

Brunello di Montalcino 2007

Diverse terroir and winemaking remain hot topics in the region, says Richard Baudains, introducing a vintage which was awarded a top, five-star rating by the consorzio

THE DEBATE AROUND Montalcino, both from inside the denomination and among critics, continues to focus on the question of identity. Now that the rumpus over illicit blending has subsided and Brunello has regained its virginity as Tuscany's only monovarietal Sangiovese, the hot topics are terroir and winemaking style.

The significant differences in soils and climate conditions within the DOCG zone have long been appreciated, but the expansion of the area under vine in recent years has raised new issues. Hardliners complain that wines are now being produced in places where site-sensitive Sangiovese should never be planted, and call for the definition of a kind of 'original and best' classico zone within the DOCG. Softliners, on the other hand, propose a descriptive zoning to identify the characteristics of the various crus. The issues are complex and the arguments of the zoners not always supported by the evidence. For example, many estates founded in the past 10 years, including some in the fringe areas, produce excellent wines, by no means below the standard of the DOCG as a whole. What is more, the calls for sub-zones based on village boundaries fail to take into consideration the diversity of terroirs within these areas. Scientific studies of soil and climate differences would be necessary for a serious mapping of sub-zones. Since this is not on the agenda of the producers' consortium, a formal classification of sub-zones is highly unlikely in the short to medium term.

As for winemaking style, this debate has raged since the 1980s, when barriques first appeared here, but it has returned to prominence with the blending scandal. The use of Merlot to accommodate international tastes by juicing up the fruit, softening the naturally hard tannins of Brunello and bringing drinking dates forward, has sparked a backlash against modern styles from traditionalists who defend a so-called 'terroir' style. Both approaches emerge in tastings; the deeper coloured, rounder, more fruit-driven interpretation of Brunello and the leaner, intense, savoury one modelled on the archetypal wines of Biondi Santi.

Distinctive style

My view is that the debate provides valuable insights, but these days poses a false question. 'Real Brunello' was an issue when cheating on the blend was going on. It should not be today. Brunello has a distinctive character which marks it out from Chianti to the north and Morellino and the other Sangiovese-based wines of the Maremma to the south and, to me, diversity of cru character and wine styles within the DOCG is a resource, not a threat to that identity.

Having said that, diversity can be more or less apparent, depending on the vintage. Distinctions between sub-zones and winemaking styles are much more evident in cooler vintages with longer ripening periods than in early picked ones. Hot vintages, on the other hand, are a great leveller. 2007 is a case in point. The winter was mild, the spring warm and dry and the early part of the summer baking hot. Picking started on 10 September. On the basis of the quality of the harvest, the producers' consorzio gave 2007 its top, five-star rating. The wines are dense, rich and full-bodied but with lower acidity than average and less to give on the nose. Producers are saying that it's a vintage



Brunello: the facts

Soils These range from the galestro and alberese types common in Chianti to sandy clay on the lower slopes. Altitude of vineyards is mostly between 150m and 400m above sea level.

Area under vine 2,000ha

Annual production About 8.3 million bottles (63,000 bottles in 1980; 1.5m in 1988; about 3.5m on average in the 1990s)

Producers 250

Bottlers 200

DOCG regulations (since 1998) 100% Sangiovese. Ageing for four years (five for riserva), of which two must be in wood.

Brunello di Montalcino: know your vintages

2007 Dense, rich and full-bodied; lower acidity than usual. Possibly not for very long keeping. Drink: 2013-2020.

2006 Powerful if not always totally balanced. The best will age well. Drink: 2016-2026.

2005 Careful selection needed. The best are elegant and mid-weight, to drink fairly early. Drink: 2013-2020.

2004 Textbook conditions. Wines are intense, perhaps a little

dry and nervy, but should develop well. For long ageing. Drink: 2014-2024

2003 Concentrated, full-bodied but often one-dimensional wines with quite low acidity. Probably not for the long term. Drink: 2012-2020

2002 Very difficult, but some surprises. Worth trying top names, but not to keep. Drink: 2012-2015

2001 Those who picked later made austere but typical wines for ageing. Drink: 2012-2021

that will show its best over the long term. We will probably need to wait a few years for confirmation or otherwise.

Richard Baudains is a DWWA Regional co-Chair for Italy



The results

Regardless of your preference for traditional or modern styles, our experts found commendable consistency – though no real superstars – in these approachable, fruity Brunellos. By Guy Woodward

'SOLID IF UNSPECTACULAR' was the overall verdict on a tasting where consistency was the overriding issue.

