

WINE News

The Best of Italy: 2010 Brunello, scintillating whites, new producers, and more.



AUGUST 31, 2015 FEATURES

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A Boatload (Actually, Three) of Treasures from Italy

By Greg St. Clair

September has arrived, and so have multiple containers filled with Italian wines. This issue debuts our newest Direct Import producer, Le Battistelle Soave Classico (great quality and exceptional value), and celebrates the return of La Monacesca Verdicchio di Matelica (92-95 points of powerful whites). An introduction to the superb wines of d'Amico from the Lazio/Orvieto border is offered by Hollywood's John Downing, and our in-house sommelier Angie An offers wine pairing advice for Brunello. Finally, Guido writes about the superb Prosecco producer, Silvano Follador (our yearly allocation is back). But first, our goal of exposing you to the truly spectacular 2010 vintage for Brunello di Montalcino continues with the arrival of an abundance of in-stock wines ready for the upcoming holidays!



2010 Banfi Brunello di Montalcino (\$49.89) 4 stars ****

The aromatics in this wine speak to a density, saturation and structure like I've never experienced in this level of Banfi Brunello before. Plum, cherry, savory meats and spice blended with dried flowers highlight the nose. On the palate, the wine's structure takes over. Big, shoulder-size tannins give a framework of power and allow the dense fruit to bond. Flavors of plum and cherry are mere accents to the dense power. Very fine-grained tannins pull the wine to a long and vibrant finish. 48,500 cases produced.

2010 Mastrojanni Brunello di Montalcino (\$67.99) 5 stars *****

The nose smells of savory meats spiced with dried fruit, tea and bergamot, almost like Earl Grey. On the palate, the underlying tannic structure is present yet balanced. Its power frames the wine in your mouth. The flavors are molten, a compote of meat, dried fruit and leather, with hints of a cedar-like richness. An earthy character—subterranean, primal and salty—dominates a finish that is of truly spectacular length and ongoing flavor. One of the best wines of the vintage. 2,916 cases produced.



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2010 Brunello di Montalcino “Redux”

By Greg St. Clair

I was asked by one of our staff members the other day, what the equivalent vintage in Barolo would be compared to the 2010 vintage of Brunello di Montalcino. The answer was really simple: none. It has nothing to do with the quality of Barolo or if you think Barolo is “better” than Brunello, only that Barolo has had a string of excellent vintages in the last 20 years, and many more before, but none of those stands so far above the others as 2010 does in Montalcino. James Suckling’s first review of the 2010 Brunello di Montalcino vintage in December 2014 had a headline reading: “A vintage of a lifetime.” Believe me, he nailed it.

When I first visited Montalcino in 1982, I visited the Fattoria dei Barbi (just super wines this vintage) and was struck by how different the experience was from Napa. There were vast tracks of open land, forests, hills and lots of dirt roads. Napa has about 44,000 acres planted to vineyards, whereas Montalcino has only 8,400 acres (of the 57,000 acres in the commune) and only 5,000 acres of Brunello vineyards. Napa has more than 400 producers; Montalcino, just above 200. So, what am I getting at? It is a small place where not very much wine is made, and this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We may never see wines like this again.

These are available in stores now, or will be shortly, and are available on a pre-arrival basis. Read our full **2010 Brunello Report**, coming in September, by visiting the Vintage Reports link in the K&L Web Features section of our website, KLWines.com.

2010 Agostina Pieri Brunello di Montalcino (\$49.95) 4 stars ★★★★★ Bold, dramatically ripe aromatics of sweet cherry and plum fill the nose along with a big dose of barrel spice. On the palate the wine is luscious and rolls across your tongue, replaying the aromatics with a bold, fruity character. 1,666 cases produced.

2010 Bellaria Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ The nose is sweet and savory, full of spiced plum, wild herbs and a hint of the Tuscan dust. In the mouth the wine is expansive and seemingly fills every corner with a luxurious and full body. So approachable now, it’s hard to resist drinking, but it will grow in stature with a few more years. 208 cases produced.

