

# Wine Spectator

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## CHIANTI CLASSICO

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ARGIOLAS



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## The Rise of Chianti Classico

In this issue, Tuscany takes center stage as senior editor and lead taster on the wines Bruce Sanderson reports on the region's current releases, having tasted more than 525 since his previous report. (This doesn't include the 2016 and 2017 Brunellos di Montalcino, which appeared in our June 30 issue.)

His reviews span three vintages, with 2019 in the middle and firmly in the sweet spot. Sanderson rated the overall vintage a classic in key Tuscan regions. The top-scoring wines include several of the usual super Tuscan suspects: The Cabernet-based Sassicaia 2019 and the 100% Merlot Masseto Toscana 2019 each earned 98 points.

However, Sanderson has made a bold decision to cast Chianti Classico in the leading role for this vintage—and for this issue. This historic wine region has long been overshadowed by blockbuster super Tuscans as well as the high-scoring Sangioveses of Montalcino. But when looking for a dynamic region that offers exceptional quality for the price, Chianti Classico steals the show.

Our comprehensive guide chronicles the rising fortunes of Chianti Classico with the development of new categories of wine like *gran selezione* and the establishment of regional sub-zones called UGAs. Many of the top-scoring wines from these UGAs can be had for \$50 or less. Chianti Classico's *annata* wines offer even greater affordability, with many of them priced at \$25 or less. Find some of these excellent values on page 62. Rarely are classic-rated Italian wines so well-positioned for everyday drinking. This guide gives both the information and insight to make your own exploration of these wines.

Value shoppers can expand their search through the Southern Hemisphere. Beginning on page 79, we tally solid-scoring wines across Argentina, Australia, Chile, New Zealand and South Africa priced at \$30 or less.

Meanwhile, collectors should turn their attention to our white Burgundy tasting report. A trio of top wines from the *grands crus* of the Montrachet area achieved ratings of 96 points or higher, fulfilling the promise of their \$1,000-plus price tags.

Among the most collectible wines from Spain is Pingus, a Tempranillo from Ribera del Duero. Contributing editor Robert Camuto chronicles the unlikely rise of Denmark-born owner Peter Sisseck, who came to Spain as an outsider 30 years ago. Pingus has earned consistently high ratings from *Wine Spectator*, with only one vintage not achieving 90 points or higher, when 1997 was troubled by frost. Today, Pingus is a rare treat, with a rightful place among the great luxury wines of the world. But in keeping with this issue's underlying theme, Sisseck has also created a wine within reach for many—Dominio de Pingus'



second wine, Flor de Pingus, which sells for a tenth of the flagship's price.

This profile of Sisseck is especially timely as we prepare to welcome him to *Wine Spectator's* New York Wine Experience on Oct. 20–22. Those who are attending will have the chance to see this visionary on stage and to taste Pingus alongside him. This is a rare opportunity I am personally looking forward to.

Marvin R. Shanken  
Editor and Publisher

THE **ULTIMATE GUIDE TO** 

# CHIANTI CLASSICO

The Castelnuovo Berardenga commune is the birthplace of Chianti Classico's first super Tuscan, a 100% Sangiovese called Vigorello.

COURTESY OF CONSORZIO VINO CHIANTI CLASSICO

**It's a new dawn for this historic  
Tuscan region, where innovation is  
driving impressive quality**

*BY BRUCE SANDERSON*





CAMPAGNA FINANZIATA ACCORDING TO LEADER REGULATION N. 1305/2013

# A DIVINE STORY




SEREGO ALIGHIERI  
DAL 1353

The Serego Alighieri estate has the longest historical, cultural and winemaking tradition in Valpolicella. For 21 generations the family has lived there continuously, producing wines of unique personality and authentic expressions of viticulture in the Valpolicella region, since Pietro Alighieri, son of the divine poet Dante, bought the estate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



The iconic  
'Vaio Armaron'

Follow our story on: [seregoalighieri.it](http://seregoalighieri.it)   @seregoalighieri

Chianti Classico is a treasured Italian appellation deserving of the world stage. It's also the best source of value in Tuscan wine today. After centuries of both struggle and acclaim, the region's fortunes in the modern era have continued to improve, although its quality-to-price ratio has only recently received recognition.



Under president Giovanni Manetti, the Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico voted to delimit Chianti Classico into subzones called UGAs.

Chianti Classico's stunning landscapes, from hidden valleys to sweeping vistas on high-elevation rocky slopes, with a complex mix of soils, provide the settings for unique expressions of Sangiovese. Producers are realizing this potential, with financial investment, passion and commitment to their land. Far from a sleepy wine country rooted more in its past than its future, Chianti Classico is perhaps today's most dynamic region in Tuscany—if not all of Italy.

The wines offer a mix of fruit and savory elements. Sangiovese is not a “fruity” grape, as can be said of Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, but warmer vintages and thoughtful viticulture and winemaking emphasize its fruity aspects, mostly cherry with strawberry, raspberry, black currant and plum notes. Sangiovese's fruit flavors are often enhanced by floral aromas of violet and rose. On the savory side, Mediterranean herbs such as juniper, rosemary and thyme, plus notes of tobacco, olive, iron and earth, all give depth and complexity. Sangiovese by nature is light in color, tannic and high in acidity when grown at the higher elevations of Chianti Classico, giving the wines freshness, vibrancy and the capacity to age.

In June 2021, the board of the Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico voted unanimously to divide the region into subzones, called Unità Geografiche Aggiuntive (UGA), or Additional Geographic Units. Some of the new UGAs are identical to the political and geographical communes, while others, such as the commune of Greve, have been divided into separate UGAs.

“They are all increasingly aware that the territory makes the difference, and that we had to reinforce the relationship between the wine and the specific piece of land giving birth to it,” current consorzio president Giovanni Manetti said at the time. “Quality is not only satisfaction for the palate but also uniqueness, and the territory is the production factor that mostly provides it.”

Currently, the use of UGA designation on labels applies only to the *gran selezione* category (the top of the quality pyramid in Chianti

Classico, introduced in 2014), because these wines must come from estate-grown grapes. The subzones may apply to Chianti Classico *annata* and *riserva* in the future, however the issue of blending across UGAs will have to be addressed.

Nevertheless, the UGA project is a move toward a stronger link between the wines and the land where the grapes are grown, rather than simply defining the wines based on grape variety and aging requirements. It's also a link to traditions in the region based on the historical significance of areas within Chianti Classico, and a move to differentiate Chianti Classico from greater Chianti.

The Chianti Classico Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) stretches from just south of Florence to the outskirts of Siena. It's a large region, covering 173,000 acres, though only a portion of that land, a total of 17,300 acres, is devoted to vines, the equivalent of the vineyard acreage in the Mâconnais region of Burgundy. The remainder is planted with olive groves, along with wheat and other grains. Most of the region is covered with forest, a wild tangle of oak, chestnut, pine and cypress.

Driving through the region, there are times when you are in the depth of a thick, rock-strewn forest, wondering where the vineyards are, only to round a bend in



Giorgio Vasari's 1547 painting in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence shows a black rooster.

TOP: COURTESY OF FONTODI; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF CONSORZIO VINO CHIANTI CLASSICO

## CENTURIES OF STRUGGLE AND ACCLAIM

Nearly a millennium has shaped the history and culture of Chianti Classico, culminating in wines that rank among Tuscany's best

1203

### BORDER WAR

A treaty briefly ends hostilities between Siena and Florence by establishing the Lodo di Poggibonsi, with Florence gaining control of Chianti.

1306

### PUSHING BOUNDARIES

Lega del Chianti defines the “Classico” region as the area between Florence and Siena, including the communes of Greve, Radda, Gaiole and Castellina.

