

WINE News

Italy: A vintage for the ages and fresh whites for this summer.



JULY 3, 2017 FEATURES

- 1-3 Reviews: 2012 Brunello di Montalcino
- 4 A Summer of Italian White Wines

2012 Brunello: Flavor, Depth, Balance and Drinkability!

By Greg St. Clair

“The 2012 Brunello Vintage is a Return to Finesse”

—Kerin O’Keefe, *Wine Enthusiast*

“I found more good to outstanding examples than in any past vintage”

—Ian d’Agata, *Vinous*

“Rock Star Vintage”

—James Suckling

So the pundits have spoken, and I agree that the 2012 wines from Montalcino are exceptional. It sounds too good to be true after how good the 2010 vintage was, but the elegance, balance, complexity and

depth of texture are all sensational in these wines. The 2010 vintage brought Brunello to the world stage, and now it is on the back of the 2012 to show how good the wines from Montalcino are, and that 2010 wasn’t just a fluke or a once-a-decade event. This February, I spent the better part of a week in Tuscany tasting the 2012 vintage, and I was amazed by the consistent quality and intrigued by its more savory, rather than overtly fruity, character. In this way it is similar to 2010. In general, the wines are superbly balanced, elegant and will age well for a decade plus. In this newsletter you’ll find my reviews on a selection of these you may wish to try, followed by refreshments from Lugana and Soave Classico.

2012 Castelgiocondo Brunello di Montalcino (\$49.99) The nose of this wine seems subtle, yet it is not—it just isn’t blatantly fruity. It has a dense, concentrated meatiness to it that isn’t like the salty, savory umami character that many wines have this vintage. On the palate the first thing you notice is the superfine tannin structure, polished to a high gloss, supple yet muscular. The flavors are deep, a mix of that concentrated meatiness with an understated plum and cassis background. This gives a restrained, muscular density to the wine that, while that may seem like a description of a ponderously thick and clumsy wine, is anything but that. It is balanced, smooth, complex and exceedingly well balanced. This wine will age very well over the next 10–15 years. Drink from 2017 to 2027.

93 JS, 93 WE, 92 RP, 91 VN



2012 Fattoria dei Barbi Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) This wine is gorgeous. Fattoria dei Barbi is one of Montalcino’s classic wines, defining the style. The wildly attractive nose is full of wild cherry and plum with leather, spice and Tuscan brush. On the palate the wine has a density, a smooth muscle power, and where Barbi sometimes comes across a little gritty, this vintage shows a bit of sweetness rounding off the edges. The flavors are stunning, so focused and saturated, showing a great combination of place and vintage while being extraordinarily well balanced. The finish is long, alive and seems to lift at the back end, regaling one with that ultra-complex Sangiovese wild cherry spice that goes on and on. This wine is remarkably drinkable now yet will age easily up to 20 years from the vintage. I really love this wine. Drink from 2017 to 2032. 94 WS, 93 WE, 93 RP



2012 Talenti Brunello di Montalcino (\$43.99) You can really sense the richness of this wine, which is dictated by Talenti's western slope location. The wine smells of the afternoon sun. The nose is full of umami-spiked plum, far more savory than fruity, yet still has a dense fruitiness to it. There is a lushness to it that feels like humidity-rich environments: it fills your nose almost like the difference between a warm summer breeze that fills your sinuses in New Orleans versus a similar afternoon in Phoenix. On the palate the wine is agile and linear, and while still reflecting that density, it remains remarkably elegant and fresh on the palate. The flavors amble between those salty plum and dried wild cherry flavors with suggestions of Mediterranean garrigue. The finish has a certain lushness about it, but is not overtly fat at all, just has a bit of weight on its bones that gives it more drinkability now. It still has the classic Sangiovese linear drive that lends balance and freshness to the finish. Barbecue pork chops with fresh rosemary for me with this wine—don't overcook them, they need to be a little pinkish. This wine will age well for another decade but is too delicious to wait! Drink from 2017 to 2027. **95 JS, 91 RP, 91 VN**