2010 Biondi Santi Brunello di Montalcino (\$104.95) 4 stars ★★★★★ The nose is tightly wound, oyster shell, crushed brick and leather. On the palate the wine shows long, elegant lines that highlight the wine’s tannic structure. Leaner and restrained, with hints of the salty, savory vintage character.

2010 Capanna Brunello di Montalcino (\$46.99) 5 stars ★★★★★ Capanna is a powerhouse: the nose is an array of wild cherry, chestnut, cinnamon, smoked meats, plum and cocoa. On the palate, the wine is a cauldron of molten fruit,



spice, and leather and displays an extraordinary density. A marvel to behold. However, this is a wine you’ll need to hold onto for awhile. Drop it in your cellar for another 5-10 years, or if you need to gift a birth year wine, this is it. 2,500 cases produced.

2010 Col d’Orcia Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 5 stars ★★★★★ The nose is full of baked cherry pie aromatics, that wafting, enticing kind that fills your kitchen as you wait to dive in. The wine is no fruit bomb, however; it epitomizes the character of the vintage with its savory/salty character, hints of leather, stone and that exotic cherry. The best Col d’Orcia I’ve ever had. Sensational effort! 20,833 cases produced.

2010 Colosorbo Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ Colosorbo’s southern exposure always seems to absorb the sunshine right into the bottle in an exuberantly fruity style. This vintage is a bit different, and for me, it is a stunningly more complex version. This vintage the meaty, soy, umami, salted plum and leather flavors have joined in behind the fresh, wild cherry ripeness to form an incredible combination. The finish is really focused but still shows that inherent richness. Excellent wine. 3,000-plus cases produced.

2010 Cupano Brunello di Montalcino (\$89.99) 5 stars ★★★★★ The nose is a powerful combination of sweet spices, fruit compote and barrel spice, and has a dynamism that is truly impressive. On the palate that dynamic movement of the wine

is evident as the layers of ripe fruit, smoke, cedar, emerge and eventually lay bare the underlying savory/salty character. The finish is powerful, deep. Slightly more modern in style and truly great. 458 cases produced.

2010 Donatella Cinelli Colombini Brunello Prime Donne (\$74.99) 4 stars ★★★★★ The Prime Donne is a denser, more powerful version of Donatella’s Brunello. However, the density has focused the wine’s flavors inward and it doesn’t have the current effusiveness that the Brunello Annata does. The future holds the key to this wine and those who show the patience to wait will be rewarded. 416 cases produced.

2010 Donatella Cinelli Colombini Brunello (\$54.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ The nose of this wine is full of sweet, ripe fruit, more plum than cherry but Italian “plumminess,” not overripe, just spicier. On the palate the wine opens, deepens and is full of the ripe cherry, but not sweet—more savory. The finish is balanced, long, and full of the same fruit character. It becomes more elegant and lifts on the back end. 3,750 cases produced.

2010 Ferrero Brunello di Montalcino (\$42.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ One of the curious attributes of the stellar 2010 vintage is that most wines are darker in color than normal. Ferrero is no different. The nose is full of tight black cherry aromatics, focused, vibrant and penetrating. Normally in Ferrero, I find weight and richness in the first sensation, but this wine’s incredible balance just jumps out at you. The flavors are saturated, dense,

layered and all held in perfect balance. The black cherry is accented with hints of earth and spice and the finish goes on and on. 457 cases of the best wine Ferrero has produced.

2010 Fornacina Brunello di Montalcino (\$49.99) 4 stars ★★★★★ The nose is like a two-day-old fire pit: smoky, ash, earth, leather, opening to dried herbs, spiced fruit and the vintage's savory character. On the palate, more fruit begins to open and the wine's powerful structure takes hold. A lot going on, but it needs a few years to come together, or a few hours in a decanter. But such potential! 833 cases produced.

