

TASTING REPORT: TOP 100 NEW SUPER TUSCANS IN 2012

August 29th, 2012

This year I have already tasted close to 1,000 Tuscan wines, and I still have a few hundred more wines to go – mostly whites. I have found hundreds of outstanding quality wines.

Rather than slow you down with all of them at once, I have decided to give you my top 100 Super Tuscan wines to date. This includes wines under the appellation of IGT Toscana as well as regions such as Alta Valle della Greve, Bolgheri, Cortona, Colli della Toscana Centrale, Maremma Toscana, and Sant'Antimo. (The photo above is from Chianti Classico.)

When all my new Tuscan wine tasting notes are posted on the site, I will provide you with a complete list of Tuscan wines, including Brunellos. The wines will be ordered according to score and also alphabetically.

"The 2009 harvest is one of my favorite recent years," said Lamberto Frescobaldi of the famous Florentine winemaking clan. "There were no extreme temperatures during the summer. And then the temperatures rose in September and we had very little rain. It was great for Cabernet Sauvignon, but the king variety for Tuscany – Sangiovese – also gained a lot."

For now, most of the wines I have tasted this summer are super Tuscan reds from 2009, a beautiful year that produced refined wines with plenty of pure fruit and racy tannins. Most of my top 2009s came from growing costal regions such as Bolgheri and the best sub-areas of Chianti Classico. They are all so very approachable and beautiful now but will improve for decades ahead. I seemed to have a preference for international varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Some of my favorites from 2009 include: Sassicaia (98 points), Guado al Tasso (97), Messorio (97), and Solaia (97). Some of the high-scoring wines that may be less known to you include: Chianti Classico's Casaloste Inversus, Riparbella's Castiglion del Bosco Prima Pietra, and Valdarno's Caberlot. I scored all three of these 96 points.

Check out two videos on Prima Pietra – one on the vineyard and one on the wine. Two more are coming on Caberlot.

This all said, my favorite wine of my Tuscan tasting was the 2008 Castello dei Rampolla d'Alceo. I scored this magnificent wine 100 points. It is truly perfect. Everything – the fruit, tannins and acidity – is in perfect proportion. This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot is so refined and ethereal. It's a wine you fall in love with tasting. The di Napoli family is extraordinary at winemaking. Moreover, they organically grow all of Rampolla's grapes. (I am tasting with Luca Di Napoli in the photo at his estate.)

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Check out two videos on Rampolla from last year – one filmed in the vineyards and the other during a tasting in the property's garden.

It's amazing how many excellent to fabulous vintages Tuscany has experienced recently: 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011. I honestly didn't expect to find so many superb wines from the 2009 vintage after so many marvelous wines from earlier years.

Last night I had an engaging conversation with a winemaker from Brunello di Montalcino who said that Italian winemakers do not differentiate their vintages enough. "Most winemakers say that every vintage is outstanding," he said, urging his colleagues to note the individual nuances of various wines and years.

Yet, the number of excellent wines being produced in just about every vintage in Tuscany makes the task of distinguishing one year from another for particular wines difficult for some winemakers. In fact, it's difficult for all of us who love Tuscan wines.