1384

### SOMETHING TO CROW ABOUT

The Gallo Nero, or black rooster, is selected as a symbol by the Chianti League.



the road to an open valley blanketed in vines. The roads are treacherous, narrow and full of switchbacks, often with cyclists commanding half the lane.

Chianti Classico's vineyards, mostly Sangiovese, range from 825 to 1,980 feet in elevation, which is the sweet spot for this grape variety. A mix of soils—combinations of limestone, schist, clay and sandstone, some of those formed by the sedimentation of old sea beds—result in diverse *terroirs*. Schist (*galestro*) and hard limestone (*albarese*) are common, along with sandstone on the eastern side of the appellation as well as more recent alluvial deposits.

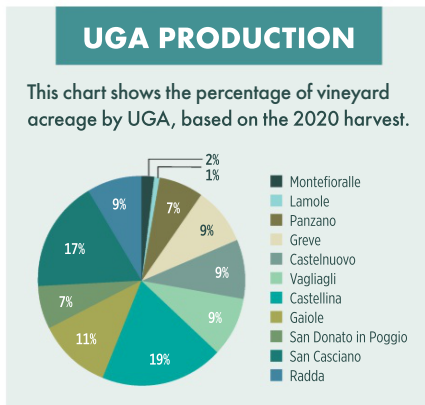
These combinations affect the body, acidity, aromas and flavors of the wines. Clay soils give fuller-bodied Chianti Classicos; those on sandstone tend to be more aromatic; the *galestro* and *albarese* versions are more angular, linear and well-structured. Generally speaking, the higher-elevation vineyards yield higher-acidity wines.

There tend to be more stony soils in the northern end, near Florence. Closer to Siena, the landscape opens up, with more gentle slopes, a higher clay content in the soils and a warmer climate.

*Gran selezione* wines must be made entirely from estate grapes; many *gran selezione* offerings are vineyard-designated and comprise 100% Sangiovese. They must be aged for a minimum of 30 months, including three months in bottle. These represent 5% of the region's production and generally range in price from \$40 to \$100, with a few exceeding \$250.

*Riserva* wines are aged for a minimum of 24 months before release, including three months in bottle. They tend to be made from an estate's top vineyards, often a blend across various parcels that can be selected in the vineyards or as specific lots in the cellar. They cost \$25 to \$55.

The *annata* category represents the introductory level of wines from the region. They are typically ready to enjoy on release and fall into the



\$20 to \$45 price range. These are often the fruitiest wines, lighter in body and tannins, fresh and mouthwatering, making them ideal with a range of cuisines.

The use of wood and size of the barrels during the aging period is left to the winemaker's discretion. Most *annata* are not aged in oak barrels; *riservas* typically spend a year in wood; and *gran selezione* undergo at least a year of aging in oak barrels, sometimes up to 18 months.

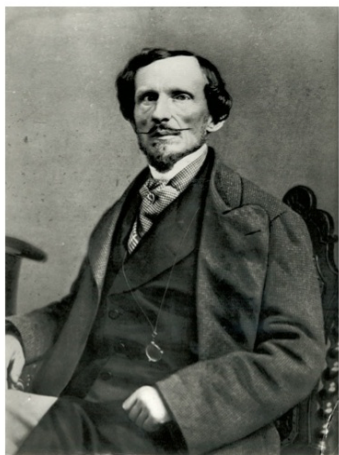
Chianti Classico is the historic and geographical heart of the greater Chianti region, in the center of Tuscany. The Etruscans cultivated vines here prior to the Romans. The Classico area was initially defined by the Lega del Chianti (Chianti League) in 1306 as the land between Florence and Siena, including the communes of Greve, Radda, Gaiole and Castellina. The Lega del Chianti adopted the Gallo Nero (black rooster) as its symbol, representing "vigilance."

Chianti-style wine was being exported to countries outside Italy in the 18th century, yet fraudulent blending practices were rampant at the time. These circumstances led to the *bando* of 1716 by Cosimo III of the ruling Florentine Medici family. The *bando* delimited the first appellations for Chianti: Chianti (including Greve, Panzano, Gaiole, Radda and Castellina), Pomino, Carmignano and Valdarno di Sopra.

Much of the area was owned by merchant bankers and business families from Florence, who adopted a sharecropping system, or *mezzadria*, to manage their agricultural holdings. Despite having beneficial aspects for the landowners, *mezzadria* discouraged investment and innovation. For the families who farmed the estates, wine was sustenance; quantity, rather than quality, was the *modus operandi* for viticulture and vinification.

One landowner bucked that trend: Baron Bettino Ricasoli, the 27th generation of his family to oversee their estates since the 12th century, who moved from Florence to Castello di Brolio in 1838 to personally manage his farms. He improved efficiency, and in addition to wine and olives, he introduced tobacco and the cultivation of mulberry trees for silkworms.

At the time, the wines produced in Chianti relied on the Canaiolo grape variety. Ricasoli believed in Sangiovese, which he referred to as Sangiovetto, and in an 1872 letter to a professor in Pisa, he wrote: "The wine receives most of its aroma from the Sangiovetto (which is my particular aim) as well as a certain vigor in taste; the Canaiolo gives it a sweetness, which tempers the harshness of the former without taking away any of its aroma."



Baron Bettino Ricasoli's Chianti formula, based on Sangiovese, became the template for Chianti Classico.

1716

#### DUKE'S UP

The *bando* of Cosimo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, delimits Chianti's first appellations: Chianti, Pomino, Carmignano and Valdarno di Sopra.

1838

#### SITE MANAGER

Baron Bettino Ricasoli moves from Florence to Castello di Brolio to personally manage his estates.

1872

#### SECRET RECIPE

In a letter to professor Cesare Studati at the University of Pisa, Ricasoli outlines his "Chianti Recipe" for a blend that makes Chianti ageable.

1850

#### ESTATE BOTTLED

The Antinori family purchases several estates in Chianti Classico, including Tenuta Tignanello.

1898

#### FOUNDING FATHERS

The Marchesi L&P Antinori wine company is founded.



LEFT: COURTESY OF CONSORZIO VINO CHIANTI CLASSICO; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF ANTINORI



# Chianti Classico at a Glance

## A GUIDE TO CHIANTI'S 11 UGA SUBZONES



### San Casciano

In the northwestern part of Chianti Classico, between the Val di Pesa opening to the west and Val di Greve to the east. The soils are primarily alluvial deposits, with sandstone known in the region as *macigno*.



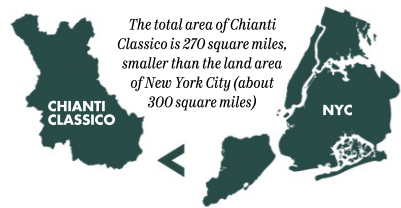
**What does UGA mean?** The first step in identifying the best vineyards in Chianti Classico, UGAs delimit growing areas with naturally occurring regional, historical and cultural factors.



### Greve

Greve is a large UGA, with three major valleys. One straddles the Greve River, with both east and west exposures, and another surrounds the village of Dudda. The northern end is flatter and more gentle.

*Chianti Classico provides the setting for unique, complex expressions of Sangiovese.*



The total area of Chianti Classico is 270 square miles, smaller than the land area of New York City (about 300 square miles)

### Montefioralle

One of the smallest UGAs, along with Lamole and Panzano, consisting of two vineyard areas: one with sandstone and limestone soils, the other with clay and limestone.

### San Donato in Poggio

A medium-sized UGA, with the northern end similar to aspects of San Casciano. It's open on the west to the Val di Pesa and bordered on the south by hills where Isole e Olena and Monsanto are located.



### Castellina

The largest UGA, with diverse soils ranging from stone in the upper parts to clay in the lower elevations. Gentler than those on the northern side of the village of Castellina, the southwestern slopes are also open to the coast. The area's wines range from elegant to powerful and savory.