2010 Ilicus Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ Generally I'm not much of a fan of Sangiovese in barrique—it takes the right producer to grow fruit powerful enough to withstand the barrel's character. Ilicus is that wine. The nose is packed with dense fruit: wild cherry, ripe, yet vibrant plum, bits of leather, spice. Very aromatic. On the palate the wine is sensational, an audacious, polished, supple force, powerful yet easy, superbly balanced yet opulent.

2010 La Mannella Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 4 stars ★★★★★ La Mannella is experiencing a generational changeover in winemaking technique. The shy, supple, easy wines of the past have been replaced with bold, powerful, exuberant wines. The nose of this wine just fills the room with sweet fruit flavors, cherry, plum, spice and hints of wood spice. On the palate, the aromatic profile segues into the same flavors, then the powerful structure takes over. I think that the power will integrate and make this a wine I wish to look at again in another few years. 1,667 cases produced.

2010 La Mannella Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ On the palate the wine is wound around a tight core. This is a powerful wine with a lot of structure. It will open, but it is a bit tight at the moment. There are lots of pent up flavors, and time will open up a lot of those locked-in flavors. If you're looking for near-term drinking La Mannella's Annata Brunello is for you, but the long term potential of the I Poggiarelli is superb. The finish is powerful, long and layering. A really powerful wine with a long, long future. 333 cases produced.

Le Ragnaie Brunello di Montalcino (\$79.99) 5 stars ★★★★★ This is one of my favorite wines of the vintage and one that just epitomizes its character. The nose is filled with savory, smoky, meaty, porcini aromatics. On the palate the wine is supple: it just flows so easily, so graceful across your tongue. It is so balanced it just seems poised to remain forever in your memory. Don't miss this wine, it's just superb. 2,041 cases produced.

2010 Terre Nere Brunello di Montalcino (\$42.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ The nose is a wild combination of cigar ash, salted plum, cedar and bergamot—never thought I'd write that combination, but it really works. On the palate the wine has serious depth, richness and an underlying sensation of complexity. The finish is long, bold and flamboyant, lots of texture and sweet fruit. For a more New World style of Brunello, this is excellent. 1,583 cases produced.



James Suckling tasting the 2010 Brunello "vintage of a lifetime" last September.

2010 La Serena Brunello di Montalcino (\$58.99) 4.5 stars ★★★★★ ½ The nose is full of spice, vanilla, cedar and bits of cherry compote. On the palate, the cherry and spice blossom in a supple, enticing and plump texture that is enticing, alluring and makes you want to taste again. Fruit and spice come together in a long, powerful finish. 1,166-plus cases produced.

2010 San Giacomo Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 4 stars ★★★★★ The nose is a little reticent at first, then gradually opens to spice, wild cherry and leather. On the palate, the savory flavors grow, and morph into a meaty, spicy richness. Yet, I find myself paying more attention to the ultra-fine tannins. This is a wine that takes time to develop, blending the flavors and textures to a triumphant statement. An excellent wine—I can't wait to see what this will be like in another 5-10 years. 416 cases produced.

2010 Verbena Brunello di Montalcino (\$49.99) 4 stars ★★★★★ This is the best Verbena I've ever tasted, period. The wine shows lots of wild brush, herbs, plums and stone in the nose, while on the palate the depth of this vintage begins to show. Spice and herbs on the palate, then fruit: dried plum accented with wild cherry, hints of leather, bits of vanilla and more of that umami character in the back palate. The finish is long, full and layered, and shows that aging will add more depth and breadth to the wine. 1,275 cases produced.



Le Battistelle

I can't remember the last time I was so excited about introducing a new Direct Import producer as I am about Le Battistelle. The name had me from the first: "To Bat the Stars." It is so evocative of their vineyard sites, they couldn't have chosen a better name. And yet, I would never, never have guessed it was a producer of Soave.

