

Tuscany report: Top scoring new releases from Brunello di Montalcino to Chianti Classico

Michaela Morris tastes the latest releases in Tuscany, including the highly anticipated Brunello di Montalcino 2015 wines, plus Chianti Classico 2017.



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This full-throttle showing of the region's latest releases marked my last trip to Italy. I am not sure when I will be able to return to Tuscany's munificent hills, but I will rely on these wines to transport me there until then.

Scroll down to see Michaela's top scoring wines in this Tuscany vintage report

As always, the tastings commenced with Chianti Classico, presenting far more wine than was possible to try.

I focused on the 2018 'annata' wines, almost confounding in their exuberance of aromas yet softness of structure.

These were juxtaposed with the 2017 Riserva and Gran Selezione wines; some surprisingly juicy and balanced, others overshadowed by the many stellar 2016 and 2015 wines that continue to emerge.

Sandwiched between Chianti Classico's multifaceted offerings and Brunello di Montalcino's generous 2015s, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano was in a somewhat awkward position.

To boot, the austere 2017 vintage was in the hot seat coming on the heels of the more charming 2016. Nevertheless, I found much to be positive about here.

Providing the grand finale, Brunello di Montalcino's 2015 vintage was fraught with expectations.

While not all of these were met, there is undeniably a lot to like in this vintage.

It may not completely satisfy staunch classicists in the habit of tucking away bottles for years, yet its supple, friendly and accessible nature will have wide appeal.

Read Michaela's in-depth reports and tasting notes on Chianti Classico, Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano throughout this week on Decanter Premium.

Vintage Guide:

Chianti Classico annata 2018: Recurring rainstorms with cooler than average temperatures, though weather varied throughout the region. Many fragrant, soft wines for near-term enjoyment. 4/5

Chianti Classico 2017: Spring frost was followed by extreme drought and heat throughout the summer. These factors reduced harvest size and quality varies, but there were still some successful, balanced wines at all levels. 3.75/5

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2017: After damaging spring frost, the dry, torrid summer led to shrivelled grapes. Rather austere wines with dry tannins, but the top producers stand out. 3.5/5

Brunello di Montalcino 2015: A very warm, sunny summer with minimal water stress gave generous quantities of grapes. Supple, sumptuous and accessible wines that will drink well over the next 10 to 15 years. 4.5/5

Chianti Classico standout producers:*

Castello di Ama: Has crafted an excellent Gran Selezione in the challenging 2017 vintage, representing great value in its category.

Istine: Angela Fronti is a terroir-hunter making beautiful, transparent Sangiovese from three single vineyards.

Montesecondo: Offers pure, unadulterated, highly quaffable Chianti Classico at refreshingly modest alcohol levels.

Poggerino: Thoughtful, observant and detailed, Piero Lanza is on an upward trajectory.

Rocca di Montegrossi: The annata here receives as much attention as the [top-tier] Gran Selezione; both ally concentration with energy.

**Also look for much-celebrated names such as Fontodi, Fèlsina and Castello di Monsanto*

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano standout producers:

Boscarelli: Captures both the wildness and nobility of Sangiovese with a great sense of place.

Il Molinaccio: A young winery that has delivered some of the top offerings in the last couple of vintages.

Salcheto: Environmentally and socially-responsible winery, and the wines are delicious.

Brunello di Montalcino standout producers:

Canalicchio di Sopra: Outstanding cru expression without sacrificing the quality of the classic Brunello.

Casanova di Neri: Making Brunello with definitive personality, as well as seriously delicious rosso.

Conti Costanti: Seductive and hedonistic, yet balanced and ageworthy.

Padelletti: After sitting out the 2014 vintage, Padelletti returns with rare grace in 2015.

Val di Suga: Andrea Lonardi has tweaked the direction here and the wines are even better for it.