### Panzano

This centrally located UGA has two main slopes, one facing west and the Val di Pesa and one facing east toward Greve, Lamole and Radda.

### Lamole

This is the smallest and one of the most historic UGAs, with east-facing vineyards of mostly sandy soils surrounded by forest. The region's higher elevation makes it a cooler area, yielding typically elegant wines.

### Radda

Lying in the center of the region, the Radda UGA has slopes high in elevation that are split between the north side and south side of the ridge running through the village.



### Gaiole

The third-largest UGA, Gaiole is hilly and heavily wooded, with swaths of vineyards dotting the landscape. Its southernmost area is sandwiched between Vagliagli and Castelnuovo Berardenga, with gentler, open hillsides. This is the source of Chianti Classico's most ageworthy wines.

### Vagliagli

From north to south, this UGA transitions from higher-elevation, forested areas to wider, more open vistas.

### Castelnuovo Berardenga

From higher elevations in the north to the open landscapes in the south, the soils change from *albarese* to sand and clay.

**53%** of the total Chianti Classico acreage is certified organic



COURTESY OF CONSORZIO VINO CHIANTI CLASSICO

The northwestern hills of Chianti Classico are home to the Antinori estate that produces Tignanello, which sparked a revolution in Tuscany after its debut in 1971.



Although Ricasoli made his Chianti to age, he noted the addition of white grapes could give the wine immediate drinkability. His formula, with the inclusion of Malvasia (and later Trebbiano), became the template for Chianti Classico, a blend that came to haunt the Ricasoli family.

"I have been battling for years to bring back the truth of his original formula since it has been often misunderstood," explains Francesco Ricasoli, current owner of the Brolio estate and the 32nd generation of the family. "Many books and articles are stating that if Chianti, still in the recent past, had white grapes in the blend, the fault was of Baron Ricasoli."

"The truth is that Bettino wrote in his famous letter [of 1872] that his ideal [Chianti] wine had to be made with a majority of Sangiovese, a bit of Canaiolo in order to 'soften' the acidity of Sangiovese, and some Malvasia only for those wines made for a prompt drink, meaning that the white grape had not to be used for those wines made for aging," he adds.

Bettino Ricasoli performed many experiments in fermenting, aging and shipping his wines, to ensure quality and stability. It's a testament to his determination that the Ricasoli name was recognized in Europe, England and the United States, given that Chianti Classico's isolated location was bypassed by railroads and other means of transportation. It was under Ricasoli's direction that new roads were built in the region.

This isolation, as well as the emerging popularity of Chianti as

a style synonymous with Italian wine, played into the hands of large wine producers. As a result, it was brokers and merchants who became more important than the wine estates themselves, and Chianti as a typical style became more significant than geographical origin and authenticity.

Around the same time, the Melini and Ruffino brands began commercializing and exporting their wines under the name Chianti. The Antinori family bought several properties in Chianti in 1850, including 120 acres at Tignanello, and founded its wine company Marchesi L&P Antinori in 1898.

After 600 years of practice in Chianti Classico, the *mezzadria* system wound to an end after WWII, desisting officially in 1974. By the 1960s and 1970s, sharecroppers had left the land to find jobs in nearby cities, leaving a shortage of labor. Chianti Classico producers were financially strapped due to the high costs of production and low prices for the region's wines.

Many of the abandoned *frazione*, or hamlets, and estates were sold during this period. Many of the buyers were from Milan, Florence, Genoa or Rome, yet some came from other parts of Europe, looking for a vacation home. Some of Chianti Classico's leading estates emerged during this period: Castello di Ama, Brancaia, Fontodi, Volpaia and Monsanto.

Despite the challenges facing producers, two events were about to change the fortunes of Chianti Classico: the birth of super Tuscans and the Chianti Classico 2000 project.

1925

**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**

Consorzio del Gallo of Chianti Classico is founded.

1927

**RIVAL FACTIONS**

Consorzio del Vino Chianti, also known as Chianti Putto, is created for greater Chianti.

1932

**MAKING PROGRESS**

The region of Chianti is defined with the addition of the word "Classico," used for the first time to refer to a subzone.

1933

**GRASPING AT STRAW**

An association dubbed the *Comissionaria Industria Fiaschi* for the manufacture of straw-wrapped bottles, or *fiaschi*, is created in Empoli. Today, these traditional bottles are not permitted for *riserva* or *gran selezione* selections.



TOP: SARAH MATTHEWS; BOTTOM: GETTY IMAGES

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– Photo by Massimo Giovannini

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## THE GRAPES OF CHIANTI CLASSICO

Sangiovese is at the heart of all Chianti Classico, constituting between 80% and 100% of the finished wine. Yet the National Register of Grape Varieties, approved by a ministerial decree dated May 7, 2004, allows 47 varieties—all of them red—to comprise up to 20% of the blend. Among these grapes are many international varieties, which will no longer be included in *gran selezione* bottlings.



When in 1967 Enzo Morganti arrived at San Felice, a small hamlet and winery in the Castelnuovo Berardenga commune of Chianti Classico, he found the remnants of the sharecropping method for quantity over quality. Despite the fact that the Sangiovese vines at San Felice were planted in wide rows interspersed with olive trees, Morganti believed in the potential of the grape variety.

Morganti began replanting the vineyards, as did many leading estates in Chianti Classico, and in 1968, he introduced a wine from 100% Sangiovese called Vigorello. At that time, Chianti Classico was still a blend, including the use of white grapes, and a pure Sangiovese wasn't sanctioned by Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) regulations, meaning that Vigorello was labeled as *vino da tavola* (table wine), the lowest denomination. (Chianti Classico officially became a subzone of Chianti in 1967.) Despite its designation, Vigorello was the winery's most expensive bottle.

Vigorello was the first "super Tuscan" from the Chianti Classico area. Antinori's Tignanello would debut in 1971, with roughly 3% to 5% of Malvasia Nera and Canaiolo rounding out the Sangiovese in the inaugural version. Montevertere's Le Pergole Torte, also 100% Sangiovese, and Castellare di Castellina's I Sodi San Niccolò were almost a decade away, their first vintages being 1977. They were followed by Cepparello from Isole Olena and Badia a Coltibuno's Sangiovese, both of which debuted in 1980.

When Tignanello made its debut, it was recognized immediately as a game-changer for Tuscany. Tignanello



was born at the estate purchased by Piero Antinori's ancestors in 1850. Unlike Morganti at San Felice, Antinori and his enologist, Giacomo Tachis, looked to Bordeaux for inspiration. His decision to blend Cabernet Sauvignon with the indigenous Sangiovese upended traditional ideas about the wines of the Chianti Classico region and was a primary impetus for the emergence of the super Tuscan category.

By 1994, Tuscany was home to dozens of super Tuscan. The Italian government recognized that these wines deserved better than the simple table wine moniker, and introduced the Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT) appellation delimited by the boundaries of the region. Late last year, a group of Chianti Classico producers formed the Historical Super Tuscan Committee to protect and enhance the value of super Tuscan by disseminating the history of the wines and the courage of the winemakers who created them prior to the '94 IGT law.

In 1987, the Chianti Classico consorzio, the body overseeing production and wineries in the region, embarked on an ambitious project to upgrade the vineyards of Chianti Classico and to raise the quality of Sangiovese. This represented a significant investment in the future of the region.



In the 1960s, sharecroppers began leaving Tuscany for other work.

LEFT: COURTESY OF SAN FELICE; RIGHT: ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

1967

### STATUS CHECK

Chianti, with Chianti Classico as one of the region's subzones, earns DOC status.

1968

### SUPER-SIZED WINES

San Felice introduces the first super Tuscan, Vigorello, made from 100% Sangiovese.

