

Article Archive
Vintage Profile

Tuscany 2009 and 2010: A World of Opposites

These are interesting times in Tuscany. There is no doubt the region is in the midst of a profound stylistic evolution. A growing number of estates are moving in the direction of more natural viticulture. In the cellar, new oak is down and the use of neutral vessels is up. Cement, once virtually forgotten, is making a huge comeback. As it turns out, the makers of cement tanks and vats are now taking as long as six months to fill orders, something that was unheard of up until very recently. In Chianti, Sangiovese continues to gain favor, while the use of international grapes in Tuscany's most famous wine has decreased. Readers will find three very different vintages in the market; the cool, powerful 2010s, the radiant 2009s and the irregular 2008s. As always, Italy's byzantine regulations can be intimidating for those who don't yet feel comfortable with the wines. Readers who take the time to get to know the producers in this article will be rewarded with a number of stunning bottles at all price points. I tasted the majority of the wines in this report during a week I spent in Tuscany in April 2012, followed by tastings in New York shortly thereafter.

Vintage 2009 Overview


The 2009s are wines of contrasts. The winter and spring were on the cool and damp side in most parts of Tuscany. In some spots flowering got off to an early start, as temperatures were higher than normal in May. The summer was very hot, culminating with an intense heat wave that arrived in mid-August. This is the time when evening temperatures typically begin to moderate as the summer winds down and fall arrives. Not in 2009. The worst of the heat lasted over a week. I have a vivid recollection of that time because I was on vacation in Tuscany with my family. It was hot, hot, hot. The most adversely affected area was Maremma, where I came across a number of wines that had their personalities baked out by the heat. Chianti Classico, which is generally cooler, was spared the worst of the heat. In some places, the warmth actually helped fill out some of the wines. A number of producers did not bottle their top wines in 2009, and many of those who did were very severe in their selection of what made it into bottle.

It is hard to make a broad generalization about the 2009s given the sheer size of Tuscany, but in general it can be said that the wines tend to have medium-bodied structures of cooler vintages, but the radiant, ripe fruit typical of warmer years. I don't expect this to be a vintage to cellar over the long term, but it should be a useful crop of wines to drink while the 2006s, 2007s and 2008s come around. Overall, I find much less personality in the 2009s than I do in the surrounding vintages, although, as always, I prefer to choose producer first and vintage second.

Vintage 2010 Overview

In Chianti Classico, 2010 is shaping up to be a great vintage, perhaps one of the greatest. It was a cold year, with an irregular flowering that lowered yields, and a very late harvest. The wines possess stunning depth, well-delineated aromatics and massive structure. If I had to draw comparisons with recent years, I would say the 2010s have the aromatics of 2004, the fruit density of 2007 and the structure of 2006. Sounds pretty appealing, doesn't it? Readers can get a sense of the year by tasting the Chiantis that are entering the market over the next few months. And it's not just the Chiantis from the Classico zone that are terrific, there are plenty of wines from the broader Chianti zone that are also compelling, especially because they can be had for a fraction of the price. I am equally enthusiastic about the wines of Montalcino, as I described in Issue 200. So far, I have tasted less from Maremma, but what I have seen is promising as well.

—Antonio Galloni


eRobertParker.com

92+
points
Drink: 2015-2025

2009 Podere Poggio Scalette Capogatto


The 2009 Capogatto is totally dialed in in this vintage. Grilled herbs, graphite, licorice, plums and black cherries are woven together in this subtle yet opulent wine. If the Capogatto was made in Bordeaux, it would cost at least twice as much. The 2009 is totally harmonious from start to finish. Layers of fruit build to the juicy, explosive finish. Capogatto is Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. I can't wait to see how this ages. Anticipated maturity: 2015-2025.

The Poggio Scalette wines aren't always easy to find, but they are well worth the effort. This is another strong set of new releases from father and son team Vittorio and Jurij Fiore. In particular, I was impressed with the Chianti Classico, which shows tons of character and personality at a very fair price.

A Leonardo Lo Cascio Selection, Winebo...

- Antonio Galloni (June, 2012)

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94+
points
Drink: 2016-2029

2009 Podere Poggio Scalette Il Carbonaione


The 2009 Il Carbonaione has elegance to burn. Polished, silky tannins frame layers of fruit as this harmonious, totally finessed wine blossoms in the glass. The 2009 is simply glorious from the very first taste. A kick of Sangiovese acidity gives the wine its lift and vibrancy on the finish. This is a great showing. Carbonaione is 100% Sangiovese (Lamole clone) grown on the hillsides of Greve. The wine spent 15 months in 350-liter oak barrels, 50% new. Anticipated maturity: 2016-2029.

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A Leonardo Lo Cascio Selection, Winebow, M...

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90
points
Drink: 2012-2016

2010 Podere Poggio Scalette Chianti Classico

The 2010 Chianti Classico (Sangiovese) is layered with dark fruit, spices, licorice, grilled herbs and new leather, all supported by firm tannins. Dark red cherries and flowers reappear on the attractive finish. This is a lovely effort. In 2010, the Chianti Classico comes across as a baby Poggio Scalette. Not bad, to say the least. Readers on a budget should not miss this striking Chianti Classico. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2016.

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