On the plus side, said Jane Hunt MW, 'we tasted 161 wines, and only asked for one second bottle [for a faulty wine]. Equally, I can only recall two or three wines that you would say were badly made – and it's a long time since I've seen that level of consistency from Italy'. While the overall standard of winemaking was reliable, there was 'quite a diversity in style,' said Rosemary George MW. This largely came down to the two camps: modern and traditional.

On the classic, traditional side, Hunt found plenty of wines whose 'beauty was in their character – that lighter colour, more subtle, perfumed nose and lovely, slightly cedary fruit'. Richard Baudains, too, applauded the wines made in a 'slightly oxidised, mature, perfumed style'.

But there were also wines made in what Hunt described as 'a bolder, more modern style'. While many were well made, she felt some had 'lost the plot' with over-use of oak 'destroying the beauty of Sangiovese'. Baudains agreed, bemoaning those wines that overextracted the 'wild berry fruit' to achieve optimal ripeness but ended up with a rounder, more mellow palate which is 'not typical of

'It's a long time since I've seen that level of consistency from Italy' Jane Hunt MW

Brunello'. Colour, too, was a factor, with all the tasters remarking on the unusually bright, vibrant hues of wines that are five years old. 'The colour was far too red' on several wines, said Hunt, who went so far as to say 'you wouldn't pick them out as Brunello [if tasted] blind.'

This naturally raises questions about possible adulteration of these supposedly 100% Sangiovese wines, but the tasters were confident that 'only three or four had too much mintiness for it to be 100% Sangiovese' as Hunt said. Baudains didn't feel many were 'contaminated'.

So why the diversity in styles? 'There's a lot of new, small estates in Brunello that have young vines and haven't yet established their credentials,' said George. The tendency, said Hunt, was to employ a consultant and end

The scores

161 wines tasted

2 Outstanding

44 Highly recommended

71 Recommended

41 Fair

3 Poor

0 Faulty

18 Good value (€30 and below)

The tasters' verdicts

Richard Baudains



Richard Baudains is a Decanter World Wine Awards Regional co-Chair for Italy. He is based in Italy and has written on Italian wine for Decanter since 1989. He additionally contributes to various Italian wine publications and the California-based Italian Wine Review.

Baudains' verdict

'I came away with the impression of solid, well-made wines from a warm vintage, with mature colours, ready or almost ready

for drinking and (with few exceptions) not for particularly long ageing.

'On the nose they were quite inexpressive sometimes; earthy, savoury, and quite low on fruit aromas – more herby than floral. I thought that in general they delivered more on the palate than on the nose. The textures are very good and I liked the dense, chewy feel of many of the wines. I would intuit that the most interesting examples came from later rather than earlier picking.

'With the vast majority, I felt terroir and the vintage was more evident than individual estate styles. In particular I thought the ageing was very well handled, and I found very few wines that I could say were over-oaked.

'The 2007s do not have the grip of the 2006s or the tight, dry palates and acidity of the 2004s, but they are more consistent than the 2005s, with a lot more body. If you like the mellow, ripe tannic style of southern Tuscan Sangiovese, there's a lot to enjoy in the vintage.'

Jane Hunt MW



Jane Hunt MW is a Decanter World Wine Awards Regional co-Chair for Italy. She has worked in the UK wine trade for 33 years. She now jointly runs Hunt & Coady which organises major trade tastings for Italy, among others. She spends several months of the year in Italy where she produces olive oil at her renovated farmhouse in Umbria.

Hunt's verdict

'My overall impression of the 2007s is of

early-maturing wines which are ready or nearly ready to drink and, for most, having a relatively short potential lifespan of five years at most. It's a useful vintage to enjoy while the more austere 2006s mature.

'Stylistically, the most attractive wines showed a good expression of Sangiovese with its savoury, dried fruits, sweet 'n' sour notes, pot pourri and spice elements, and with firm but not aggressive tannins. 'Elegant' appeared many times in my notes for many of the best wines. The least attractive had cooked, jammy fruit and astringent tannins. And a few showed the suspiciously minty character typical of Cabernet Sauvignon.

'Brunello must spend at least 24 months in oak, though we tasted several with 36 to 40 months. To me, the final quality of the wine was far more dependent on the original fruit quality than oak ageing. My top wines had been matured in *botti* rather than barriques or tonneaux.

'This tasting included a large number of producers that were new to me. Sadly, wines of distinction were in noticeably short supply from some of the better-known producers.'

up with 'formulaic winemaking'. 'Everyone is jumping on the bandwagon,' she added, 'since you can sell Brunello for a good price. So you get people with land that once grew wheat or something, who feel they can make more money from wine. The fact that they are on a north-facing slope on porous, unfertile soil is not ideal – but it falls within the DOCG, so they can do it.'