Yes, a wine of that name was the scourge of television commercials in my youth: Sono Franco Bolla; Soave Bolla; or was it Bolla Soave? Who ever knew?

I spent five days in Soave in September, 2014. It was enlightening, more so than any other five day period I've spent anywhere else in Italy. First off, there are two Soaves. I really never paid any attention until I got there, and then the difference was so overwhelmingly evident, I wondered how we all (OK, just me) missed it so badly. Soave? Yes. But, Soave Classico? OMG. Yes, that's an OMG.

I tasted with Cristina and Gelmino Dal Bosco, who have vineyards in Soave Classico, in the tiny town of Brognoligo, high up in the basalt layers of an extinct volcano. Cristina and Gelmino started their winery in 2002, using only stainless steel for fermenting and aging. They belong to a group known as Viticoltura Eroica, which means Heroic Viticulture. I immediately understood why they had previously sold their grapes to the local cooperative: To work on their steeply sloping vineyards must have been back-breaking enough, let alone having to worry about making wine and selling it! Fortunately, K&L can help with that.

The 2014 Le Battistelle Soave Classico "Montesei" (\$10.99) is mind-blowing at this price point. The vineyard is a looser blend of volcanic soil and clay that allows the grapes to mature more quickly in relation to their other vineyards, and it produces a wine that is forward, with more fruit, kind of Golden Delicious apples, than minerals, yet is intensely refreshing, with a supple texture. Only 12% abv.

The 2013 Le Battistelle Soave Classico "Battistelle" (\$14.99) vineyard is the steepest slope they have, facing more southwest. Here the soil is basalt rocks that alternate with *tufo* (in their dialect it's called *togo*).

This gives the wine a more savory, salty character; it just makes your mouth water. The nose is full of white flower aromatics. Balanced, with incredible persistence, and 12.5% abv.

The 2013 Le Battistelle Soave Classico "Roccolo del Durlo" (\$19.99) vineyard is the a mix of tufo, basalt and clay, but is so dark it's called "Le Carbonare," referring to its coal-like color. Gelmino took me out in this vineyard to show me a whole section of vines that are more than 100 years old—incredible to look at but even harder to imagine. I love this wine: the nose is full of spice, white flower and on the palate it has a certain depth—I balk at saying power, because it is so delicate, but it does have staying power and it ages very well for up to 10 years.



The Roccolo del Durlo vineyard: tufo, basalt and clay.

Villa Poggio Salvi

Being well-known in a region is a blessing and a curse. Of the more than 200 producers in Montalcino, we can't import them all. Yet we get asked by so many, it's hard to say no. Every producer thinks their wine is both fabulous and well-priced, but in a subjective world it is really hard to make every wine work for our marketplace. Luca

Belingardi had been pursuing us for several years, but it wasn't until this February that Guido Parres and I visited the winery.

2010 Villa Poggio Salvi Brunello di Montalcino (\$34.99) The nose on this wine is classic: all leather, earth, spice and wild cherry, with hints of roasted chestnuts. On the palate it is a serious wine: muscular, sinewy, long, and leathery. In this vintage, the characteristic layers of savory,

salty, umami-like character allow the fruit and structure to just peel back, one after another, revealing even more Tuscan earth, wild herbs, rosemary and smoke. This is an exceedingly deep wine. This wine has a very fine-grained tannin feel to it stretched out along a powerful acidic core that allows the tannins to blend in harmoniously. A long finish where the earthy, spicy flavors seem to last for minutes. 94 points *WE*.

2004 Villa Poggio Salvi Brunello di Montalcino Riserva (\$54.99)

The nose of this decade-old Riserva is classic: leather, iron, smoke, tobacco and porcini dust with a bit of plum on the back end. This is a wine that needs to decant for a few hours, and then you'll see the mid-palate start to expand. The wine finishes with a slight tannic edge but showing all of the aromatics that have now turned to flavors. Have this wine with a rich pasta or pot roast. 91 points *WE*.