2012 Le Potazzine Brunello di Montalcino (\$56.99) The nose on this wine is full, but full of the flavors of the forest, wild fruit; constrained, not sweet, yet vibrant; then rosemary, marjoram, dried wild flowers, hints of leather, a bit of anise—all aromas that lift the nose to an elegant place. On the palate this wine is very high toned, super elegant, long and lithe—no love handles here, this wine is taut and supple in the same moment. The flavors show the restraint of Tuscan nobility: never revealing too much in a moment, one needs time to read between the lines. Le Potazzine is one of Montalcino's higher-elevation wineries just on the crest of the western slope. This altitude gives this wine its light touch. Nothing is out of place, just wild berries and herbs touched with a bit of soil. Long, elevating and supremely balanced, this is an excellent wine, a real throwback classic that will age very well over the next 10–15 years but is readily drinkable now with a bit of decanting. Drink from 2017 to 2027. **96+ RP, 96 WE**



2012 La Magia Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) The nose is a more savory wild cherry and salted plum, followed by a whiff of Tuscan garrigue. On the palate the wine has a broad, full, central palate with fine tannins and a supple plumpness. While it is graceful, it still shows structure, power and excellent acidic presence. The flavors are plum and wild cherry, with bits of leather and earth. Having a more restrained voice, this wine is really well balanced, and while drinkable now, it will age gracefully for the next 10 years or so. Drink from 2017 to 2027. **96 JS, 92 WE, 92 VN**

2012 Brunello di Montalcino Pre-Arrivals

We've been in the business of importing wine directly from many of these producers since the 1999 vintage, and we can offer extraordinary value with them because we are the middlemen. This vintage is sensational and you are going to want these wines! These are pre-arrival prices, and for many of these wines the in-stock pricing will be higher.

2012 La Fortuna Brunello di Montalcino (\$35.99) The nose is full of wild cherries and plummy ripeness, with hints of herb and a bit of leather. La Fortuna has vineyards on Montalcino's south slope as well as next to Fuligni, just east of the town. This combo (just like Siro Pacenti) allows them a more complex blend, full and ripe with wonderful freshness and structure. This year's Brunello is no exception—it's perfectly balanced! Drink from 2017 to 2030. **93 JS, 92 VN, 92 RP, 90 WE**



Angelo Zanoni invites us into the cellars at La Fortuna.

2012 Sesta di Sopra Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99) There's always a special place in my heart for Sesta di Sopra—we were their first client and they our first Brunello import, a tremendous honor, and we've sold their wine ever since their inaugural 1999 vintage. They average about 335 cases of wine a year—yes, that's just over 4,000 bottles. The nose in this vintage is a mélange of umami, plum, porcini mushrooms, wild cherry, Tuscan brush and bits of leather. The wine has a great palate presence, rich, supple, with excellent balance and a bit of tannic structure. Drink from 2017 to 2030. **95 JS, 93 WE, 93 VN, 92 RP**

2012 Tenuta di Sesta Brunello di Montalcino (\$29.99) One of my favorites of the vintage! The nose is full of a savory, plummy sweetness accented with touches of earth and spice. On the palate the wine is smooth, rich and gives one a luxurious feel while the driving force is the complex blend of fruit, dried herbs, leather and earth that resonate on the palate. While Tenuta di Sesta's wines never seem to be blockbusters (they aren't), their ability to age is undeniable. It's all about the balance, and this wine is sensational. Drink from 2017 to 2030. **92 JS, 92 VN, 92 RP, 90 WE**

2012 Baccinetti Brunello di Montalcino (\$29.99) Baccinetti (or Catzilla as we affectionately call it) is on Montalcino's south slope just west of Lisini and produces a full, richly textured Brunello. The nose is heady, full of balsamic notes, sweet plum, clove and cinnamon spices along with a bit of leather. On the palate you sense this is a powerful wine—waves of plump fruit cross your tongue framed by a tannic structure. The finish is an explosion of flavor: those balsamic notes, earth, spices and fruit all come back to the center for a lush and long finish. Drink from 2017 to 2026. **92 JS**



Be on the lookout for the return of Catzilla.