1970

### THE BIG SHOW

The municipality of Greve in Chianti creates Expo Chianti Classico, now the longest-running festival representing producers from all the communes of Chianti Classico. [epochianticlassico.com](http://epochianticlassico.com)

1971

### WINE PIONEER

Antinori debuts Tignanello, and though the first vintage is mostly Sangiovese, the estate would soon introduce Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc to the blend.

1974

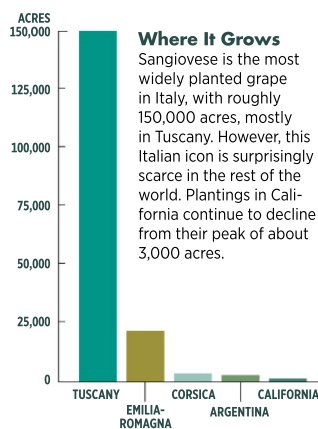
### END OF AN ERA

The *mezzadria*, or sharecropping system, is abolished in Italy.

## ALL ABOUT SANGIOVESE

The Chianti Classico 2000 project greatly improved the quality of Sangiovese in Chianti Classico by identifying seven preferred clones from among hundreds being grown. They were selected for berry size, thickness of skins, air circulation within the cluster and consistent quality.

- **A prolific producer, Sangiovese fruit must be limited to 3 tons per acre for use in Chianti Classico.**
- **The clusters are medium-sized, conical in shape, both wide and long, and can weigh ¾ to 1 ¼ pounds each.**
- **Bluish-black berries are medium-sized, though some clones are known to produce smaller berries.**
- **A late ripener, Sangiovese is typically harvested around late September or early October in Tuscany.**



### By Any Other Name

*“Sangiovese” comes from the Latin sanguis Jovis, meaning “blood of Jove.”*

*With its large number of regional clones and resulting wines, the grape goes by many other names. These are some of the most common:*

**BRUNELLO, PRUGNOLO GENTILE, MORELLINO, NIELLUCCIO, SANGIOVETO, SANGIOVESE DI ROMAGNA, SANGIOVESE GROSSO, SANGIOVESE PICCOLO**



### Taste Profile

While not a fruity grape like Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir or Merlot, Sangiovese offers a mix of both fruit and savory elements as well as floral notes.

- **FRUITY**  
Cherry, strawberry, raspberry, black currant, plum

- **SAVORY**  
Wild juniper, rosemary, thyme, tobacco, olive, iron, earth

- **FLORAL**  
Violet, rose



Most of the clones of Sangiovese at the time, many of them planted in the 1960s and 1970s, favored quantity. Producers who purchased properties after the dissolution of *mezzadria* often had no idea what was planted. The resulting wines exhibited underripe flavors and harsh, green tannins. Blending with international varieties was one solution, as was extended aging in wood to soften the tannins. But neither was the long-term answer.

The consorzio's scientific committee, in conjunction with the schools of agriculture at both the University of Florence and the University of Pisa, examined all aspects of vineyard cultivation—grape varieties, rootstocks, planting density, vine training, soil management and clonal selection—to modernize the region's vineyards and farming.

The project took 16 years. Nearly 62 acres of test vineyards were incorporated into 16 sites for clonal trials and five research cellars to vinify and test each clone. Trials were made with four grape varieties in production in the region: Sangiovese, Canaiolo, Colorino and Malvasia Nera.

A number of different rootstocks were examined, along with different planting densities and the use of cover crops between the vine rows, to determine the best overall combinations for Chianti Classico. From a total of 239 clones of the four varieties examined (and tested for viruses), a total of 34 were chosen for trials in the test vineyards: 24 clones of Sangiovese, eight of Canaiolo and two of Colorino.

These were planted in 1995 and analyzed and vinified in 1998. In the end, seven clones of Sangiovese and one of Colorino were selected as suitable for production of Chianti Classico, based on berry size, thickness of skins, air circulation within the clusters and consistent performance in the soils and climate.

The total investment for the Chianti Classico 2000 project was 5 million euros, with half coming from the consorzio and the remainder from Regione Toscana and the University of Florence. It was an expensive project, yet the systematic replanting of the region over the past 25 years is one of the major reasons for the increase in quality of Chianti Classico.

In addition, many producers are now making pure Sangiovese reds from reduced yields with the new clones and vineyard cultivation regimens, particularly as the vines get older. Last year, the consorzio increased the minimum of Sangiovese from 80% to 90% of the blend for the *gran selezione* category, though many vintners rely on 100% Sangiovese for their top wines.



The Chianti Classico 2000 project examined a total of 34 different clones in test vineyards across the region.

If you look at a map of the greater Chianti region, Chianti Classico is smack in the middle. The greater Chianti area stretches from Pistoia in the north and almost to Livorno in the west, Arezzo to the east and south of Siena to include Montalcino, Montepulciano and as far south as where Tuscany meets Latium and Umbria.

There are seven subzones (e.g., Chianti Rufina and Chianti Colli Senesi) within the Chianti DOCG. Despite the huge size of the region, at 38,000 acres of vineyards, Chianti is only a little more than double the size of vineyards designated for Chianti Classico. There are 3,000 producers accounting for 100 million bottles a year. Chianti Classico is a separate DOCG, not a subzone of Chianti.

Much of the greater Chianti region is unsuitable for grapevines, such as the thick clays of the *crete senesi* south of Siena, which is planted to wheat and other grains, *sulla* (a legume grown to feed the local Chiannina cattle) and sunflowers. There is less forest and even less of the *terroir* needed to make top-quality wines. There is some *galestro* in places, but more clay and sandy soils at lower elevations than Chianti Classico. There are a few pockets where excellent Chiantis can be found, such as the Rufina and Colli Senesi subzones.

During the past hundred years, as the boundaries of these regions were defined, political and commercial forces pitted the Consorzio del Gallo of Chianti Classico (founded in 1925) against the Consorzio del Vino Chianti (created in 1927) of greater Chianti. At the core of the argument was Chianti as a “brand” with a typical “style,” versus Chianti Classico as a wine rooted in a territory.

In 1932, a technical commission formed by the Italian government approved a Tuscan-wide Chianti appellation that included



Since 1997, Gaiole in Chianti has hosted the annual L'Eroica cycling event.

TOP: COURTESY OF MAZZEL; BOTTOM: PAOLO PENNI MARTELLI

1981

**NEW HEIGHTS**

Chianti, including the Chianti Classico subzone, earns DOCG status.

1987

**SEND IN THE CLONES**

The Chianti Classico 2000 Project is launched to identify the best clones of Sangiovese for various *terroirs* in Chianti Classico.

1996

**PURE PLAY**

Chianti Classico earns its separate DOCG status, and for the first time, the region's wines can be made from 100% Sangiovese.

1997

**JOY RIDE**

Italians love cycling, so a group of friends started L'Eroica in Gaiole in Chianti, celebrating vintage bicycles, which has grown into an international series of events. [eroica.cc/en](http://eroica.cc/en)

2006

**WHITE OUT**

The first vintage where white grapes (Malvasia Bianca and Trebbiano) are banned from the production of Chianti Classico.



## HOW TO READ A CHIANTI CLASSICO LABEL

The label contains mandatory information as well as indicators of quality, aging and vineyard sourcing.

### Black Rooster Logo

The trademark of the Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico, the Gallo Nero is required for easy identification.

### Chianti Classico Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita

This authentication of geographical origin guarantees the wine meets all requirements for quality and style.

### Vintage

This must always be included.

### Alcohol

*Annata* will be at least 12%; *riserva* at least 12.5%; *gran selezione* at least 13%. *Annata* and *riserva* may include enrichment by concentrated must from Chianti Classico, concentrated rectified must or grape sugar.



### Neck Label

The approval strip is distributed by the consorzio to producers for wines that have been certified as Chianti Classico DOCG. It indicates that wines have been traced from vineyard to bottle.

### Quality Level

The designations *annata*, *riserva* or *gran selezione* indicate increasing levels of quality and longer aging requirements.

