maremma, the once-marshy coastal south of Tuscany that Sassicaia's success opened to fine wine. **Conceived in 1999 as a joint venture between Panerai's Castellare di Castellina and Baron Eric de Rothschild's Domaines Barons de Rothschild-Château Lafite — the first great Italian-French winemaking partnership of its kind** — the estate lies near Gavorrano, between Bolgheri and Montalcino, on mineral-rich soils of clay, limestone, marine fossil, and iron oxide.

The property extends over 500 hectares with about 80–90 under vine, planted to Sangiovese (the Castellare clone), Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and Vermentino. The grand vin, Rocca di Frassinello (Maremma Toscana DOC), blends Sangiovese with Cabernet and Merlot in the Bordeaux manner; its first vintage was 2004, and a twentieth-harvest limited edition of the 2020 was unveiled in 2024 at a vertical tasting led by Italy's first Master of Wine, Gabriele Gorelli, with Cellai — who served from the outset as the estate's winemaker.

The Maremma climate is warmer and more strongly influenced by the Tyrrhenian Sea than inland Chianti. Coastal breezes moderate heat and improve air circulation, while the longer, warmer growing season can ripen Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Sangiovese reliably. Wines from this area often possess riper black fruit, broader texture, and softer acidity than high-elevation Chianti Classico, although site and harvest decisions remain decisive. **Where Castellare argues for tradition, Rocca di Frassinello argues for synthesis: Tuscan grape and French method, reconciled in a single glass.**

