

Excerpt from article

"Fine Wines Among Tuscany's 2001s"

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The 2001 vintage has a fine reputation for Tuscan reds for the reasons outlined below. In this tasting organize in London last month by the Institute of Masters of Wine I found a wide variety of differently styled wines. A few were rather exaggeratedly oaked, very few seemed overripe, but a delightfully high proportion really did seem to be well balanced, unequivocally Tuscan wines for drinking with pleasure with food, and reasonably marked tannins and acidity. Prices vary from only just over £10/\$20 to more than £60/\$120 a bottle (for Ornellaia). All the IGT wines are systematically more expensive than the Chiantis, by no means always with justification in my view. Best buys are marked GV below.

The 33 wines are listed below in the order in which they were tasted, straight Chianti Classico first, then Riservas, then the IGTs including Tignanello, a rather disappointing Sassicaia and that hugely popular Ornellaia. 'Tuscany's harvest has been characterized by the Easter Sunday frost,' says Piermario Cavallari, owner of Grattamacco, in Bolgheri. 'Yields fell 10 to 50 percent. Sangiovese suffered the most.' Cristina Mariani of Castello Banfi in Montalcino says the frost functioned as a natural pruning device, lowering the yield but contributing to the grape quality. According to Renzo Cotarella, managing director of Antinori, 'the Sangiovese is powerful, with persistent tannins, yet not too overpowering or chunky and the Cabernets are looking excellent, very fruity with great character.'

Summer was hot and dry, but without the intense heat of, say, 2003. Picking started at the end of August and finished around 15 oct. Most grapes were hand picked, although newer vineyards, especially in Bolgheri and Montepulciano, may have followed an early morning hand picked selection by machine picking. The harvest took place in unsettled weather; rain, and below-average temperatures, interspersed with sunny days. Some producers complained of diluted must and uneven ripening, others profited from cool days and breezy nights.

Many producers benefited from a slower maturation resulting in well-balanced tannins. 'For the first 15 days of the harvest the grapes were excellent with a high concentration of polyphenols,' said Cotarella. 'I've never tasted such extraordinarily good quality grapes in Bolgheri. On the whole Tuscan wines show powerful, persistent harsh tannins, a good integrity, allowing for long wines with plenty of good minerals'.

Chianti Classico 2001 Castello di Ama
18 pts

GV. Drink 2005-12. Sangiovese 80%, Canaiolo 8%, Malvasia & Merlot 12%. 18 mths French oak barrels (30% new, 70% 3 year). 12.9% find this wine

Mid ruby red. Warm, ripe evolved nose. Surprisingly mature and gentle. Fine grained tannins just sneak in at the end of the palate. Should provide delightful drinking over the long term - though a little smoky/bonfire on the nose. Vineyard not cellar driven. And this is just regular Chianti Classico!

Chianti Classico 2001 Giorgio Primo, Fattoria La Massa
16 pts

Drink 2008-12. Sangiovese 85%, Merlot 15%. 18 mths new French oak. 14% find this wine.

Deep, dark crimson still. Compost notes on the nose with some attractive evolution on the edge. Very grainy tannins underneath – extremely dry finish. Just a bit too much new oak? Rather exaggerated. Not much fun or charm.

Chianti Classico 2001 Le Trame, Le Boncie
17 pts

GV Drink 2005-10. Sangiovese 90%, Colorino, Mammolo, Foglia tonda 10%. 16-18 mths in Allier barrels (500-700-1500 litres). 13.3% find this wine.

Mid crimson. Some sweet ripeness and balancing acidity. A transparent wine without particularly obvious oak. Very gouléant in the Beaujolais sense. Attractive if you're looking for the taste of Tuscany rather than a blockbuster. But forward.

Chianti Classico 2001 Grosso Sanese, Podere Il Palazzino
17 pts

Drink 2005-12. Sangiovese 100%. 30% new oak barriques. 14% find this wine.

Very dark crimson. Sweet and evolved nose. Well balanced whole already – fine sandy tannins underneath but perfectly drinkable already too. Quite lively and crunchy fruit. Quite marked acidity.

CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA

Chianti Classico 2001 Riserva Berardo, Castelli di Bossi
16.5

Drink 2007-14. Sangiovese 85%, Merlot 15%. 24 mths in barriques, 6 mths in bottle. 13.5% find this wine.

Sottobosco, mildly, on the nose. Plus a bit of oak. Evolved and open – a relatively charming drink though far from the most Tuscan. Very inky finish.

Chianti Classico 2000 Riserva, Tenuta di Coltibuono
16 pts

Drink 2006-12. Sangiovese 90%, Canaiolo 10%. 24 mths in French and Austrian casks, 4 mths in bottle. 13.5% find this wine.

NB VINTAGE! Mid, well evolved ruby. Quite vegetal nose with some roasted notes. Lots of acidity – quite distinctive. Not touched by modernism. A little too burnt for my taste but certainly distinctive.

Chianti Classico 2001 Riserva Rancia, Fattoria di Felsina
18 pts

GV Drink 2005-14. Sangiovese 100%. 12-18 mths in small and medium casks, 6-10 mths in bottle. 13.5% find this wine.

Mid dark crimson. Ripe but not fake sweet with sufficient acidity. A whole! Real life and no compromises. No this seems to have everything – an expression of place and vintage. Transparent, no mucking about, true and refreshing. Health juice. Very clean bracing finish.

Chianti Classico 2001 Riserva Vigna del Sorbo, Fontodi
17 pts

Drink 2007-15 find this wine. Sangiovese 90%, Cab Sauv 10%. 16-18 mths in Allier barrels, min 6 mths in bottle. 14%

Mid crimson. First bottle corked. Second fragrant and ethereal. Fresh scrunchy fruit with lots of ripeness and no heaviness. Real lift. Sweetness lurks underneath. Wait awhile.

Chianti Classico 2001 Riserva Il Poggio, Castello di Monsanto
18 pts

Drink 2005-14. Sangiovese 90%, Canaiolo 7%, Colorino 3%. 18 mths in French oak barriques (new and one yr), 12 mths in bottle. 13.5% find this wine

Dark crimson. Appealing true autumn leaf mould notes. Transparent pure hit on the front palate with real life and stimulation. A playful confident wine that could be enjoyed already but is not short of tannins. Long, Slightly too hot on the finish for perfection.

Chianti Classico 2001 Riserva Bugialla, Fattoria Poggerino
17 pts

Drink 2006-14. Sangiovese 100%. 18 mths in new Allier barriques 13.5%. find this wine

Very vegy, almost rotten vegy, nose. Light, fragrant, quite delicate constitution. Grating tannins and very dry no concessions to sweetness/ripeness. Good drink.

Chianti Classico 2001 Riserva, Riecine
17? Pts

Drink 2008-15. Sangiovese 100%. 20% new oak, 80% 3-4 yr barriques. 14.2% find this wine.

Deep bright crimson. Sweet, smooth, suave – very different from the Riecine of old. Rather light on the palate bit of a lounge lizard. Lots of dry tannins on the finish. Quite an unresolved puzzle at the moment. I'm not at all sure what to make of it and would love to revisit in three years' time.

Chianti Classico 2001 Riserva Vigneto San Marcellino, Rocca di Montegrossi
16 pts

Drink 2007-13. Sangiovese 100%. 24 mths in Allier barrels (1/3 new, 1/3 2 yr, 1/3 3 yr), 24 mths in bottle 13.3% find this wine.

A bit of French oak influence on the nose. Quite light fruit. Zippy but not desperately memorable. No great density, no great acidity.

IGT

Tignanello IGT 2001 Antinori
17 pts

Drink 2006-15. Sangiovese 85%, Cab Sauv 10%, Merlot 5%. 14 mths in 1 yr barriques, 1 mths in bottle
13.5% find this wine.

Very dark crimson. Sweet intense nose. Gentle, well-sculpted palate attack. You can certainly taste the Cabernet in this wine. Carefully made with lots of mildness in its makeup – pleasing and of a different family from all the wines tasted up to now.

