

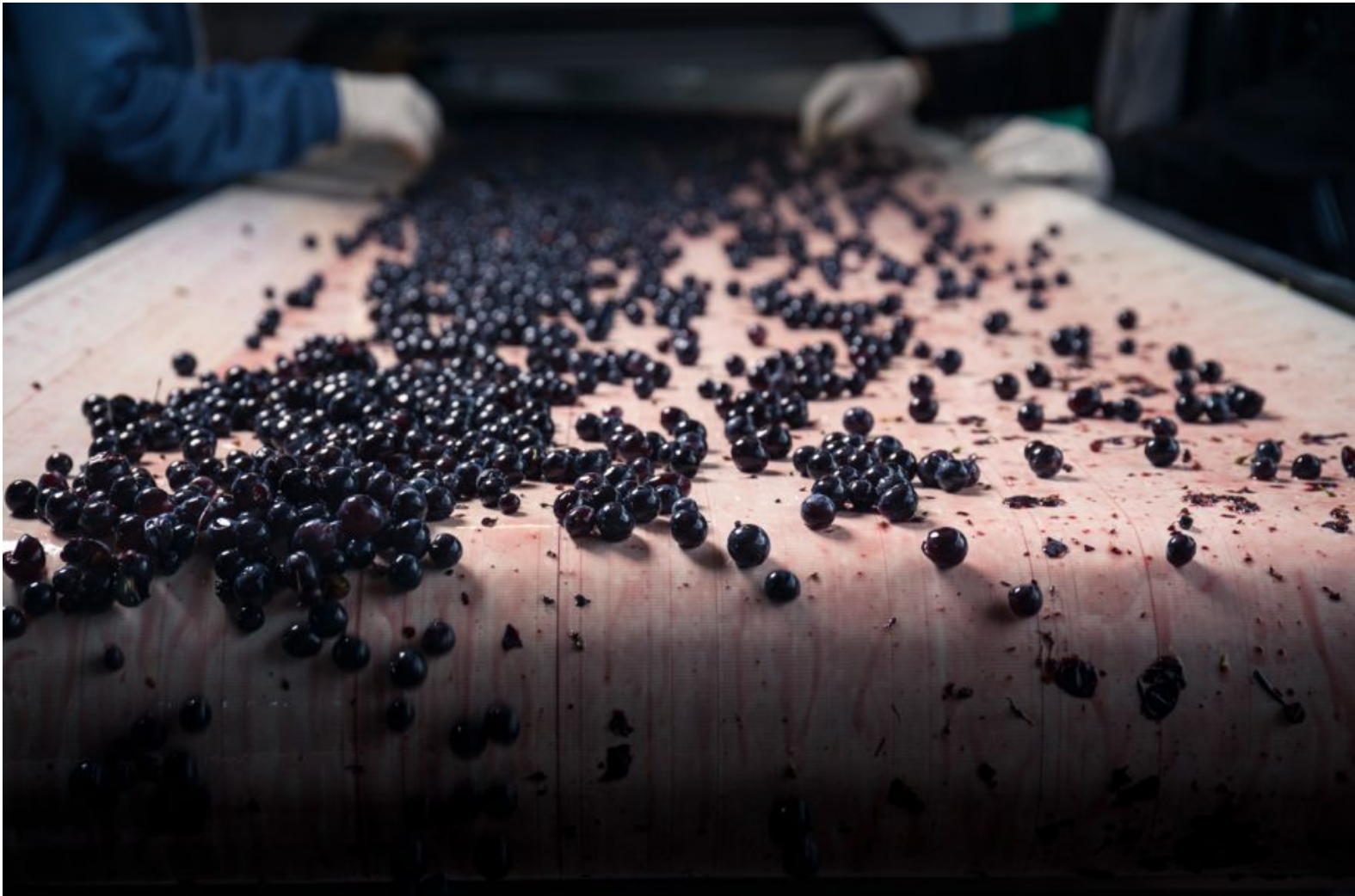
Best Chianti Classico Riserva 2018 plus late releases

Michaela Morris explores the relevance of Chianti's Riserva category, and tastes 24 new releases from the 2018 and 2017 vintages.



Michaela Morris

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Credit: Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico

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Scroll down for Michaela's top Chianti Classico Riserva 2018 wines – plus late releases from 2017

How do the categories compare?

On the one hand, over-performing annata from 2018 and 2019 eclipse the handful of underperforming Riserva. This may be due in part to the fact that some producers don't even make a Riserva, instead crafting an annata that essentially meets the former's production standards.

Marco Ricasoli-Firidolfi at Rocca di Montegrossi is among those who skip the Riserva level. 'I find that there is little difference between Riserva and Gran Selezione,' he explains, referring to ageing requirements of 24 versus 30 months respectively.

Conversely, the Riserva category also includes many of the denomination's finest wines. Among these are wines from producers who eschew the Gran Selezione classification, declaring their top Chianti Classico as a Riserva.

Chianti Classico Riserva 2018

The 2018 Chianti Classico Riserva wines mirrored the heterogeneous nature of the vintage found in the annata.

There are lithe examples – illustrated by Castellina di Castellare and Bibbiano – as well as plump, warm expressions offered by Castagnoli and Riecine. A couple felt like they had the edges knocked off, leaving me thirsting for a bit more drama, but overall they are an affable and beguiling bunch.

Once again, careful vineyard selection and picking dates were key in areas affected by rain.

In Radda, Poggerino's Piero Lanza had to bring in fruit from more humid plots early – in mid-September – due to the threat of botrytis and acid rot. However, less prone parcels including his Riserva vineyard were harvested later – between 25 September and 11 October. 'I obtained a wine with more structure, higher alcohol and aromas of mature red fruit,' he maintains.

