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PANZANO IN CHIANTI (FI)
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"Michael and, his sister, Jennifer have demonstrated a visceral passion for the Chianti Classico region; for them this means biodynamic farming, minimal intervention in the cellar and a great respect for Sangiovese."

THE TWO FROM PANZANO – In the heart of Chianti Classico a young man tends to an over 40 year old vineyard which is so stony that he strains his hands from exertion. This is not a fairy tale, but the work of Michael Schmelzer, who since 2003, with his family, has owned Monte Bernardi, a winery situated in Panzano's "Conca d'Oro" (the golden shell"). Together Michael and, his sister, Jennifer have demonstrated a visceral passion for the Chianti Classico region; for them this means biodynamic farming, minimal intervention in the cellar and a great respect for Sangiovese. The enthusiasm of the Schmelzer siblings has resulted in qualitative growth which gives us pleasure to write about.

9.5 hectares/23.5 acres – 30,000 bottles

THE HISTORY – Since Jennifer and Michael arrived in Italy at the beginning of 2000, they remained enchanted with the Chianti Classico region. In 2003 they acquired Monte Bernardi, a winery in Panzano in Chianti. Michael is an enologist, who interprets the territory in an authentic and rigorous way. Jennifer is responsible for the commercial part of the business. Since 2004 they have been farming biodynamically. The hard work in the vineyard and cellar is starting to show great qualitative results.

THE VINEYARDS – the property purchased by the Schmelzer family is situated in the southern hills of Panzano. The vineyards are over 40 years old, at an altitude of 350 meters above sea level, surrounded by forests and on a soil of a high rock content – in part shale (Galestro), in part limestone (Alberese). In the cellar, they use large casks for maturation; the casks are of German and Austrian oak and sourced by the famous Austrian cooper Franz Stockinger. Grapes are acquired, also from Panzano, for their base wine: Chianti Classico "Retromarcia". However soon, thanks to new vineyards planted over the last few years, Monte Bernardi will be able to source all of its wines from its own production.

THE WINES – The wines are produced with the aim of achieving the maximum expression of the magnificent territory of Panzano. The quality of the wines presented to our tasting reflects a great achievement. The Chianti Classico SA'ETTA 2007 (Sangiovese; 4,000 btls; 27€) represents a selection of Sangiovese from the winery's best vineyard. This wine is austere, rich in contrast where the fresh acidity is layered in richness and complexity. The Chianti Classico MONTE BERNARDI 2007 (Sangiovese, Canaiolo; 5,000 btls; 15€) expresses deep iron aromas, on a rich, fine structure. Enjoyable and brilliant in color, the Chianti Classico RETROMARCIA 2008 (Sangiovese, Merlot; 22,000 btls; 9€) – is a great value for money. The ROSÉ 2009 (Sangiovese, Canaiolo, Trebbiano, Malvasia; 1,500 btls.; 13€) exhibits notes of mineral and flower; in the mouth it is enjoyable and persistent.

FERTILIZERS: manure pellets, biodynamic preparations, green manure

PEST CONTROL: copper and sulfur

WEED CONTROL: manual

YEASTS: natural

GRAPES: 30% purchased