Flaccianello IGT 2001 Fontodi
17 pts

Drink 2007-14. Sangiovese 100%. 16-18 mths in Allier barrels, 12 mths in bottle. 14% find this wine

Very dark crimson. Intense and lively nose. Very full, spreads across the palate. Transparent and already quite evolved. Chewy finish. Well sculpted. Quite a hot finish though.

Cepparello IGT 2001 Isole e Olena
18 pts

Drink 2006-15. Sangiovese 100%. 14 mths barrel (1/3 new, 1/3 1 yr, 1/3 2 yr), 12 mths in bottle
13.5% find this wine.

Notably, daringly, pale ruby. Low key, relatively sweet nose. Lots of acidity and freshness – quite different from most of these wines! Racy, lacy. Needs to be drunk by aficionados so to speak – others might ask where the beef? Very healthy-tasting.

Paleo Rosso IGT 2001 Le Macchiole
18 pts

Drink 2005-13. Cabernet Franc 100%. 18 mths (70% new, 1 yr). 14% find this wine.

Dark crimson. Gosh what a shock in among all these Sangioveses! Very seductive – wonderfully ripe, smooth texture and lovely refreshing fruit thanks to the naturally leafy - not underripe - character of the grape.

Sa'etta IGT 2001 Monte Bernardi
17.5 pts

Drink 2005-13. Sangiovese 100%. 10-11 mths in French oak (40% new), 4-6 mths in bottle
13% find this wine

Quite evolved nose. Quite a light colour. Light and lively and very gentle. Quite distinctive.
Fresh and a good drink. I suspect you have to pay for it though...

Ornellaia IGT 2001 Ornellaia
18 pts

Drink 2007-17. Cab Sauv 65%, Merlot 30% Cab Franc 5%. French oak (70% new, 30% 1 yr) 18 mths, 12 mths in bottle. 14.5% find this wine

Inky flattering full and smooth though it does belong more to Bordeaux than to Tuscany! Great freshness – great intensity – great wine. Still very thick and next to Chianti seems almost heavy.

Camartina IGT 2001 Agricola Querciabella
18! pts

Drink 2005-13. Sangiovese 55%, Cab Sauv 40%, Merlot and Syrah 5%. 24 mths 80% new and 20% 1yr French oak (Allier, Nevers, Tronçais), 6 mths in bottle. 14% find this wine

Almost black. Sweet and rich and international. Soft and ripe and very very carefully made. A wine that surely goes down a storm in Italy though seems a bit anomalous in this company. Lively and smooth and fresh and well balanced. Not too sweet or overripe.

La Gioia IGT 2001 Riecine
16 pts

Drink 2007-12. Sangiovese 100%. 60% new oak. 14.22% [How's that for precision?] find this wine
Mid crimson. Vegy autumnal. Lots of oak and sweetness. Not sure about this – too rich and 'international'?
Very hard work on the finish.

Percarlo IGT 2001 San Giusto a Rentennano
18+ pts

Drink 2007-15. Sangiovese 100%. 22 mths in French barriques (Allier, Nevers). 14.5% find this wine.

Very fresh and leafy on the nose – not especially dense in colour. Positively dances over the palate. Lots of life – but why do they make this as well as a Chianti? Great life and race and truth.

Sassicaia IGT 2001 Tenuta San Guido from magnum
17 pts

Drink 2007-17. Cab Sauv 85%. Cab Franc 15%. 22 mths in French barriques (1/3 new), 6 mths in bottle
13.5% find this wine.

Mid crimson. Bonfires and sweetness. Not as arresting as the Ornellaia – much lighter and more transparent
Even in magnum. But a refreshing drink that is so confident it almost doesn't have to try and will surely age.

Anfiteatro IGT 2001 Vecchie Terre di Montefili
16.5 pts

Drink 2006-12. Sangiovese 100%. 16 mths in new French barriques. 13.5% find this wine.

Mid crimson. Autumnal nose. Very ripe and flattering – sweet – so different from, say, Sassicaia. Sweet, round, slightly ingratiating.

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