### Vigna or Vigneto

This may appear and will always be followed by a specific vineyard or place name.

### Estate Bottled

This indicates the wine is made by the producer from its own vineyards. "Bottled by" means the wine is made from purchased grapes.

Currently, yields for Chianti Classico are the lowest for any Chianti designation, at 3 tons per acre. Chianti Rufina and Chianti Colli Senesi are also stringent, at 3.8 and 3.6 tons per acre, respectively, while the greater Chianti allows 4.5 tons per acre.

Chianti Classico attained its own separate DOCG status in 1996. The wines were now allowed to be 100% Sangiovese and forgo the use of white grapes (Trebiano and Malvasia Bianca became illegal in 2006), with 15% of other red grapes from the region also permitted in the blend, including international varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Reviews of Chianti in *Wine Spectator* blind tastings over the years indicate that the highest quality wines come from Chianti Classico, whether *annata*, *riserva* or *gran selezione*. Among more than 6,500 wines tasted, the Sangiovese-based reds from Chianti Classico represent more than 80%,

with 26% earning outstanding ratings of 90 to 94 points, including a little more than 1% in the classic range of 95-plus.

No wines from Chianti or its subzones earned classic scores, and none achieved a similar percentage of outstanding ratings, though Chianti Rufina came close with 24%. (Frescobaldi's Castello di

Castello di

with 26% earning outstanding ratings of 90 to 94 points, including a little more than 1% in the classic range of 95-plus.

TOP & BOTTOM: JEFF HARRIS; RIGHT: COURTESY OF CONSORZIO VINO CHIANTI CLASSICO

Chianti Classico as a subzone, overturning the Consorzio del Gallo's argument that Chianti should be delimited by geography. The rationale was, the bigger the better, improving the economic situation for both Tuscany and Italy.

It wasn't until 1963 that Italy introduced Law 930 to develop controlled origins. There were two levels: DOC and the higher distinction DOCG (the latter with an added guarantee of quality). The Chianti region remained based on the 1932 decree, with Chianti Classico a subzone. The greater Chianti zone earned DOC status in 1967, including seven subzones. Despite being lumped together, Chianti Classico had lower yields by law.

From the outset, Chianti Classico was determined to separate itself from the Chianti DOC and establish its own DOCG. Nevertheless, by working together with the greater Chianti consorzio, Chianti Classico was able to achieve DOCG status in 1984 as a subzone of Chianti, with each subzone allowed to set its own yields. In addition, the Chianti Classico consorzio had permission to protect its geographical origins and oversee its members' adherence to the region's stricter production regulations.



Meet Chianti Classico Experience draws crowds with concerts, exhibitions and more.

2009

### CRITICAL ACCLAIM

A Chianti Classico ranks among the top 10 wines of *Wine Spectator's* prestigious annual Top 100 for the first time, as 96-point Castello di Brolio 2006 places at No. 6.

2014

### TOP FORM

The consorzio introduces the *gran selezione* category, for Chianti Classico wines of the highest quality from estate-grown grapes.



2018

### TOP THREE

*Wine Spectator* names Castello di Volpaia Chianti Classico Riserva 2015 the No. 3 wine of 2018, scoring it 96 points.

2021

### LINES ARE DRAWN

Unità Geografiche Aggiuntive (UGA), or Additional Geographic Units, are approved by the Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico.

2022

### CENTER STAGE

The consorzio launches a program of contemporary art exhibitions, classical music concerts and modern theatre performances called Meet Chianti Classico Experience, with events held across the region.

Nipozzano and Selvapiana are the leaders in the appellation.)

Several large producers, such as Barone Ricasoli, Cecchi, Ruffino, Rocca delle Macie and now Frescobaldi, bottle wines under both Chianti and Chianti Classico DOCGs. In all cases, the Chianti Classicos earn higher scores.

Chianti Classico has been inextricably linked to the greater Chianti region for the past 100 years. Despite the historical and geographical significance of the Classico zone and the region's potential to make great wines, there continues to be confusion among many U.S. consumers between the two. But with more stringent regulations over the past decade, wine lovers can look for the symbol of the black rooster on the Chianti Classico label with confidence.



Brothers Francesco (left) and Filippo Mazzei have worked to modernize and expand their family's Chianti Classico estate.

In 2014, as Chianti Classico continued to separate itself and the quality of its vineyards and Sangiovese plant material improved, the consorzio introduced the elite *gran selezione* designation.

When it debuted, *gran selezione* had to be made from estate-grown grapes of a single vineyard, or a selection of the estate's best parcels, and the aging requirements were longer than those for *riserva*. Sangiovese was at least 80% of the blend, with other approved grape varieties allowed by the DOCG.

The goal was to achieve stricter standards to drive quality and inspire consumer confidence in the wines of Chianti Classico. Initially projected to represent about 10% of Chianti Classico production, the *gran selezione* designation, as of 2021, accounts for 5% of the region's wines, according to the consorzio.

Previously, some of the wines now labeled *gran selezione* were designated *riserva*, such as Antinori's Badia a Passignano, Fontodi's Vigna del Sorbo and Il Molino di Grace's Il Margone, while others are completely new wines, such as Barone Ricasoli's vineyard-designated CeniPrimo and Roncicone. These were created after proprietor Francesco Ricasoli undertook a five-year study of the estate's soils and nearly 3,000 acres of vineyards.

In June 2021, the *gran selezione* regulations changed to require Sangiovese to be at least 90% of the blend, with wineries no longer allowed to use international varieties. This change brought a greater emphasis on estate-grown grapes and estate-bottled wines, with the goal of producing the best quality Chianti Classico. Its

secondary purpose was to preclude the practice of purchasing grapes or bulk wine, with bottling done by companies that don't own vineyards or are located outside the production zone.

Initially, I thought that the *gran selezione* regulations didn't go far enough, that the category should have stipulated 100% Sangiovese from single-vineyard, estate-grown grapes. Yet my hard line was tempered a little by listening to Marco Pallanti, co-owner and winemaker of Castello di Ama, speak about his own *gran selezione*. Pallanti makes three *gran selezione*, two single-vineyards and one estate selection from several vineyards.

His Vigneto La Casuccia and San Lorenzo, a blend of parcels, have always contained Merlot. They are Chianti Classicos of the highest quality, yet under the new consorzio rules, not to mention the "100% rule" I suggested, he would have to label them as *riserva*, *annata* or IGT. Yet, as president of the consorzio from 2006 to 2012, Pallanti was instrumental in creating the *gran selezione* category.

Thus, despite the commercial success of the *gran selezione* designation, with most prices in the \$40 to \$100 range (two of Castello di Ama's single-vineyards cost \$275, and Ipsus from the Mazzei family \$390), there are still issues to be resolved.

In addition to the changes to the *gran selezione* regulations last June, the consorzio also voted unanimously to undertake a project to delimit 11 subzones within Chianti Classico for the *gran selezione* category. In some cases, these subzones coincide with

GETTY IMAGES

## PRODUCTION & REGULATIONS

These are the three quality levels within the DOCG, broken out by their percentage of total production and the regulations for each.



	5% Gran Selezione	38% Riserva	57% Annata
<b>SANGIOVESE</b>	minimum 90%	minimum 80%	minimum 80%
<b>OTHER VARIETIES</b>	up to 10%*	up to 20%	up to 20%
<b>WHITE VARIETIES</b>	none	none	none
<b>SOURCE</b>	estate-owned grapes only	Chianti Classico	Chianti Classico
<b>ALCOHOL</b>	minimum 13% ABV	minimum 12.5% ABV	minimum 12% ABV
<b>AGING</b>	30 months (minimum 3 months in bottle)	24 months (minimum 3 months in bottle)	12 months

\*traditional grape varieties only



COME AS YOU ARE.  
LEAVE AS MORE.