2006 Villa Poggio Salvi Brunello di Montalcino Riserva (\$54.99)

92 points *WE*: "This is a broad, masculine Brunello with layers of spice, leather, Spanish cedar, cola and cured meat. The mouthfeel is streamlined and elegant, with crisp acidity and a solidly tannic base."



36-year-old Brunello and still going strong.



La Monacesca vineyard and Apennine Mountains.

La Monacesca

Ok, I'll admit it: I'm in love with this wine, I'm in love with this little valley, and I'm determined to be a missionary for Verdicchio di Matelica. This is a small DOC, with maybe 14 producers. It's located in Italy's Marche region, which you can think of as being on the opposite side of the Apennine Mountains from Tuscany. One of the more confusing things about Verdicchio is that there are two DOCs: Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi, which is the eastern sloping hills all the way to the Adriatic Sea; and, of course, Matelica.

What really sets Matelica apart is that it has a continental climate: very cool nights with warm days. The Adriatic is a beautifully warm sea, and it's great to be at the beach there, but the vineyards along the coast stay warm night and day. Matelica is in the only north-south valley in the entire Apennines chain, which blocks the possibility of any warm coastal air flow. So, while the days are warm, dry and sun-filled, the nights are cool and in the 50s.

My first visit to this valley was in 2009. When I arrived on October 9th, much to my surprise they were in the midst of the harvest for white grapes! This extraordinarily long "hang time" allows the grapes to get completely physiologically ripe, and vintners are not just harvesting on the sugar bloom. This translates into more intense flavors in the grapes and keeps the acids high. Along with the marine soils in the valley, it makes for a distinct minerality. Although I consider myself a "place first" (before grape variety) kind of guy, Ian d'Agata, author of the comprehensive "Native Wine Grapes of Italy," writes in his 2014 book: "Verdicchio is arguably Italy's greatest native white grape variety." And: "The only other white varieties in Italy that can match Verdicchio's versatility and potential for great wines are Veneto's Garganega (with which Soave and Recioto di Soave are made) and Campania's Fiano." This combination of grape and region produces wines that are just sensational.

We usually carry two different wines from Matelica, both showing Matelica's minerality in two different expressions. The **2014 Collestefano Verdicchio di Matelica (\$17.99)** comes from the west side of the valley and doesn't get as much afternoon sun, which leaves the wine with a leaner, wiry, vibrant expression of soil and floral character. It's excellent for shellfish or creamy pasta dishes, and is usually about 12% abv, like this vintage. La Monacesca comes from the eastern side of the valley and receives more afternoon warmth and light. These wines have more power, depth, and for me, flavor development. I love both expressions, but am crazy about La Monacesca. Here are my notes:

2013 La Monacesca Verdicchio di Matelica (\$17.99) The vineyard for the Classic bottling is made from a vineyard that is 50% 30-year-old vines and 50% 10-year-old vines. The nose is full of elderflower, pear and stone fruit, but the really impressive part of this wine is the palate presence. Body, texture, and depth add to the mineral-laden center. The finish is decisive, focused and seems to go on forever.

2012 La Monacesca "Mirum" Verdicchio di Matelica Riserva (\$26.99) The nose is bright and focused, full of quince, and on the palate an incredible core of acid and minerality, it feels like crushed quartz. Yet with all of this sizzling acidity, minerality and salinity, the wine is full-bodied, sees no oak but is so texturally dazzling you won't believe it. Layers of flavors, waves of supple texture and an endless finish make this wine something extraordinary. This wine will age well for the next decade. Stock up now. A great wine.

2010 La Monacesca "Mirum" Verdicchio di Matelica Riserva (\$34.99) The nose is full of a lemon custard-like aromatic. White flowers fill your nose with an enchanting blossom of aromatics. On the palate, the wine has tremendous power, richness, layers of density, and an incredible array of flavors. Truly legendary. You need to own this wine—we have the last 10 cases on Earth!