As for the longevity of the wines, Baudains said, not disapprovingly, that 'they are quite well-ahead', with most almost ready to drink 'now or next year'. Hunt too felt it was a vintage for 'early drinking, not long keeping'. While this was partly down to the nature of the vintage, she also felt it may herald a conscious decision by producers to make wines in a more accessible style and get them on the market earlier.

While Baudains also detected 'a tendency towards making Brunello fruitier and more accessible for earlier drinking', he stressed that 2007 is 'very different to 2006, which was steely and rigid with lots of acidity and good cellaring potential'. All the tasters agreed the 2004s and 2006s are more ageworthy, but you're more likely to see the '07s on a wine list. 'They may not all be great, but they are reliable,' said Hunt, who would buy '07s with 'reasonable confidence but not for a special occasion'. Ultimately, the tasting reinforced the notion that buying from a well-known and respected producer is paramount.

Individual tasters' scores and notes are listed in addition to the Decanter average score for all 'Outstanding' wines (previously known as Decanter Award or 5-star). For 'Highly Recommended' and 'Recommended' wines (previously 4- and 3-star), individual and average scores are listed but tasting notes are combined efforts. For individual tasting notes for these wines, go to Decanter.com/brunello. For a full explanation of our new tasting methods and scoring system, see p2 and p61

Outstanding 18.5–20pts (95–100pts)



La Colombina di Caselli Anna Maria

Decanter average score: 18.5pts/20 (95pts/100)

Individual judge's scores:

Richard Baudains 17.5 Jane Hunt MW 19.5 Rosemary George MW 18.5 N/A UK www.lacolombinavini.it

Federico Caselli's thick Tuscan accent leaves no doubt as to the local origins of this up-and-coming estate at Castelnuovo dell'Abate. The Caselli family has been smallholders here for generations, until recently practising the traditional mixed farming of the area and only making wine for domestic use. It converted to specialised wine growing in 1997 with the planting of 3ha in locations which rub shoulders with some of the most illustrious names of this southern Montalcino cru. The first vintage from the new vineyards came out in 2001. Caselli considers 2004 his best wine to date, while 2007, he says, will need time to reveal its full potential.

Richard Baudains: 'Upfront aromas of ink, graphite and cedar, with hints of sour plum. Concentrated palate with lean tannins and nervy acidity.'

Rosemary George MW: 'Firm cedary fruit on nose and palate. Elegant wine with depth and well-integrated tannins.'

Jane Hunt MW: 'Classy, beautiful expression of Sangiovese. Layered nose of dried fruit and pot pourri. A lush palate gushes with bags of fruit and a perfect balance of tannin and acidity. Maturing red is rich in complexity.'

Drink 2012–2020 Alcohol 14.5%

Rosemary George MW



Rosemary George MW is a Decanter World Wine Awards Regional co-Chair for Italy. She joined the wine trade in 1972 and in 1979 became one of the first ever female MWs. She has now written 11 wine books, including two on Tuscany – most recently *Treading Grapes: Walking through the Vineyards of Tuscany*.

George's verdict

'The best wines are lovely and elegant, showing Sangiovese's sour cherry notes

tempered with finely crafted oak ageing. They have depth and potential for longevity. However, 2007 was a ripe vintage, so some of the wines tasted surprisingly ready for drinking after a spell in *botte* or barrel. The best had a tannic backbone that would enhance their ageing potential.

'While the overall standard of winemaking has improved enormously over the past decade or two, there are still divergences in quality. There were no outright bad wines, but there were wines that were leaner, thinner and lacking ageing potential, which would represent bad value for the price that Brunello commands. Inspired by the popularity and success of Brunello on the global market, the number of producers has increased significantly in recent years. Some of these are very tiny, with barely a hectare or two, and, as yet, relatively limited winemaking experience.

'We were told which wines had been aged in barriques, as opposed to *botti*, but to my surprise the effect was not as different as I'd expected. Nor were differences in terroir or climate particularly obvious – something else one might have expected, given the diversity of terroir in Montalcino. Maybe the lengthy period of ageing in the cellar blurs these differences?'