MORE IS MADE  
BY THE MANY

  
**Hennessy**  
V.S.O.P



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existing communes (for example, Castellina in Chianti and Radda in Chianti), while in Greve, the township was broken out into four subzones: Greve, Panzano, Lamole and Montefioralle. Producers will be allowed to add the subzone to the label beginning with the 2020 vintage. The consorzio's goal is to extend the labeling of subzones to the *riserva* and *annata* categories in the future.

The origins of the subzone concept vary. It may date to the early 1980s, when American wine writer Burton Anderson presented a tasting by commune. "The Chianti Classico consortium commissioned me to do a study of the conditions of terrain and microclimates in the nine

communes of the zone, with observations about the typology of Chianti produced in each," Anderson explains. "I then believed that certain similarities could be discerned in wines of each of the communes, in the way that likenesses have been evidenced in the wines of the various sectors of Burgundy, Barbaresco and Barolo.

"When I presented my findings, a number of winemakers and estate owners commended my work as a base for further research aimed at eventually distinguishing specific vineyard areas and individual plots," he continues. "But the project was suddenly and mysteriously dropped. I learned later that commercial bottlers and cooperative wineries vetoed any further study as detrimental to their interests."

Emanuela Stucchi Prinetti, whose family owns Badia a Passignano, notes that growers from Panzano formed an association in 1995 and held a tasting called *Vino al Vino*. This was the beginning of a number of changes in the region, notably the formation of associations in the different communes of Chianti Classico.

Pallanti, who was consorzio president at the time, oversaw the introduction of the *gran selezione* concept. "When I was president of the consorzio, [the UGA] was an argument debated for several meetings of the board but without solution," he says. "We have had a lot of debates to find the best solution for the appellation, and at the end, we approved the *gran selezione* that is a kind of 'zonazione,' not indicated by a commission but personally by the producers.

"The UGA for me is only the first step to arrive at identifying and subscribing the best vineyards of Chianti Classico," he adds. "I hope we can use it, in a not-too-distant future, not only for *gran selezione* but for all the Chianti Classico wines. For the moment, the UGA can surely be an important help with the insertion of new wines from new producers."

It's been a 40-year process, but finally the UGA was ratified by the Chianti Classico producers, under the stewardship of consorzio president Manetti, who was also a member of the initial Panzano growers association in 1995.

"In identifying the 11 UGA, we've carefully studied not only the natural-occurring regional factors but have also taken into consideration the human elements, which are just as important in the definition of the enological identity of these areas," Manetti explains. "I think we've done a good job, and this was recognized by the Chianti Classico winegrowers when they approved it a year



Angela Fronti oversees her family's Istine estate in Radda in Chianti.

ago in the General Assembly with 90% positive votes."

But the 11 UGAs, with individual characteristics and complexity, still make it hard to identify a unifying wine style. According to Manetti, "The morphology of the hills along the Monti del Chianti chain to the east, which traverse the whole of Chianti from north to south, then running parallel, the longitudinal hills, which alternate with the principal river valleys of Greve, Pesa, Arbia, Massellone, etc., the 11 different soil types, the huge biodiversity with more than 60% of the region covered with woods—all these combine to make the microclimate even more varied and complex.

Add to this the local communities with their cultural traditions and long-standing winegrowing background."

At a workshop and tasting conducted this past April at Vinitaly in Verona, *Wine Spectator* invited 11 producers, one from each UGA, to present a wine and discuss the identity of its UGA.

The smallest UGA, Lamole, is the source of elegant, floral wines, in part due to its high elevation. Montefioralle, represented by Viticcio's Prunaio 2019, showed rich fruit, iron and tobacco notes. The Chianti Classicos from Panzano's Conca d'Oro delivered richness and depth of fruit, while Radda's versions featured elegance and freshness, showing floral and delineated fruit flavors due to its elevation and enclosure by surrounding hills.

Other UGAs are much larger in size and difficult to pigeonhole stylistically. For example, the Barone Ricasoli estate consists of nearly 3,000 acres of vines. Francesco Ricasoli has identified five different geological formations and 19 different soil types within his Castello di Brolio vineyards, from which he is producing four different *gran selezioni* and one pure Merlot.

Still, in terms of cultural traditions and common landscapes, the delimitation of UGAs brought growers together and heightened the focus on quality. Most of all, the UGA project is a culmination of decades of developments in the vineyards and cellars of Chianti Classico by its passionate and committed producers, many of whom recently began bottling their wines after previously selling grapes or wine to a cooperative or large producer. It represents a new direction for the region, a long-term investment in the future.

At Angela Fronti's family estate Istine in Radda in Chianti, her parents sold grapes and bulk wine until 2009. That was the year the consorzio decided to withhold the sale of 20% of bulk wine to shore up prices. "This gave us the push to choose our best wine in the cellar and to buy some barrels and try to do a small quantity of bottled wine," she recalls. "I think now is a magic moment for Chianti Classico and for winemakers who love to work strongly connected with our land and territory."

The developments in Chianti Classico not only reinforce its significance as a source of quality Sangiovese and Sangiovese-based wines, they have also set the region on a future course to continue pursuing quality, authenticity and distinctiveness. In this exciting period, wine lovers would do well to explore the region while the prices of its wines represent fine value on the global wine scene.



Housed within the old buildings of a medieval hilltop town, Castello di Volpaia is one of Chianti Classico's leading estates.

# Bruce Sanderson's Recommended Chianti Classico

This chart offers a selection of top-scoring wines from each of Chianti Classico's 11 UGAs, chosen from recent releases.