2012 Poggiarellino Brunello di Montalcino (\$29.99) In the 2012 vintage there is a powerful statement of place, and for Poggiarellino that is manifested in marasca cherry—that wild and gamy Italian cherry—and its surreal aromatics: it's haunting, inviting and seductive; it's that incredibly complex aroma that you adore in your Manhattans. On the palate you sense the ripeness of the vintage—not over-ripe, but definitely with a hint of chocolate and plums it is aromatically dense, and like the vintage in general, that richness is balanced by excellent structure underneath. This vintage shows far more complexity, layers of spice, distinct mineral components and a truly dramatic and long-lasting finish where the spice and mineral go on forever. In the mouth the wine is electric—it has a real, vibrant core that drives the wine the length of your palate with a lush, dense coating yet it never hesitates to be forceful and compelling. This is a wine that is capable of aging 15–20 years easily, yet is balanced and rich enough to drink now! Drink from 2017 to 2030. **93 JS, 93 WE**

2012 Albatreti Brunello di Montalcino (\$34.99) The first time I met Gaetano Salvioni I couldn't believe my eyes—it was like Santa Claus had taken up winemaking! However, his wines are amazing—the Albatreti nose is full of wild cherry, herb, spice and a touch of earth. On the palate it is supple, and the fruit melds with a savory component giving one the sense of braised fruit with a touch of earth. The wine finishes long, supple and flavorful. Just delicious now and will age well for the next decade.



K&L's Team Italy at Tenuta di Sesta.

2015 Rosso di Montalcino

2015 Fattoria dei Barbi Rosso di Montalcino (\$19.99) Fattoria dei Barbi is of Montalcino's oldest wineries, dating from the late nineteenth century, and is situated on the east side of Montalcino's spine ridge not too far south from Biondi Santi. This is the first winery I ever visited in Montalcino, way back in 1982, and their style is classic: the nose is full of leather, earth, Tuscan brush and is slow to open. On the palate you sense a vibrant core of acidity and tannin that sets the tone for the wine. Dynamic and expanding, this is a wine to decant for 2–4 hours or to power decant (pour back and forth between decanters multiple times). You don't need to be gentle—the core of this wine begins to uncoil with air contact, or age, and if you drink half a bottle one night and go back the next you'll be amazed at the growth. This is what all Brunello and Rosso used to taste like: a bit focused and tight,

but over time, with air contact, it opens into a beautiful wine. On the palate the wine gives you real Sangiovese flavor, bright, wild cherry with a bit of earth and leather, and has a bit of gritty texture to remind you it's a classic. The finish is tight, clean, focused and layered with earth, spice, leather and wild cherry. This wine needs a richer food like a T-bone, or American-style lasagna would work as well. Drink from 2017 to 2025.

2015 Argiano Rosso di Montalcino (\$19.99) The nose of this wine is smoky, earthy, spiced with aromatic plums—more red plums than dark plums. The body shows lushness and supple warmth, yet is not fat, just textured. Argiano is in the western portion of Montalcino and has a sun-kissed glow to it. The flavors show a bit of earth, spice and leather that combine with the smoky spiciness; the red plums come in at the end and drive those into a more singular flavor. The finish shows Sangiovese's long, natural structure and in a great vintage like 2015 where everything lines up you can get quite the show. Balanced, complex, texturally supple with a long finish, this is a really good wine that's going to age for another 5–10 years. Drink from 2017 to 2022.

2015 Talenti Rosso di Montalcino (\$19.99) The nose of this wine is so pure, so clean and so classically Sangiovese, it thrills me. Talenti's position on Montalcino's western slope allows for a slightly riper profile but its elevation adds intrigue and focus. Lots of fresh plum, herb, spice and glove leather flow from the glass in a gentle, beckoning manner, never bold but always compelling. On the palate the supple smoothness is the first thing you notice—the structure is there but it never protrudes as obvious. As the lithe wine glides across your palate it's a more savory plum flavor that you notice, less fruity, more complex, with more background earth and herb. The finish is long, balanced and seems to wander across the back of your tongue rather than forcefully play itself out. This wine will age well for the next 8–10 years. I like this wine with a slightly more delicate accompaniment—no wild boar for this, rather rabbit or veal with some fresh pappardelle! Drink from 2017 to 2025.



2015 Uccelliera Rosso di Montalcino (\$26.99)

The nose of this wine is smoky, savory, umami-driven and reminds me a lot of the aromas from the 2010 vintage, and they were heavenly. It isn't as if there is a lack of fruit, it's just that it's not that ebullient, California fruity forwardness. The fruit in this wine is part of that savory nose, it's just integrated; the wild cherry aromatics are less like a bowl of Jell-O, they're more like that pungent, earthy aromatic that dried cherries can give, concentrated but not "fruity." On the palate you sense this is Sangiovese immediately—the long axis that gives wines from Montalcino that great length and lift. There is no sense of sweetness on your tongue but you can feel the movement, that electric vibrancy driving the flavors and the supple texture. The finish is very well balanced, complex and persistent. This is a wine that is really drinkable now, but I always like to decant Sangiovese for an hour or two—it opens an expressive option. This wine will age very well 10–15 years from the vintage, opening and gaining complexity. Drink from 2017 to 2026.