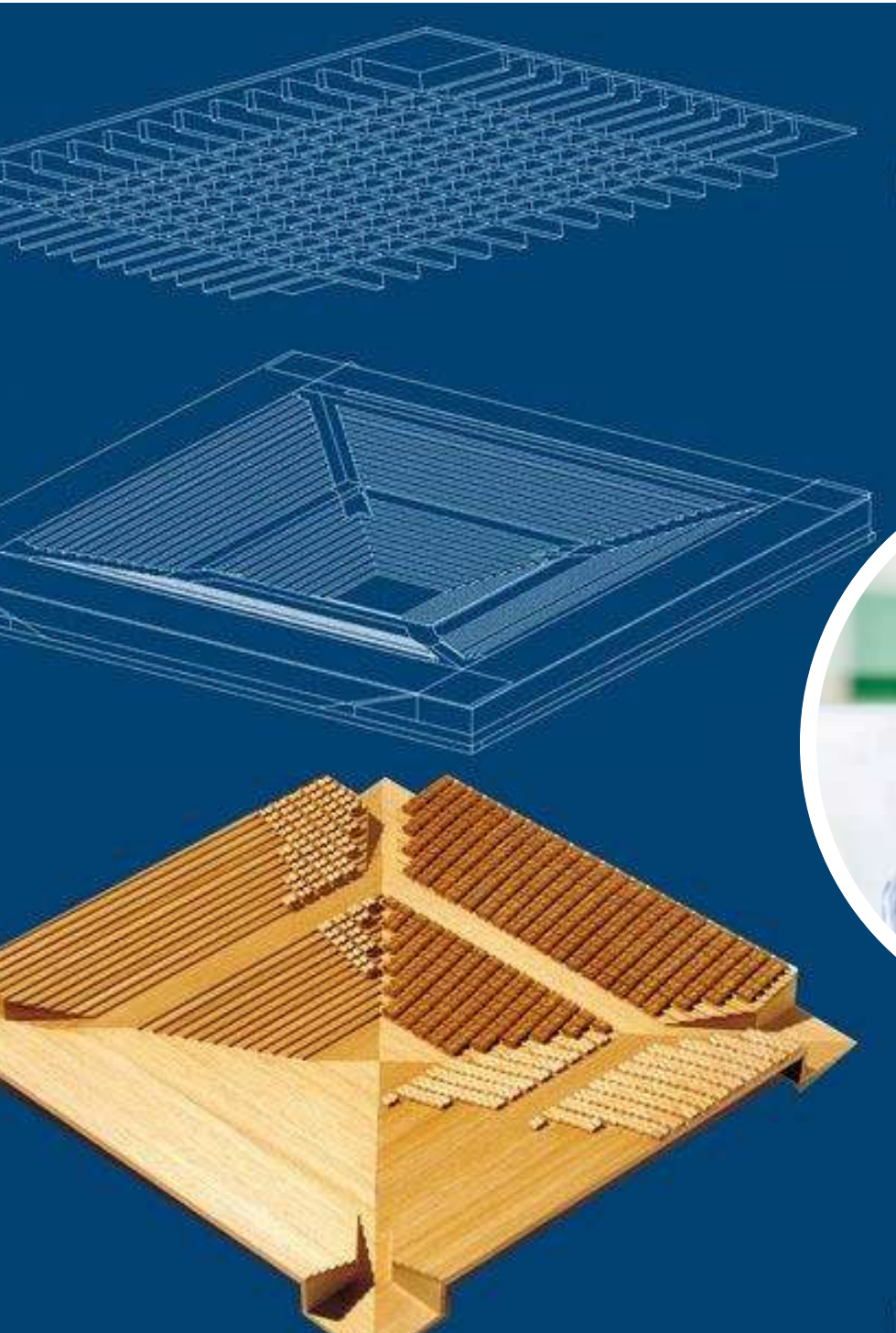


TIMELESS STRUCTURES

A TOWER IN THE VINES: HOW RENZO PIANO
HARNESSED THE TUSCAN SUN

ROCCA DI FRANSINELLO WINERY AND CELLAR WAS INAUGURATED IN 2007, AND IS
THE ONLY WINERY EVER DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT RENZO PIANO: A THEATRICAL
AMPHITHEATER OF BARRIQUES BENEATH A VAST SUSPENDED ROOF.

The Amphitheater of Wine: Renzo Piano's Masterpiece at Rocca di Frassinello



Renzo Piano's role in designing the Rocca di Frassinello winery was to create an essential, functional space that inspired the production of world-class Super Tuscans for the joint venture between Paolo Panerai and Baron Eric de Rothschild. His vision deliberately avoided flashy excess, favoring instead a profound sense of mystery and utility. **The layout is highly revolutionary and centered entirely on the winemaking process:** grapes are hand-sorted on a massive open-air terrace—baptized by Piano as the *sagrato*, or churchyard—before gravity seamlessly transfers them through openings in the floor into fermentation tanks, completely bypassing the need for oenological pumps. **The undisputed heart of this design is the *barricaia*, an inverted-pyramid underground amphitheater built from cement and completely unsupported by columns. Here, up to 2,500 oak barrels line the terraced steps like worshippers in a modern temple of wine,** illuminated by a slender red tower that uses angled mirrors, or heliostats, to reflect natural sunlight deep into the subterranean space.



ARCHITECTURE TOOLS AND DESIGN PROCESSES

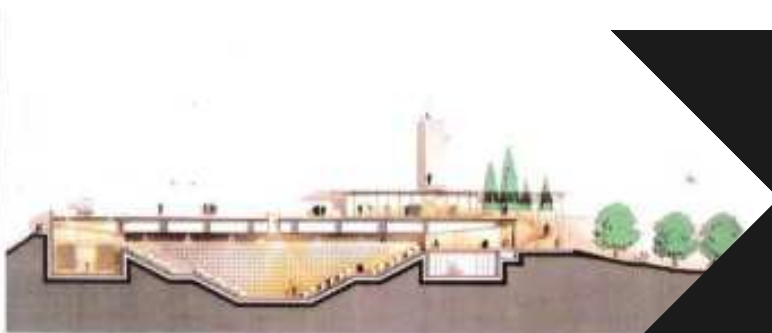
Piano's illustrious career as a Pritzker Prize-winning architect, renowned for groundbreaking urban projects like the Shard and the Centre Georges Pompidou, uniquely prepared him for this endeavor. His signature ability to merge chic industrial aesthetics with profound practical purpose allowed him to celebrate the winery's functional requirements rather than conceal them.

Gravity and Glass: How Renzo Piano Designed the Ultimate Wine Estate



Before creating the structure, **Piano intimately familiarized himself with the environment, famously stating he never creates without first visiting the site; he fell in love with the area during helicopter rides over the Maremma hills.** This deep respect for allowing the land to make the first move translated his mastery of monumental, disruptive modernist design into a highly nuanced agricultural facility. It remains his first and only winery project, standing as a testament to his belief that architecture should serve its purpose poetically rather than merely acting as a monument to itself.

From a broader landscape and architectural perspective, Piano's vision seamlessly integrates the winery into the historical and geographical fabric of the Tuscan coast. **The building's linear profiles and brick-red plastered walls are specifically designed to evoke the imposing silhouettes of the ancient Maremma fortresses—the Aldobrandeschi strongholds**—and the historic watchtowers that dot the coastline. Externally, the colossal 5,000-square-meter terracotta terrace acts as a "flying carpet" hovering over the rolling hills, providing a sweeping visual connection to the surrounding 500 hectares of vineyards.