La Lecciaia

La Lecciaia is located within one of Montalcino's most historic regions, just off the road to the Abbey of Sant'Antimo heading southeast, and a few kilometers from the town of Montalcino. Just to La Leccia's north is Biondi Santi, the estate widely credited with creating the first Brunello di Montalcino, and to its south is Fattoria dei Barbi, one of the oldest estates in Montalcino. Besides the proximity of those two famous producers, the styles are very similar, as well. In most vintages, La Lecciaia's wines have an earthy, leathery, and a more apparent tannin structure than wineries on the south slope or western edge of the DOCG, and the nose is filled with more herb, spice and exotic woods than ripe, plum fruit.

La Lecciaia's owner, Mauro Pacini, founded La Lecciaia in 1983. It was during the first boom time for Montalcino, begun by the Mariani family's purchase and expansion of their Banfi estate. While Banfi's estate is enormous and dwarfs almost all other producers, La Lecciaia is actually one of the region's larger wineries, having more than 36 acres and producing more than 10,000 cases. Those might not seem big to you, but the average producer in Montalcino makes closer to 3,000 cases. Sesta di Sopra, one of our other Direct Import producers, for example, makes only 340 cases of Brunello annually and almost 1,200 cases in total.



Mauro Pacini.

Mauro Pacini is a busy man. His main business is in dried or artificial flowers, and it's a tough business, but for him Montalcino is a place to refresh. However, just one look into his eyes, even in Montalcino, you can tell this man loves to compete: he makes all of the decisions at the estate but is not there on a day-to-day basis. It is his personality that one feels in the wines: sometimes a bit stern and gritty, but so many layers of complexity, and the wines have incredible length and age very well. I was introduced to Sig. Pacini through a third party. Sig. Pacini was a bit leery about my connection to this guy, which was only a couple of e-mails and a price list, but I remember visiting the estate for

the first time. It was in February and it was really cold—not so much outside as it was inside! It almost seemed like he was testing me. He had kept the wines in a different room to keep them “room temperature” for us to taste, but where we sat to taste them couldn't have been more than 45°F. His gaze alternated between glare and stare but once he was satisfied that I knew what I was talking about (and didn't mention the cold) he took a different approach: searching, wanting to learn why, what, how. This man is intense: he's all about getting the most information possible.

I really like these wines. They remind me so much of what Brunello di Montalcino was like when I first began learning about it. They have that less “made” feel about them, to me. They are pure, real and really well priced!

Here are my tasting notes on the wines, and some of the top scores. These wines are in stock now.

2010 La Lecciaia Brunello di Montalcino (\$34.99) The nose is full of plum, spice, leather, gravel and smoke. That might seem a disparate blend, but it is a heavenly flow of aromatics that escape the glass. On the palate the wine is classic: a long, vibrant flow from front to back that is layers of wild cherry, smoke and leather couched in a richly textured center. Superb balance and vibrant, classic aromatics, and at the price an unbelievable deal. 94 points AG, 92 points JS.

2010 La Lecciaia “Manapetra” Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) The Manapetra is a plumper, broader, a richer, fuller version of the Brunello. The nose is brooding, slightly closed now but shows hints of power and size. On the palate the wine is full but shows a bit of tannic tension. Roiling beneath the surface is a powerful structure and sizable density. However, this wine will need time in your cellar. 94 points AG.

2013 La Lecciaia Rosso di Montalcino (\$14.99) The nose is full of sweet cherry aromatics coupled with bits of leather and spice. On the palate the wine shows good body, and is supple and savory. The wine finishes with a bit of tannic grip and then relaxes and lengthens, showing more elegance.