Vineyards of Le Battistelle in spring.

You Should Drink More White Wines—Especially Italian!

By Greg St. Clair

Summertime is the perfect time to explore white wines from regions that are new to you. We recently started importing the wines from Tenuta Rovaglia, a producer located at the foot of Lake Garda just west of Verona, in the Lugana region. For years, the white wine of the Lugana DOC was known by the moniker Trebbiano di Lugana, but DNA research now shows that the grape of Lugana is actually Verdicchio, one of Italy’s greatest indigenous white grapes.

2016 Tenuta Rovaglia “Limne” Lugana (\$12.99) This wine really excites me: the nose is floral and spicy, and shows notes of beeswax and honey that flow from the glass. On the palate the wine has weight and a distinct richness, yet you immediately feel the snap of acidity, that vibrant center-palate zing that just lights up your mouth. And it’s only 13% ABV. The flavors of spice, lees and braised fruit are offset by the focused acidity that adds lift and drive to the palate presence. The finish is long, mineral-driven, and shows incredible balance. Layers of fruit, spice and floral notes are consistently blossoming on the finish. **90 WE**

A few years ago I spent the better part of a week in Soave—Soave Classico, that is—and until I did that I really didn’t understand the difference. The Soave Classico DOC rests on top of an extinct volcano, unlike its Soave DOC counterpart, and it is this volcanic minerality that gives the wine its vibrancy. It wasn’t until I visited Le Battistelle that I finally had the epiphany. In Le Battistelle’s wines you really get a sense of place: the piercing minerality, elegant balance, focused aromatics and



remarkable aging potential of the region’s wines. When we visited Le Battistelle in 2016 we were about to taste the 2014 cru selections when owners Cristina and Gelmino dal Bosco told us that 2014 was a terrible vintage. I was a little surprised by the statement and wondered what I had got us into—the previous year’s wines were truly outstanding. My colleagues and I cautiously tasted and then looked at each other with a “what?” look on our faces—the wines were stunning, focused, mineral driven and aromatic. We looked at Cristina and Gelmino and said, “But these are great.” They replied that of course they’re good, but in 2014 they lost 70% of the harvest due to bad weather—thus, for them, it was a horrible vintage! I had to explain “marketing” to them, and that the story of how their sacrifice made a great wine was a better lead than “it’s a terrible vintage.”

2014 Le Battistelle “Battistelle” Soave Classico (\$12.99)

Layered with white flower aromatics, crisp acidity and an edgy minerality couched in a supple and inviting body, this is excellent by itself or with delicate fish or roast chicken.

2014 Le Battistelle “Roccolo del Durlo” Soave Classico (\$15.99)

A wine that has more structure, depth and aging ability—one senses structure immediately in this wine—this is the old-vine portion where almost a third of the vines are from 60 up to 100 years old. The Roccolo has superb aromatics, a combination of floral and spicy. The palate shows more body and grit, while the minerality accents a dynamic and lifting finish.



K&L REDWOOD CITY

3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061
P (650) 364-8544 **F** (650) 364-4687
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-7, Sun 10-6
LOCKERS Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5

K&L HOLLYWOOD

1400 Vine Street, Hollywood, CA 90028
P (323) 464-WINE (9463) **F** (323) 836-0853
HOURS Mon-Thurs 11-8, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11-6

K&L SAN FRANCISCO

855 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
P (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-6

KLWINES.COM

Toll Free (877) KLWINES (877) 559-4637
Email: Wines@KLWines.com

K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host regular evening and Saturday tastings at each K&L store as well as many special events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to KLWines.com/Local-Events.

We accept American Express, Discover, Visa, Mastercard and PayPal.

For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit KLWines.com

[🍷 FOLLOW OUR BLOGS UNCORKED AND SPIRITS JOURNAL FOR THE LATEST UPDATES FROM K&L STAFF 🍷](#)