By harmonizing traditional Tuscan architectural elements with modern engineering, Piano delivered what he described as **a "hymn to lightness"**. This cohesive integration extends beyond the visual landscape, as the estate also respectfully incorporates an exhibition designed by Italo Rota showcasing ancient Etruscan artifacts unearthed on the property, bridging millennia of history beneath Piano's contemporary canopy.



THE NEW SYMPHONY

The barricaia (barrel room) at Rocca di Frassinello is more than just a storage space for aging wine; it was deliberately designed by Renzo Piano to double as **a subterranean acoustic amphitheater.**

Instead of a traditional flat layout, the room takes the shape of an inverted square pyramid. The sloping concrete walls are terraced, **holding up to 2,500 oak barriques that cascade downward toward a central floor.** This central space acts as a natural stage, while the concentric rings of barrels effectively serve as acoustic baffles, creating an environment with exceptional, concert-hall-quality sound reverberation. Because of these flawless acoustics, the cellar regularly transforms into a prestigious performance space. It has become a highly sought-after location for both classical and jazz concerts, hosting events where the audience is seated along the tiered barrel lines or on the central floor. During a performance, the atmosphere is incredibly dramatic. The musicians play from the central "stage," surrounded by thousands of resting wine barrels, illuminated either by the natural light channeling down through the tower's heliostats by day or by architectural lighting by night. It perfectly executes Piano's vision of blending the art of winemaking with the performing arts.



The Elite Wines of Rocca di Frassinello



Baffonero represents the ultra-premium, maritime-influenced, 100% Merlot expression of coastal Maremma. Crafted under the direction of Alessandro Cellai, Baffonero was explicitly created to challenge the world's greatest 100% Merlot wines—most notably Tuscany's own Masseto and Pomerol's Château Pétrus.



The **Rocca di Frassinello San Germano** is an elegant red wine from Tuscany, Italy, that skillfully blends a substantial amount of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon with a touch of local Sangiovetto. This full-bodied wine is renowned for its ability to combine power and intensity with soft tannins and a velvety texture, often revealing fruity notes and hints of spice on the palate.



Rocca di Frassinello (DOC Maremma Toscana). A blend of 60% Sangiovetto, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 20% Merlot. Aged for 24 months in French oak barriques (80% new), it delivers black currant, dark spice, espresso, firm velvety tannins, and a long finish.

"Baffonero is power meeting Mediterranean elegance. It represents our ambition to show that the soils of Rocca di Frassinello can elevate 100% Merlot into an iconic, brooding masterpiece of depth and complexity."

-Allesandro Cellai



The Merlot Icon

Baffonero is one of Italy's most deliberately ambitious wines: a single-vineyard, 100% Merlot from the Maremma coast made in tiny quantities, priced at the very top of the Tuscan market, and openly positioned as a challenger to Masseto. Rocca di Frassinello sits in Gavorrano, in the heart of the Maremma. It was founded by Paolo Panerai (owner of Castellare di Castellina in Chianti, and also a journalist and publisher who founded Class Group) in a joint venture with Domaines Barons de Rothschild-Lafite. The winery itself was designed by Renzo Piano and has become an architectural landmark. **The Lafite connection matters for more than prestige: it brought Bordeaux winemaking philosophy to a coastal Tuscan site, which is exactly the DNA a serious Merlot project needs.**

Baffonero means roughly "black moustache"; it's the nickname of a legendary local farmer who once owned the plot the wine comes from. Panerai chose it to root the wine in the territory despite the grape being a non-native variety. The vineyard itself is about three hectares, sitting at the foot of the winery on predominantly clay soils, which suit Merlot well. **Clay retains water and moderates ripening, which is one reason Merlot in Pomerol performs so well and why a hot, dry site like the Maremma can still yield balanced fruit here.**

Baffonero is harvested from a tiny, 3-hectare amphitheater vineyard situated directly below the Renzo Piano-designed winery at Rocca di Frassinello. **Cellai selected a specialized clone of Merlot tailored to the warm coastal exposure. Yields are kept artificially extremely low** (often under 400-500 grams of fruit per vine via rigorous green harvesting), ensuring maximal phenolic concentration and sugar accumulation.

Unlike I Sodi di San Niccolò, which relies on high-altitude Apennine breezes and cool nights to retain acidity, **Baffonero benefits from the warm, sun-drenched coastal climate of Maremma.** Constant maritime breezes blowing off the Tyrrhenian Sea prevent humidity and rot while modulating extreme heat waves. This allows Merlot to achieve full, seamless phenolic ripeness without burning off fruit aromatics.