The Wines of Paolo e Noemia d'Amico

By John Downing

Paolo and Noemia d'Amici established their business in 1985, locating between the borders of Lazio, Tuscany and Umbria in northern Lazio. Here the volcanic-based soils, along with clay and limestone, provided just what they were looking for to cultivate their vineyards and subsequently build their winery. Their slightly higher-elevation sites have allowed them to produce high-quality Chardonnay as well as lighter reds.

Not only did we love the wines, but also the more-than-reasonable prices, and we think that you'll concur.

2013 d'Amico "Seiano" Lazio Bianco (\$9.99) This refreshing white is yet another outstanding everyday quaffer that's perfect as an aperitif and for patio-style dining. Made from a combination of Sauvignon Blanc and Grechetto, Seiano is fresh and aromatic, with notes of honey, citrus and white florals and a soft, flavorful palate with a hint of saline on the finish. Perfect with vegetable dishes, lighter fish and on its own.

2013 d'Amico "Seiano" Lazio Rosso (\$9.99) The d'Amicos have crafted a savory and inviting red with aromatics and flavors of violets, cherries and a hint of oak spicing. While Grenache is aged in steel tanks, some of the accompanying Merlot is finished in used oak to add depth and complexity. The wine's juicy texture and mild acidity make it ideal for simple meals, pasta, pizzas and outdoor fare.

2012 d'Amico Chardonnay "Calanchi di Vaiano" (\$21.99) California and France are most often referenced when it comes to Chardonnay, but the d'Amicos have definitely surprised with this impressive pair from Lazio. Calanchi comes from higher elevation vines and offers more depth and richness than we expect from a Chardonnay at this price. An intriguing aromatic melange of soft orchard fruits, almond, dried honey and a pleasant hit of lees continues on to a slightly creamy palate with wonderful freshness, flavor and length. What really surprises is that this wine is aged entirely in stainless steel. This outstanding Chardonnay is ideal with seafood, chicken, creamed pastas, egg dishes and vegetables.

2011 d'Amico Chardonnay "Falesia" (\$27.99) You might say this is the older sibling to the Calanchi, as it's a bit richer, and barrel-aged. Here there's more mineral, along with honeyed richness, ripe citrus fruit and pleasing oak spice to round it out. Falesia is well-integrated and nicely balanced, with a long, creamy finish. Pair this with white meats, cheeses, risotto and rich seafood dishes.



Slow Food, Good Friends and Great Wines

By Angie An

Living in the heart of Silicon Valley, speed and convenience are at the top of most people's priority list. Now there's even a new wave of "fast home-cooked dinner" companies that guarantee meals that can be done in one pot and under 30 minutes: all the ingredients already measured out, chopped, packaged and labeled neatly in a box, and delivered daily. Go ahead and call me a dinosaur, but I prefer the old-fashioned Italian lifestyle. Whatever happened to slow food, good friends and great wines?

On a recent evening, we decided to slow down, invite a couple of friends over for a rustic Tuscan dinner, and enjoy life's simplest yet greatest pleasures. Here's how two Brunello di Montalcino from the legendary 2010 vintage—plus a rosato!—paired with the dishes.

2014 Rocca di Montegrossi Rosato (\$15.95) Dry, crisp, rich and fruity style with generous red cherry and crushed minerals. It can certainly be enjoyed on its own, as needed in the middle of our heat wave. However, this humble rosato became heavenly next to a salad made with fresh watermelon, basil leaves, balsamico di modena, pine nuts and goat cheese! The acidity, simplicity and freshness of the salad paired with rosato really helped elevate both into a beautiful marriage!

2010 Innocenti Brunello di Montalcino (\$36.99) This wine was stunning right out of the bottle and all the way to the last drop! Lots of herbal notes, focused structure and earthy components with a muscular edge. It paired seamlessly with a *sous-vide* leg of lamb stuffed

with black olives, dried fruit, nuts and herbs! The rustic, old school style Innocenti nicely complemented the weight, texture and savory elements in the lamb. One of the best food and wine pairings I've had in a long time!