In Gaiole, Riecine's Alessandro Campatelli reported less rain in August than Radda (76 mm compared to 200mm) as well as high diurnal temperature ranges leading up to harvest in October. '2018 will likely be highly regarded in the future thanks to its acidity levels that will give it much life ahead,' he asserts.

Ageability is certainly a desired trait in a Riserva. Of the 2018s I've tried so far, they are already accessible with seven to ten years of cellaring potential.

Chianti Classico Riserva 2017

In my tastings this year, the most delightful surprises came from the 2017 Riserva. In general, the wines served to highlight the skill of the region's winemakers. The characteristics of the hot, dry vintage were certainly on display with an inevitable concentration of all elements. Some demonstrated unresolved tannins, but few were lacking acidity.

The top performers, like San Giusto a Rentennano and Monte Bernardi, captured the arid warmth while achieving striking balance. Others that stood out hail from cooler zones, such as Erta di Radda and Val delle Corti, both in Radda.

While I don't feel that Riserva always guarantees a step up from annata, I do believe that many approach the level of Gran Selezione. Above all, amongst both the 2017 and 2018 vintages there are plenty of Riserva wines with a well-defined and singular identity.

Top Chianti Classico Riserva 2018 and late releases:

View all 24 Chianti Classico Riserva wines tasted



Monte Bernardi, Sa'etta Riserva, Chianti, Classico, 2017

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Michael Schmelzer's Sa'etta is a single-vineyard bottling from 50-plus-year-old vines planted on Panzano's pietraforte, a quartz-rich sandstone with hardened limestone. It plumbs Tuscany's landscape unearthing baked clay, sundried fruit and fragrant garden herbs. It reaches earthy te...

Points 95



Poggerino, Riserva, Chianti, Classico, Tuscany, Italy, 2018

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A selection of the smallest bunches from the estate's oldest plot, Poggerino's Riserva sees a long 50-day maceration and ageing in large Slavonian oak casks. It emerges from its shell with beguiling aromas of cedar, sandalwood, iron, smoke and wet stone, evoking the rocky, forest-...

Points 94

San Giusto a Rentennano, Le Baròncole Riserva, Chianti Classico 2017

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San Giusto's Riserva is a selection of grapes based on ripeness as well as bunch and berry dimensions. In 2017, the estate managed to hold off harvesting until after the desperately needed, refreshing early-September rains. This has a lot of everything: intense aromas, ripe flavours, a weighty mouthfeel, rich fruit,...

Points 94



L'Erta di Radda, Riserva, Chianti, Classico, Tuscany, 2017

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From a single-vineyard atop a hill in the middle of a valley, this windy site sees significant day and nighttime temperature differences and boasts an iron-rich soil. An understated wine with a savoury mineral character, this somewhat defies the vintage. Accents of forest brush, wild sage...

Points 94



Val delle Corti, Riserva, Chianti, Classico, Tuscany, 2017

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Roberto Bianchi has produced a splendid 2017 Riserva, crafted from 40- to 45-year-old vines facing north to northeast at 450 metres above sea level in the cool reaches of Radda. Heather, truffles, red currants and iron waft attractively from the glass. It is slightly fleshier than usual but remains its...

Points 94



Castello di Volpaia, Riserva, Chianti, Classico, 2018

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Produced since 1967, Volpaia's Riserva is a selection of bunches from throughout the estate's 43 hectares in the township of Radda. Due to the slow start in 2018, harvest began a few days later than average, taking place during the first two weeks of October. With purity and precision,...

Points 93



Rocca delle Macie, Sergioveto Riserva, Chianti Classico 2018

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Sergioveto is a reinvention of sorts. While it used to be an IGT blend of international grapes with Sangiovese, as of 2015 it is a single-vineyard Chianti Classico Riserva crafted exclusively from Sangiovese and aged in large French oak barrels. I applaud the new direction here: assertive and characterful, the...

Points 93



Castello di Monsanto, Riserva, Chianti, Classico, 2017

Monsanto's 72 hectares of vineyards are divided into distinct parcels, each vinified and aged separately. The Riserva is the result of a collaborative tasting and blending conducted by owner Laura Bianchi, her father Fabrizio, and Andrea Giovannini, the estate's oenologist since 2001....

Points 93



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Monte Bernardi	Sa'etta Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	95 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
San Giusto a Renten...	Le Baròncole Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	94 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
L'Erta di Radda	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	94 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
Poggerino	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	94 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
Val delle Corti	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	94 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
Rocca delle Macie	Sergiovetto Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	93 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
Castello di Monsanto	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	93 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
Castello di Volpaia	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	93 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		
Castello di Ama	Montebuoni Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	92 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021		

Producer	Wine	Location	Vin.	Score	Date tasted	My Wines
Querciabella	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	92 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Rocca delle Macie	Riserva di Fizzano Gran Selez...	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	91 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Riecine	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	91 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Castellare di Castellina	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	91 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Castello Vicchiomagg...	Agostino Petri Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	90 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Pomona	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	90 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Brancaia	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	90 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Castello di Gabbiano	Cavaliere d'Oro Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	89 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Marchesi Antinori	Tenuta Tignanello Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	89 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Castagnoli	Terrazze Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	89 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Tenuta di Arceno	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	89 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Bibbiano	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2018	89 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
San Leonino	Monsenese Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	88 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	
Castello Di Albola	Riserva	Italy, Tuscany Chianti, Classico	2017	87 VIEW NOTES →	27 Mar 2021	

Producer

Wine

Location

Vin.

Score

Date
tasted

My
Wines



Dievole

Novecento Riserva

Italy, Tuscany
Chianti, Classico

2017

87

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