The vineyard sits on deep, well-draining clay soils intermixed with gravelly shale (scheletro) and iron-rich red clay. The clay provides essential moisture retention during dry Tuscan summers, while the iron and gravel drive the wine's signature savory, mineral backbone under its rich fruit profile.

The most important documented fact is that the Baffonero vineyard was planted with Merlot clones brought from Château Lafite. The official French Merlot clones fall into two rough families. The high-yield, large-berry material selected in the 1970s (clones like 181 and 182) is productive but dilute. The quality clones favored on the Left Bank and in Pomerol (343, 347, 348, and especially the low-vigor 181-successors selected for small berries and loose bunches) give higher skin-to-juice ratio, more anthocyanin, and firmer tannin. Lafite's in-house selections are drawn from the latter group, and many top Bordeaux estates also maintain massal selections from old parcels rather than pure clonal blocks.

A movement of
confidence, creativity,
and fearless expression

Not Just Style — It's Power



Gavorrano sits about 10 km inland from the Tyrrhenian coast at 90 m elevation. The estate itself notes that soils here resemble Chianti and Montalcino but temperatures run roughly 6°C warmer, with ripening advanced by as much as four weeks. **That is the fundamental tension in Baffonero: Merlot is an early-ripening, heat-sensitive variety, and this is one of the warmest sites in Tuscany. What saves it is topography.** The property sits on a hillside where the two ridges flanking the old Via Aurelia form a kind of canyon that channels sea breeze from the plain between Castiglione della Pescaia and Grosseto. The vineyard's north/south-west exposure and that ventilation moderate day-night swings, letting the fruit ripen slowly enough to hold acidity and aromatic complexity. The vineyard is described as medium-textured clay very rich in skeleton characterized as a clay-slate. **The clay content is what makes Merlot work here: clay's high cation-exchange capacity and water-holding buffer the vine through summer drought, mimicking the blue clay of the Pomerol plateau.**

The stone fraction matters equally. Heavy clay on its own is the most compaction-prone vineyard soil, especially under tractor traffic when wet, and compacted clay creates a dense, low-oxygen root zone that restricts rooting depth, waterlogs in winter and cracks in summer. A high skeleton content breaks up the clay matrix, preserves macropores for drainage and air, and lets roots penetrate. That's why the estate emphasizes that the soil drains optimally while still limiting yields. The nearby Castellare vineyards on galestro were famously described as difficult to work for this reason. No published bulk-density data exists for Baffonero, but the combination of high-density planting, permanent cordons, and a stony clay profile is consistent with a soil that resists compaction well. **In the glass, this translates to the paradox critics keep noticing: enormous density and extract paired with tannins that are firm rather than coarse, because the vine isn't stressed by waterlogging in one season and drought in the next.**

TASTING NOTES

- Primary Fruit: Dark plum, wild blackberry compote, black cherry, and blueberry.
- Secondary Aromatics: Dark cocoa, roasted coffee bean, sweet tobacco leaf, cedar, and vanilla bean from new French oak.
- Tertiary / Terroir Markers: Distinctive notes of macchia mediterranea (wild rosemary, sage, and myrtle), crushed sea salt, graphite, and cured leather.
- Palate Texture: Exceptionally plush, seamless, and mouth-coating. The tannins are spherical and silky rather than linear or astringent, giving Baffonero immediate hedonistic appeal combined with immense aging power.



The *primary fruit is dominated by black, not red, fruit: blackberry, blueberry, plum, with raspberry jam* appearing in the ripest years like 2022. Chemically, that reflects high anthocyanin and ripe-fruit esters from small berries picked at full phenolic maturity. *The very high concentrations of tannin, anthocyanin, glycerol, and polysaccharides are what give the "thick and vinous" texture.* Acidity, per critical notes, is bright enough to be a support column, which is unusual for Merlot at this ripeness and is the fingerprint of the sea breeze and diurnal swing. *The tertiary and oak-derived layer is substantial: vanilla, mocha, espresso, chocolate, toasted spice, and coconut* in some vintages come from 24 months in 100% new French oak, which contributes vanillin, oak lactones, furfural and guaiacol. Savory markers (tobacco, cigar box, new leather, licorice, campfire ash, bay leaf, mint) come from a mix of Cabernet Franc heritage methoxypyrazine traces, ripe Merlot's characteristic tobacco note, and oak. *Florals (violets, roses) are present but need air to emerge past the oak* in youth. The finish is described as long, spicy and mouthwatering, and the recurring critical complaint, a slightly burly or harsh edge in some vintages, is the cost of that extract level.