2010 Caparzo Brunello di Montalcino "La Casa" (\$59.99) Caparzo has a very bright, silky smooth mouthfeel followed by the initial lively cranberry, tart raspberry fruit aromas. Opens gorgeously after an hour of decanting. The Caparzo served as the perfect partner to a osso bucco slow-braised in Tuscan spices and garden vegetables. The wine has just enough fruit and acidity to handle the richness of a braised dish, yet is delicate enough to pair with the veal and not overpower it. At the end of the night our pants all magically shrunk a size smaller, but we slept with a belly full of satisfaction and a heart full of wonderful memories that will surely last a long time!



La Casa, one of best Brunellos from Montosoli.

Guido's Angolo

By Mike "Guido" Parres

Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore is a mouthful, and a little intimidating to try to say, so around K&L we just call it Prosecco from the Valdobbiadene. This little hamlet is just about 31 miles from Venice (where the famous Bellini was invented by Giuseppe Cipriani, founder of Harry's Bar). My first time there, I thought these were the vineyards of "The Blair Witch Project," and I would not like to be in them after the sun went down. The hillsides can be steep, the mountains very craggy, and there are young vines mixed in with much older vines. That said, in 2010 the Valdobbiadene became part of Italy's premium wine category: DOCG (Controlled designation of origin guaranteed).

Prosecco evokes an image of Italy's good life, of a food and wine culture that celebrates the bounty of the countryside and the expertise of the winemakers and chefs. These are amazing wines that have come a long way from the inexpensive, sweet bubbles of yesteryear. One of our favorite producers from this area is Silvano Follador. We have known the Follador family for many years, and as we watch the family grow, so does its winery—not in size, but into the maturity of a fine wine house that is starting to get more recognition from around the world.

2014 Silvano Follador Prosecco Brut Nature Valdobbiadene Brut (\$19.99)

This Prosecco has been one of our best sellers since we started bringing it in about eight or nine years ago. There's melon and green apple with dry savory tones, peach and cherry fruit notes, and it is crisp and floral on the palate. Its long finish, subtle mousse, and bone-dry intensity make this delicious wine a sure bet for your table. This wine will work well as an alternative to Champagne as you are sitting and sipping on the porch, watching the last days of summer and welcoming the first days of fall. Buy a few extra to have around in case someone unexpected drops by. Your guests will be very impressed.



2014 Ruggeri Corsini Langhe Bianco (\$14.99)

A very unusual white that comes from a one-acre plot of vines in Monforte d'Alba, and is all hand-harvested. This year's blend is 50% Arneis, 30% Sauvignon Blanc and 20% Chardonnay and all stainless



steel aged. A great wine to serve for your Labor Day parties (buy enough to carry you over to Thanksgiving, as it loves the cornucopia of dishes and is only 13% abv). The Chard gives this wine some weight, while the other two grapes lend acidity and *lots* of minerality. It is well-balanced and has a dry finish that will clean the palate of everything that is going on at the table. Only 50 cases were allotted to us this year—last warning, it will sell quickly. On a side note, I am a *huge* fan of Nicola Argamante and Loredana Addari. Both have bachelor of viticulture and oenology degrees and you see their passion for the grape in their wines.

2011 Ugo Lequio "Gallina" Barbaresco (\$44.99) This is classic 2011 from Piemonte, and rockin' Nebbiolo! The greatest quality for me is the balance: the wine has great density, richness and extraordinary aromatics with a seemingly unending finish. One of the best Gallinas I have tasted to date! On the palate you will find tobacco, leather and raspberries, with touches of anise and walnuts on the finish. Good for the heartiest meats or stews. Better yet, serve after dinner with some great aged cheeses (Pecorino Romano, Parmigiano-Reggiano or Asiago) and an olive tapenade. This wine is very user-friendly to drink now and will last for over the next seven to eight years with no problem, but just try to keep your hands off it for that long.

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