## Top-Scoring Wines by UGA

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
<b>SAN CASCIANO</b>			<b>SAN DONATO</b>		
<b>MONTESECONDO Chianti Classico 2017</b> Expressive flavors of cherry, raspberry and rose highlight this elegant and harmonious red, with the structure keeping this well-defined.	93	\$28	<b>CASA EMMA Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2018</b> Pretty aromas of violet, kirsch, raspberry and black currant herald this elegant, vibrant red, which is firmly built, with a supple texture.	95	\$52
<b>ANTINORI Chianti Classico Villa Antinori Riserva 2018</b> An intense red, with a vanilla accent shading the cherry, raspberry, woody and tobacco flavors. A resinous note emerges at the end.	92	\$35	<b>CASTELLO DI MONSANTO Chianti Classico Il Poggio Gran Selezione 2017</b> Eucalyptus and iron accents frame the core of cherry and raspberry fruit in this intense, powerful red, balancing fruit and savory elements.	95	\$74
<b>LA SALA Chianti Classico Riserva 2017</b> Evokes bright cherry, raspberry, floral and tobacco flavors, with firm, dusty tannins taking hold as this unwinds on the lingering finish.	92	\$35	<b>CASA EMMA Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2017</b> Bright raspberry, strawberry and cherry flavors grace this supple red, with tar, mineral and tobacco emerging on the palate.	94	\$52
<b>GREVE</b>			<b>RADDA</b>		
<b>NOZZOLE Chianti Classico La Forra Riserva 2018</b> Boasting black cherry, plum, blackberry and thyme flavors wrapped in toasty oak, this red is distinctive and modern, with fine balance.	93	\$50	<b>CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA Chianti Classico Coltassala Gran Selezione 2019</b> Lovely cherry, raspberry and floral flavors are at the heart of this graceful red. Vibrant and elegant, with a long, supple finish.	96	\$96
<b>LANCIOLA Chianti Classico Le Masse di Greve 2018</b> A complex, fluid and harmonious red, with enticing aromas of cherry, black currant, autumn woods, mushroom and leather.	93	\$27	<b>CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA Chianti Classico Il Puro Casanova Gran Selezione 2018</b> An elegant, well-integrated red, featuring cherry, strawberry, floral, mint and earth flavors, with ample structure underneath.	94	\$203
<b>MONTEFIORALLE</b>			<b>CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA Chianti Classico Riserva 2019</b> A bright yet firmly structured version, with iron, leather, almond and floral accents surrounding a core of cherry fruit. Sleek and intense.	94	\$49
<b>VITICCIO Chianti Classico Prunajo Gran Selezione 2017</b> This rich version is very harmonious and elegant, marked by cherry flavors, revealing leather, earth and sanguine notes on the long finish.	92	\$60	<b>ISTINE Chianti Classico Vigna Cavarchione 2018</b> Round and generous in texture, this compelling red features pure cherry, blackberry, plum and iron flavors. Smooth and harmonious.	94	\$45
<b>LAMOLE</b>			<b>POGGERINO Chianti Classico Bugialla Riserva 2019</b> Expressive, sporting cherry, plum, floral and mineral flavors matched to a vibrant frame. Open, elegant and beautifully balanced.	93	\$50
<b>CASTELLI DEL GREVEPESA Chianti Classico Lamole Gran Selezione 2016</b> Sweet wood smoke and spice are aromatic in this red, with plum and cherry flavors holding court on the palate. Firm, juicy and balanced.	93	\$50	<b>CASTELLO DI RADDA Chianti Classico Vigna Il Corno Gran Selezione 2016</b> This big, concentrated red is long and fresh, marked by black cherry, blackberry, plum and tar flavors that are matched by stiff tannins.	93	\$100
<b>LAMOLE DI LAMOLE Chianti Classico Vigneto di Campolungo Gran Selezione 2017</b> Complex, with plum, cherry, leather, iron, tobacco and earth aromas and flavors, this red is supported by a broad swath of tannins.	91	\$50	<b>CASTELLO DI ALBOLA Chianti Classico Santa Caterina Gran Selezione 2019</b> Taut and closed now, this exhibits balance but is shy with the black cherry and plum fruit flavors, backed by iron and wild herbs.	92	\$50
<b>PANZANO</b>			<b>CASTELLINA</b>		
<b>BASILICA CAFAGGIO Chianti Classico Riserva 2018</b> This is superb for the silky texture and pure flavors of cherry, raspberry and rose. Elegant and linear, yet with a solid spine of tannins.	95	\$35	<b>CAPRAIA Chianti Classico Effe 55 Gran Selezione 2018</b> This offers depth along with an alluring expression of cherry, black currant and violet. Approachable yet densely structured.	95	\$36
<b>BASILICA CAFAGGIO Chianti Classico Basilica San Martino Gran Selezione 2017</b> Concentrated, with a dense matrix of tannins underlying blackberry, black currant, plum, iron and tobacco. Powerful, ending with firm grip.	94	\$50	<b>TENUTA BIBBIANO Chianti Classico Vigne di Montornello Gran Selezione 2019</b> Bright, with cherry, strawberry and currant flavors, this graceful red is underlined by a firm, supple structure that lends harmony.	94	\$55
<b>FONTODI Chianti Classico Vigna del Sorbo Gran Selezione 2019</b> Elegant, with floral, cherry, raspberry and mineral flavors. A touch of earth peeks through as this plays out gracefully on the finish.	94	\$110	<b>CAPRAIA Chianti Classico Riserva 2018</b> A succulent version, this red reveals cherry, strawberry, plum, floral, eucalyptus and tobacco flavors. Long, complex and harmonious.	94	\$27
<b>CANDIALLE Chianti Classico La Misse 2018</b> Intensely flavored, with cherry, currant, iron, tobacco and thyme, this is tightly wound and should unfold slowly over the next decade.	92	\$23			
<b>CASALOSTE Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2017</b> This is concentrated with plum, blackberry, earth, iron and tobacco flavors, backed by a dense, vibrant structure, with dusty tannins.	92	\$45			

# Bruce Sanderson's Recommended Chianti Classico

This chart offers a selection of top-scoring wines from each of Chianti Classico's 11 UGAs, chosen from recent releases.

## Top-Scoring Wines by UGA

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
<b>CASTELLINA</b> (continued)					
<b>ROCCA DELLE MACIE</b> Chianti Classico Sergio Zingarelli Gran Selezione 2018 Offers bright cherry, raspberry, floral and earth flavors matched to a supple texture and compact structure. Lively and well-delineated.	94	\$100	<b>ROCCA DI CASTAGNOLI</b> Chianti Classico Stielle Gran Selezione 2016 An electric, complex red, with black cherry, black currant, iron and tobacco flavors encased in new oak. Finds equilibrium in the end.	94	\$53
<b>TENUTA BIBBIANO</b> Chianti Classico Vigna del Capannino Gran Selezione 2019 Solidly built, with cherry and kirsch flavors framed by earth, thyme and mineral notes. Taut and intense, combining finesse and energy.	93	\$55	<b>CASTELLO DI AMA</b> Chianti Classico San Lorenzo Gran Selezione 2018 Supple at first and saturated with blackberry, dark plum and violet, this turns more tannic midpalate, gaining steam through the finish.	93	\$75
<b>MAZZEI</b> Chianti Classico Castello di Fonterutoli Vicoregio 36 Gran Selezione 2018 Resin and vanilla flavors frame the cherry, iron and herbal notes in this tightly wound red, which is linear, elegant and long on the finish.	93	\$100	<b>CASTELLO DI MELETO</b> Chianti Classico Riserva 2019 This rich red is signaled by earth and tar aromas, with flavors of black cherry, plum and iron. Shows breadth and power.	93	\$35
<b>GAIOLE</b>			<b>CASTELNUOVO BERARDENGA</b>		
<b>CECCHI</b> Chianti Classico Valore di Famiglia Gran Selezione 2018 This red exudes cherry, raspberry, rose, iron and sweet spice flavors. Smooth and fairly open, with excellent balance and length.	93	\$55	<b>SAN FELICE</b> Chianti Classico Poggio Rosso Gran Selezione 2018 This concentrated red is marked by an expression of dark berry fruit, with violet, thyme and iron accents. Persistent, fresh and long.	94	\$58
<b>POMONA</b> Chianti Classico Riserva 2017 Cherry, raspberry and floral flavors show notes of iron, tar and Tuscan scrub. Burly tannins emerge on the finish, yet this stays balanced.	93	\$39	<b>TENUTA DI ARCENO</b> Chianti Classico 2020 A salty, savory red, offering woody underbrush and loam notes, with sanguine, iron, leather and meaty cherry flavors. Lively and balanced.	93	\$35
<b>BARONE RICASOLI</b> Chianti Classico Colledilà Gran Selezione 2019 Distinctly savory, this red delivers grassy, thyme and menthol flavors allied to notes of cherry, strawberry and loam. Angular and dense.	97	\$85	<b>CASTELLO DI BOSSI</b> Chianti Classico Berardo Riserva 2016 Focused in flavor, with an intense shaft of cherry shaded by mineral, woody underbrush and spices. Complex and well-defined.	93	\$30
<b>BARONE RICASOLI</b> Chianti Classico CeniPrimo Gran Selezione 2019 This really spicy red is sleek and taut, with strawberry, currant, cherry and earth flavors. Delicate, yet there's no lack of intensity.	96	\$85	<b>CARPINETA FONTALPINO</b> Chianti Classico Vigna Montaperto 2017 This starts out fleshy, with ample cherry, strawberry, floral and mineral flavors, picking up underbrush and tobacco accents on the finish.	93	\$49
<b>CASTELLO DI AMA</b> Chianti Classico Vigneto La Casuccia Gran Selezione 2018 Fresh and vigorous, this features succulent blackberry, black cherry, plum, tar, iron and tobacco flavors aligned with burly tannins.	95	\$275	<b>FATTORIA DI FELSINA</b> Chianti Classico Berardenga Riserva 2018 Dusty tannins set the stage for this cherry- and wild herb-inflected red, which boasts plenty of fruit, with orange zest and iron notes.	93	\$35
<b>BARONE RICASOLI</b> Chianti Classico Castello di Brolio Gran Selezione 2019 Polished and balanced, this red offers cherry, plum, floral, iron and tobacco flavors, with a kiss of vanilla. Focused yet complex.	95	\$70	<b>SAN FELICE</b> Chianti Classico Il Grigio Gran Selezione 2018 Firmly built, this delivers a mix of fruity and savory elements, with black cherry and blackberry allied to beef bouillon, earth and mint.	93	\$39
<b>ROCCA DI MONTEGROSSI</b> Chianti Classico San Marcellino Gran Selezione 2016 A meaty, muscular version, with black cherry, blackberry, tar, leather and iron flavors, offering a beam of fruit within a vibrant structure.	95	\$75	<b>VAGLIAGLI</b>		
<b>CASTELLO DI AMA</b> Chianti Classico Vigneto Bellavista Gran Selezione 2018 A rich, intense red, displaying black cherry, blackberry, menthol, iron and graphite flavors. Polished and expressive, yet with beefy tannins.	94	\$275	<b>TENUTA BORGO SCOPETO</b> Chianti Classico Misciano Riserva 2018 An intense red, laced with black cherry, blackberry, plum, iron and menthol, followed by a fine aftertaste of fruit, earth and iron.	93	\$35
<b>BARONE RICASOLI</b> Chianti Classico Roncicone Gran Selezione 2019 This spicy red is introduced with a blast of bright cherry fruit, along with strawberry, currant, eucalyptus and tobacco notes.	94	\$85	<b>BINDI SERGARDI</b> Chianti Classico Mocenni 89 Gran Selezione 2018 A juicy red highlighted by cherry, iron, leather, almond and earth notes. Firms up, revealing dusty tannins as it builds to the finish.	92	\$90
<b>MARCHESI DE' FRESCOBALDI</b> Chianti Classico Tenuta Perano Rialzi Gran Selezione 2016 This version leans to the herbaceous side, revealing bell pepper and celery accents to a core of blackberry and black currant fruit.	94	\$51	<b>TERRA DI SETA</b> Chianti Classico Riserva 2018 This has all the characteristics one could want, with well-defined cherry fruit that shows leather, underbrush, iron and tobacco accents.	93	\$40
			<b>TOLAINI</b> Chianti Classico Vigna Montebello Sette Gran Selezione 2017 Plenty of new leather and woody underbrush aromas give way to cherry, plum, tobacco and iron flavors in this complex, firmly built red.	92	\$49