Baffonero is a powerful, dense, and opulent Italian Merlot defined by its warm, low-altitude site, high-density planting, and low yields. *Compared to its famous Bolgheri rival, Masseto, Baffonero is darker and more extracted, trading Masseto's floral finesse and aging track record for raw power and a chocolate-espresso profile.* When pitted against classic Pomerols, it swaps restrained, earthy austerity for immediate, higher-alcohol ripeness. While stylistically closest to the similarly dense and oaky Redigaffi among its Italian peers, it remains distinctly heavier than cooler-climate or more polished benchmarks like L'Apparita and Messorio. *Ultimately, Baffonero bridges the gap between Old and New World styles, offering the heavy weight and ripe oak of a Napa Merlot while maintaining the savory, structured tannic grip of a Right Bank Bordeaux.*

Baffonero Critically Acclaimed Scores



96-97

YEAR: 2016
WINE ADVOCATE
/ SUCKLING

95+

YEAR: 2018
VINOUS

95

YEAR: 2019
VINOUS

94

YEAR: 2020
WINE SPECTATOR

96

YEAR: 2017
VINOUS

95

YEAR: 2019
VINOUS

96

YEAR: 2020
ANTONIO GALLONI
(VINOUS)

93

YEAR: 2020
JAMES SUCKLING

"In crafting Baffonero, there is no room for compromise. From rigorous cluster selection to the gentlest extraction in the cellar, every detail is focused on capturing absolute richness without sacrificing freshness."

-Alessandro Cellai

Battles of the Merlot Resurgence - Baffonero Against the World's Merlot

How does Baffonero stand up against other famous Merlots?

Against Masseto (Bolgheri, also from clay, 100% Merlot, roughly 30,000 bottles), Baffonero is a warmer, denser, more extracted wine. Masseto's clay is Pliocene marine clay at higher altitude, closer to the sea and cooler; it typically shows more red-fruit lift, more floral perfume and finer tannin, and ages with more grace. ***Baffonero has more raw power and a darker, more chocolate-and-espresso register***, but sits a few points lower in critical consensus and lacks Masseto's decades of aged-bottle track record.

Against Pomerol, the closest structural cousin is a Merlot from the clay plateau such as Trotanoy or La Conseillante rather than Pétrus, which is finer and more mineral. Pomerol Merlot on a cooler, wetter maritime climate shows more truffle, plum-skin and iron-earth savoriness at lower alcohol (13.5 to 14.5% versus Baffonero's likely 14.5 to 15), with less overtly toasty oak and more evident tannic austerity in youth. ***Baffonero is riper and more immediately opulent; Pomerol is more restrained and typically more age-worthy.***

Against New World Merlot (Napa, Washington's Red Mountain), Baffonero shares the ripeness and new oak but has notably more tannic grip, higher dry extract and a more savory, ***less sweet-fruited profile, closer to Right Bank Bordeaux in structure even if closer to Napa in weight.***

Against the other Italian benchmarks, Redigaffi (Tua Rita, Suvereto, about 30 km north) is the most stylistically similar: **a hot-coast Merlot on iron-rich soils, similarly dense and oaky, with the same tension between opulence and heat.** L'Apparita (Castello di Ama, Chianti Classico) sits at the opposite pole, grown at 450 m on galestro and limestone, **cooler, more perfumed, more Sangiovese-like in its acidity.** Messorio (Le Macchiole, Bolgheri) is between the two, more polished than Baffonero, less structured than Masseto. Baffonero's distinguishing feature within this group is the **combination of Lafite plant material, near-Pomerol planting density and yields, and the lowest-altitude, warmest site among them; that is both its signature and its constraint.**



The short version: Baffonero is a Pomerol recipe executed in a climate that behaves more like Napa, on iron-rich clay and phyllite that gives it Pomerol-adjacent density and color. Its identity is built on that contradiction, and every vintage's success hinges on whether the sea breeze and the stony clay together hold the Merlot's ripeness in check.

OTHER GREAT NAMES OF THE REGION



"Tignanello was an act of courage. It was about showing that Tuscany could compete with the greatest wines on earth by listening to the terroir rather than outdated bureaucratic recipes."

— Marchese Piero Antinori
(shown here standing with Giacomo Tachis while inspecting a vintage of Tignanello)

Any account of Chianti and the Super Tuscans must acknowledge the wider constellation of producers who shaped them. Antinori – twenty-six generations of Florentine winemaking – gave the world Tignanello and Solaia and remains the region's great modernizing house.

