

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2019 & Riserva 2018: Vintage report

'Loads of enjoyment over the next seven to ten years,' says Michaela Morris...



Michaela Morris
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Credit: Michaela Morris / Decanter

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Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2019

First to 2019, which Luca De Ferrari at Boscarelli describes as a balanced year. 'There weren't extraordinary excesses that needed to be compensated for.'

After abundant rainfall in April and May, June was dry with above-average temperatures. Very warm, dry conditions continued through July and August, though rarely did it exceed 35 to 36°C. Both months saw short but intense rainfall over a couple of days, which helped curb water stress. September temperatures were consistent with seasonal norms.

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Due to unstable weather during flowering, bunches were less compact in 2019 than usual – but there were plenty of them. 'We did a very severe thinning but still harvested more than usual,' says Giovanni Capuano, manager of the Bindella estate. Rain between 22-24 September prompted picking but most of the **Vino Nobile** harvest took place during the first two weeks of October.

According to Capuano, the timing of harvest was key. Ripening started in September when temperatures had already begun to cool down. 'Even with a generous crop load, the grapes achieved incredible concentration with lots of acidity and complex aromas,' he states.

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Salcheto winemaker Michele Manelli emphasises the warmth of the vintage. 'It allowed us to make a rather rich wine that veers more to power but is still balanced with freshness.' He defines it as riper than 2016 but dialled down from 2017.

At the preview tasting, a manageable 27 wines made it easy to try all blind, as I do every year. While there were a few pleasant surprises, overall it is the same estates that stand out again this year.

Superficially, 2019 presents as positively plump. More profoundly, the vintage demonstrates the differences between the region's various zones, showing them to their advantage. Warmer pockets yielded fleshy, chewy wines yet these were rarely heavy or overripe. From cooler corners, the wines are beautifully midweight but not skinny and crucially have achieved ripe flavours and tannins. Tangy acidity underlies both.

While a handful could do with another year in bottle, most should offer loads of enjoyment over the next seven to ten years. The vintage was kind to the region's often austere tannins though a tendency to over-extract persists in certain wines.

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano Riserva 2018

Juxtaposed with 2019, a dozen 2018 Riserva were trotted out. Cool and rainy until mid-July, the season then progressed with above average temperatures and below-average rainfall. Despite a warm finish to the year, the 2018 Vino Nobile presented as from a fresh vintage – vibrant, slender and quite fine framed.

I was charmed by last year's releases; the Riserva I tried this year, however, were mixed. Several were either tired from long ageing or overwhelmed by oak. A handful merit consideration and I have included the top five in my recommendations. Overall though, 2018 is not necessarily a vintage I would seek out for Riserva. On the other hand, with its stuffing and structure, 2019 bodes well for this category – I look forward to trying them next year.

Vino Nobile's Pieve project

I attended a preview tasting of the region's new top tier which will be launched with the 2020 vintage. The category highlights 12 sub-areas with the goal of giving greater esteem to the territory. Given ageing regulations of 36 months (12 in wood), we won't see these nascent wines until 2024.

In the interim, Vino Nobile has plenty to offer, particularly from its munificent 2019 vintage.

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano producers to know

Salcheto: Led by winemaker Michele Manelli, Salcheto delivers a range of truly delicious and environmentally conscious wines.

Le Bertille: Bertille is quietly making refreshingly midweight, unforced Vino Nobile deserving of attention.

Bindella: Enormous investment in the cellar and vineyards over the last decade shows through in wines that are stylish with substance.

Michaela's favourite newly released Vino Nobile di Montepulciano

Boscarelli, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2019: Fleshy, chewy, racy and nuanced – simply one of the best straight up Vinos Nobiles I have tasted.

Dei, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2019: A serious and masterly demonstration of vintage and territory in perfect balance.

Il Molinaccio, La Spinosa, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2019: From a cool pocket of Montepulciano, this is textured, crunchy and pure with huge drinkability.