Castello di Monsanto

## Recommended Values

This list of value wines comes from estates that are consistent performers when it comes to making quality Chianti Classico in the *annata* category at affordable prices.

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
<b>CASTELLO DI MONSANTO Chianti Classico 2019</b> Beautifully defined and pure, featuring black cherry, black currant, iron and wild rosemary flavors. Harmonious enough to enjoy now.	93	\$20	<b>TENUTA BIBBIANO Chianti Classico 2020</b> This leads off with dark fruit tones of black cherry and blackberry, with contrasting scents of violet and iron. Firm and fresh.	90	\$25
<b>CASA EMMA Chianti Classico 2020</b> This elegant, juicy red is marked by a burst of brilliant, pure raspberry flavors, with floral, wet earth and mineral accents weaving through.	92	\$23	<b>CASTELLO DI BOSSI Chianti Classico 2019</b> A chunky style, evoking a core of cherry and raspberry, with Tuscan herbs, tobacco and earth. Firmly structured, yet stays fresh and long.	90	\$25
<b>CASALOSTE Chianti Classico 2019</b> This firm, linear and balanced red offers complex flavors of cherry, strawberry, fresh mushroom, tobacco and menthol, with a long finish.	92	\$23	<b>CARPINETO Chianti Classico 2020</b> This delicate red is stitched with cherry, strawberry and floral flavors. Well-built, with the tannins sneaking up on the lingering finish.	90	\$21
<b>CASTELLO LA LECCIA Chianti Classico 2019</b> Vibrant and balanced, this is packed with ripe black cherry, blackberry, violet and tobacco flavors, with a lingering aftertaste.	92	\$21	<b>CASTELLI DEL GREVEPESA Chianti Classico Clemente VII 2019</b> This refined red shows excellent balance between the cherry and plum fruit, vibrant acidity and ripe tannins, with herbal and mineral notes.	90	\$25
<b>SAN FELICE Chianti Classico 2020</b> This supple red offers cherry and plum fruit allied to olive, juniper and tobacco notes, with well-integrated tannins and acidic structure.	92	\$20	<b>IL MOLINO DI GRACE Chianti Classico 2019</b> This starts out rich, offering cherry, plum, earth and leather notes, with an open texture. Firms up, with juicy acidity on the finish.	90	\$21
<b>BASILICA CAFAGGIO Chianti Classico Single Estate 2020</b> This elegant red features cherry, strawberry and floral flavors accented by earth and rhubarb. Firm and lightly astringent on the finish.	91	\$19	<b>ROCCA DI CASTAGNOLI Chianti Classico 2020</b> A graceful and pretty red, exhibiting strawberry, cherry, currant and white pepper flavors. Stays focused and long on the finish.	90	\$24
<b>CAPRAIA Chianti Classico 2020</b> A dark and slightly brawny version, yet with concentrated black cherry, blackberry and violet flavors, backed by a dense structure.	91	\$20	<b>RUFFINO Chianti Classico Tenuta Santedame 2019</b> Rich and mouthfilling, featuring black cherry, blackberry, earth and spice flavors. Dusty tannins quickly chime in on the long finish.	90	\$20
<b>CASTELLARE DI CASTELLINA Chianti Classico 2020</b> This crisp red evokes sour cherry, currant, almond, iron and earth flavors, ending with underbrush accents that linger.	91	\$22	<b>VIGNAMAGGIO Chianti Classico Terre di Prenzano 2019</b> A rich version marked by cherry and plum flavors, this shows a dense, lively structure and a touch of oak spice. Firms up on the finish.	90	\$24
<b>CASTELLO DI RADDA Chianti Classico 2019</b> A lively style, this boasts cherry, raspberry, floral and eucalyptus flavors. The firm structure offers definition and extends the finish.	91	\$24	<b>TENUTA DI LILLIANO Chianti Classico 2019</b> This bright red is laced with floral, cherry, earth and tobacco flavors, with a hint of sage. Round and moderately long.	89	\$19
<b>RIECINE Chianti Classico 2020</b> This juicy red shows cherry and raspberry fruit, with hints of licorice, earth and mint. Balanced, firming up on the refreshing finish.	91	\$25	<b>ROCCA DELLE MACIE Chianti Classico Famiglia Zingarelli 2020</b> Broad, boasting plum and black cherry fruit shaded by eucalyptus and juniper. Turns firm and chewy by the finish, where chalky tannins reign.	89	\$17
<b>BADIA A COLTIBUONO Chianti Classico RS Cultusboni 2020</b> Rich and vibrant, this red evokes black cherry, plum, earth, iron and spice flavors. Nicely balanced, with dense, integrated tannins.	90	\$16	<b>CASTELLO BANFI Chianti Classico 2020</b> Fluid and lively, exhibiting cherry, raspberry, earth and tobacco flavors. Turns slightly dry on the finish, with dusty tannins.	88	\$18
<b>BARONE RICASOLI Chianti Classico Brolio 2020</b> This juicy red is well-delineated, featuring cherry, tomato leaf and olive flavors, with bright acidity and dusty tannins.	90	\$24	<b>DONNA LAURA Chianti Classico Bramosia 2019</b> A fresh red, offering a mix of cherry, raspberry, iron, tobacco and thyme flavors, with a dense matrix of tannins underlying it all.	88	\$19

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