Barone Ricasoli at Castello di Brolio, the oldest named winery in Italy, carries the Iron Baron's legacy into the Gran Selezione era. Tenuta San Guido (Sassicaia) and the Frescobaldi-owned Ornellaia and Masseto define coastal Bolgheri.

Within Chianti Classico, Fontodi in Panzano's Conca d'Oro makes the all-Sangiovese Flaccianello della Pieve; Felsina in Castelnuovo Berardenga is revered for Rancia and Fontalloro; Castello di Ama in Gaiole for its single-vineyard Gran Selezione and L'Apparita Merlot; and estates such as Isole e Olena (Cepparello), Querciabella (Camartina), San Giusto a Rentennano (Percarlo), Badia a Coltibuono, Castello di Volpaia, and Rocca delle Macie – **where Cellai began – complete a roll call unmatched in Italy. The consulting and cellar tradition of Giacomo Tachis, and after him Carlo Ferrini, Franco Bernabei, Riccardo Cotarella, and Cellai's own generation, ties these houses together as surely as the black rooster on their necks.**

"A great wine must express its place of origin, but it must also have the freedom to reach its highest expression. Super Tuscans proved that tradition and innovation are not enemies, but partners."

— Alessandro Cellai,
Master Winemaker

OENOLOGICAL BENCHMARKING: ANALYSIS OF FOUR ICONIC RED WINE PROFILES				
Analytical Parameter	I Sodi di San Niccolò (Castellina di Chianti)	Buffonero (Rocca di Montebello)	Left Bank Bordeaux Premier Cru (e.g., Ch. Lafite Rothschild)	Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (e.g., Opus One / Rubicon)
Primary Varietals	85% Sangiovese 15% Malvasia Nera	100% Merlot	75-85% Cabernet Sauvignon 15-25% Merlot / Cab Franc	85-100% Cabernet Sauvignon
Terroir & Soil Profile	Calcareous Galestro & Albarese limestone (350-400m elev.)	Clay-rich loam with high gravel (schietto) & iron oxides (Costa Montebello)	Deep gravel terraces (croupes) over clay-limestone	Alluvial fans, volcanic ash, gravelly loam (Humboldt Quilt)
Climate Profile	Continental-Mediterranean; high diurnal shifts (15-20°C)	Maritime-Mediterranean; warm, sea breezes, high sunshine duration	Maritime-Temperate; moderated by Gironde estuary	Mediterranean / Warm semi-arid; daytime sun, coastal fog cooling
Typical Target pH	3.40-3.48	3.58-3.68	3.55-3.65	3.65-3.85
Total Acidity (TA)	5.8-6.2 g/L	5.3-5.6 g/L	5.2-5.6 g/L	5.0-5.5 g/L
Ethanol (ABV)	13.5-14.0%	14.5-15.0%	13.0-13.5%	14.5-15.5%
Maturation Vessel	225L French oak barriques (66% new)	225L French oak barriques (100% new, fine grain)	225L French oak barriques (80-100% new)	225L French oak barriques (70-100% new)
Elevage Duration	24-30m oak + 10-12m bottle	14-18m oak + 12m bottle	18-20m oak + 12+ m bottle	18-22m oak + 6-12m bottle
Tannic Architecture	Low, linear, rustic-tight, elevated gallic acid	Plush, spherical, velvety, dense, polished silk tannins	Dense, fine-grained, firm structural wood/seed tannins	Plush, broad-spectrum, ripe (sm) tannins, high glycerin

Travel Journal



every trip &
every winery
has its own
story.



Some moments are carefully planned, while others happen unexpectedly along the way. This magazine is a collection of the Tuscan wineries we explored, the experiences we shared, and the memories we brought home with us.



contents



Exploring the Winery

First Impressions



Vintage Finds



A Day to Remember



Scenic Views

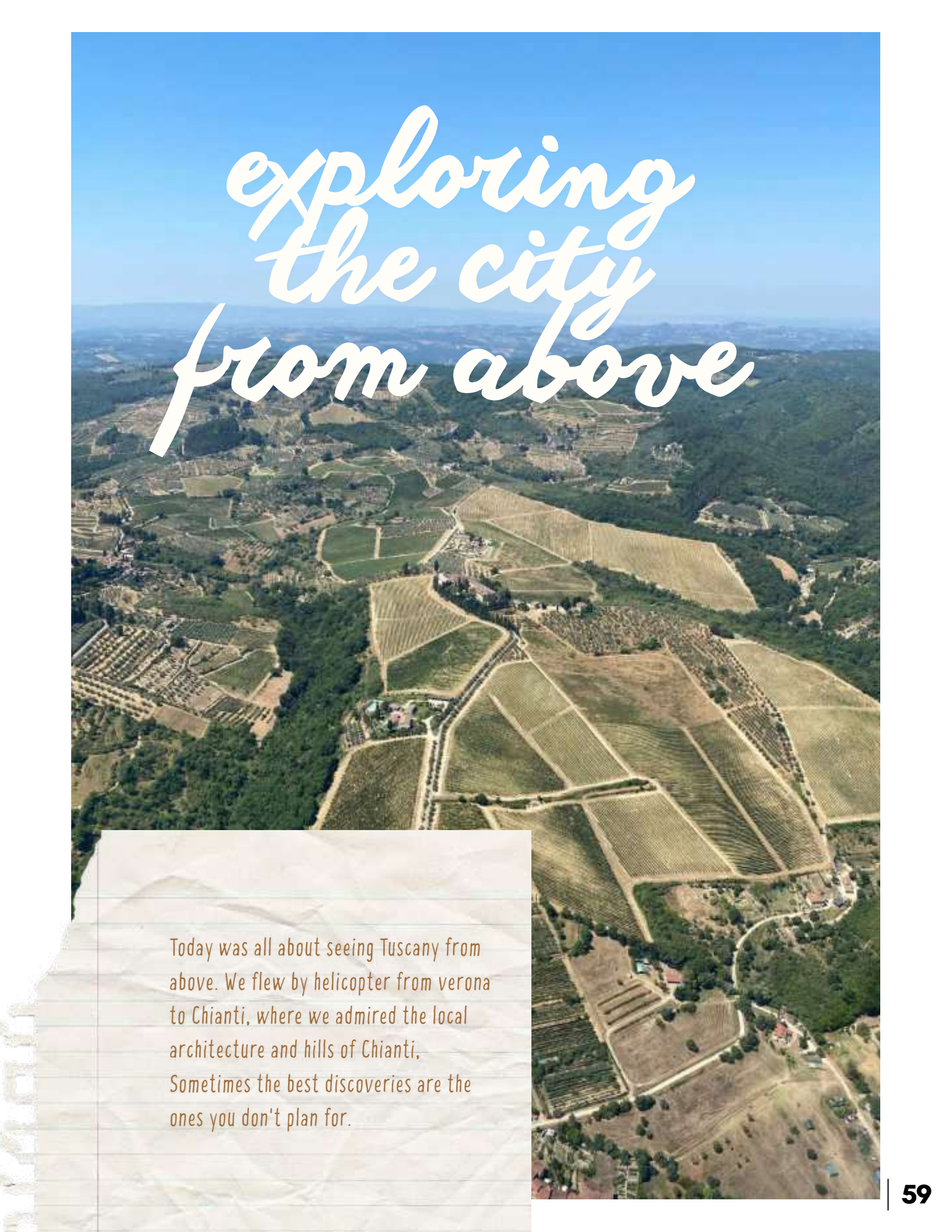
view from the top



A new place, a different perspective.





An aerial photograph of the Tuscan hills, showing a patchwork of green and golden-brown vineyard terraces. A small village with a prominent church spire is visible in the center. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

exploring the city from above

Today was all about seeing Tuscany from above. We flew by helicopter from Verona to Chianti, where we admired the local architecture and hills of Chianti. Sometimes the best discoveries are the ones you don't plan for.



A photograph of a group of men sitting around a dining table in a restaurant. Two men in the foreground are smiling and holding wine glasses. The table is set with white plates, glasses, and bottles of wine. The background shows other diners and framed artwork on the wall.

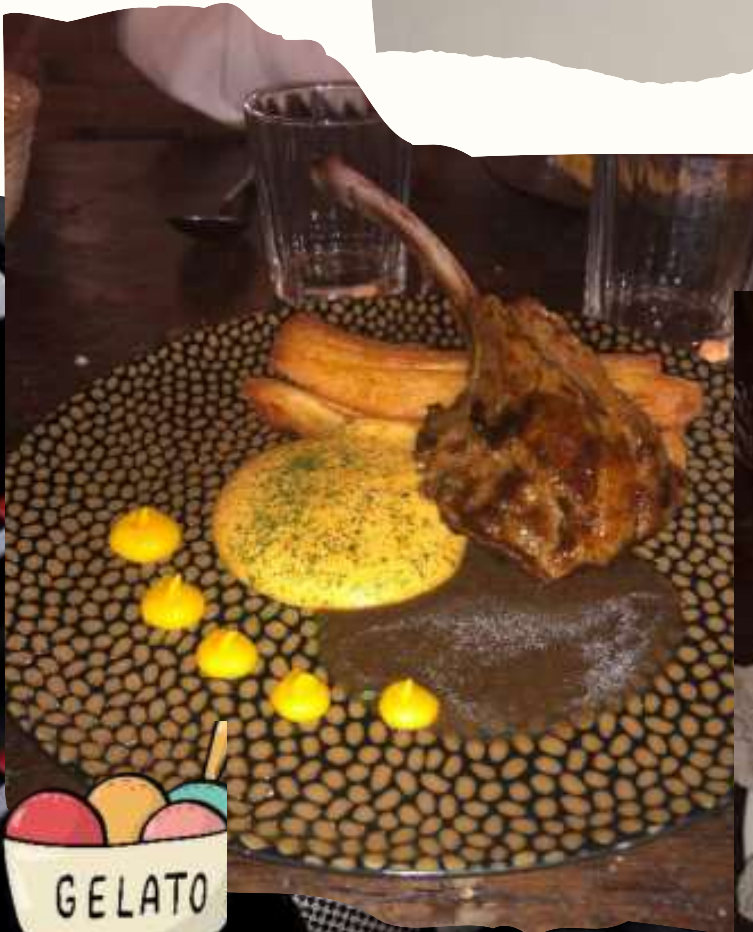
food & favorite finds

Every trip seems to come with a few memorable meals. Today we enjoyed local dishes, shared a few treats, and found a great spot for our chef to cook for us. Good food and our wine always becomes part of the story.



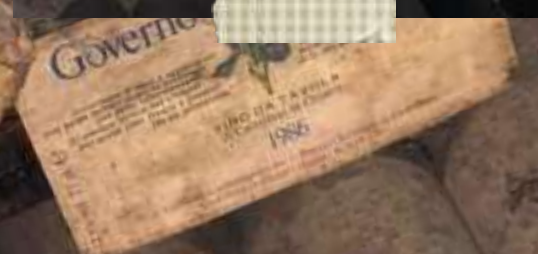


*trying
all the
flavors
we could
find*





Good food, great company, unforgettable views.





**"AND I THINK THAT THERE WILL BE MUCH
HAPPINESS FOR THOSE MEN WHO ARE BORN
WHERE GOOD WINES ARE FOUND."**

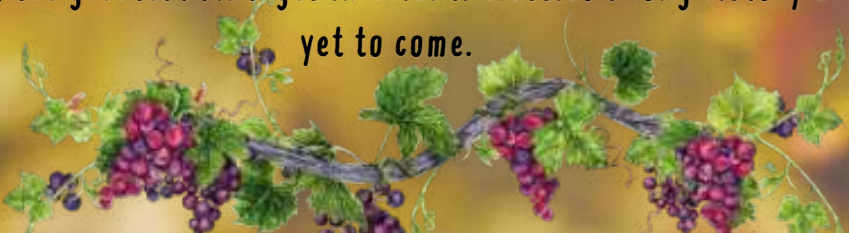
**— LEONARDO DA VINCI, RENAISSANCE POLYMATH
(BORN NEAR THE CHIANTI REGION)**



Epilogue

As this journey comes to an end, we're taking home more than photos and souvenirs. Every winery leaves behind memories, experiences, and stories that become part of us long after we've returned home.

The history of Chianti is a seven-century journey of self-discovery. While the terroir—defined by its galestro and alberese soils, high altitudes, and brilliant light—always held the potential for greatness, and Sangiovese was always its truest expression, the human element had to evolve. The pivotal shift came through both working within the law and fiercely challenging it. The Super Tuscan rebellion, spearheaded by Tachis, Antinori, and Incisa della Rocchetta, shattered outdated regulations and paved the way for sweeping reforms. The resulting DOCG autonomy, Gran Selezione tier, UGA village designations, and the upcoming 90 percent Sangiovese standard rebuilt Chianti's foundation around quality and terroir. Winemakers like Alessandro Cellai represent this modern harmony. His work proves that native traditions can achieve global acclaim at Castellare, that Tuscan and Bordeaux styles can seamlessly blend at Rocca di Frassinello, and that a young estate in the high hills of Siena can break into the world's Top 100 using only Sangiovese at Vallepiciola. Today, the iconic black rooster—once the emblem of a struggling wine—proudly represents one of the world's most dynamic fine-wine regions. Ultimately, the greatest vintages in Chianti Classico's long history are still yet to come.





Castelli



By
Ralph Madeb, MD
The Wine Doctor

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