Tenuta Friggiali 18.5 (95) RB 19 JH 18.5 RG 18

N/A UK www.tenutafriggialiepietrana.it

It's not unusual for producers at Montalcino to own plots in different parts of the DOCG zone, but the tendency is to blend wines from different vineyards rather than highlight single terroir features with separate bottlings. The Peluso-Centolani family is an exception to this rule, having always bottled its wines from the Pietranera estate at Castenuovo dell'Abate separately to those from Friggiali, which is located on the slopes immediately south of Montalcino. Pietranera ages in French oak and has the structure, depth and intensity of Castenuovo. Friggiali has the aroma and the racy elegance of Montalcino and the touch of tradition given by the use of medium-size Slavonian oak barrels. Riccardo Cotarella is the consultant winemaker, and it shows.

RB 'A herbaceous and floral nose with pure berry fruit. Austere tannins provide a dry and precise palate. The finish is long and concentrated. Great potential.'

RG 'A light, fresh nose bursting with cherry fruit. The elegant palate is medium bodied with firm tannins and a dry finish.'

JH 'Delicate aromas of savoury dried peaches are warm and inviting. A well-structured palate offers firm but not overwhelming tannins. Suggests all the typical elements of a Brunello di Montalcino.'

Drink 2014–2021 Alc 14%

Highly Recommended 17-18.25pts (90-94pts)



Canneta *Decanter* average score: 18.25/20pts (94/100pts) RB 18.5 JH 19 RG 17
N/A UK www.i-mori.it
Complex aromas of figs, dates, sour cherry, spices and dried petals. Fluid palate, refined tannins, excellent balance and firm finish. Drinking now. **Drink** 2012-2017 **Alc** 14%



Le Gode 18.25 (94) RB 18 JH 18.5 RG 18
N/A UK www.legode.it
Light, leafy fruit aromas on top with sweeter ripe fruit below. Warm flavours of sweet 'n' sour sauce, savoury tobacco leaf and black cherry. Drinking well now. **Drink** 2012-2020 **Alc** 14%



Belpoggio 18 (93) RB 18.5 JH 18.5 RG 17
N/A UK www.belpoggio.it
Smoky graphite nose with underlying cassis. A punchy wine with tantalising fruit, tangy acidity and a long, grippy finish. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 14%



Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona, Pianrosso 18 (93) RB 18 JH 18 RG 18
£26-£29 *Genesis Wines* €
Very fruity and vibrant Sangiovese nose. Big, dense tannins with fresh acidity and a long, grapey, tannic finish. Lovely succulent fruit flavours. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Fattori 18 (93) RB 18 JH 19 RG 17
£18 *Prestige Food & Wine* €
Rose petals, baking spices, dried red fruit and a savoury, bitter, meaty nose with salty-mineral underlay. Rich, supple, dense palate, with a nice Sangiovese grip on the finish. **Drink** 2012-2017 **Alc** 14.5%



Gaja, Pieve Santa Restituta, Rennina 18 (93) RB 17.5 JH 18.5 RG 18
£109 *Armit, Vinum*
Shows some maturity. The nose is perfumed, earthy and floral. A harmonious and round palate of spicy and savoury fruit. Classy. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Tenute Donna Olga, Le Cacce 18 (93) RB 18.5 JH 18.5 RG 17
N/A UK www.tenutedonnaolga.it
Toasty oak nose, with a touch of minerals and undergrowth. Flavours of spicy, ripe fruit follow through with a complex, lush and long richness. Showing some signs of maturity, but still quite youthful. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14%



Terre Nere, Campigli Vallone 18 (93) RB 18.5 JH 18.5 RG 17
N/A UK www.terreneremontalcino.com
Very expressive Sangiovese nose, with black cherry and plum and a long, mineraly follow through. Dry, grippy palate with wild berries, and balanced oak. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Capanna 17.75 (92) RB 17 JH 18.5 RG 18
£30.27 *Fine & Rare*
Ripe, red fruit aromas with hints of celery and dried leaves. Sweet, fleshy palate with good underlying grip and a firm finish. **Drink** 2013-2017 **Alc** 15%



Col d'Orcia 17.75 (92) RB 16.5 JH 19 RG 17.5
N/A UK www.armailwine.com
Lush, sweet, ripe fruit with minerals on the nose. Relatively light palate with delicate spicy ripeness - juicy yet elegant - and a lingering finish. **Drink** 2012-2015 **Alc** 14.5%



Pietroso 17.75 (92) RB 18 JH 19 RG 16.5
£35 *Hanford Wines*
Youthful and firm nose of rounded cherries. Layers of ripe, concentrated fruit with a herbal finish and supple tannins. A wonderful wine. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 14%



Cantina di Montalcino 17.5 (91) RB 18.5 JH 18 RG 16
£40 *Liberty Wines*
Warm, bramble fruit, liquorice, undergrowth and leather aromas. An old-fashioned style with astringent tannins, flavours of savoury tobacco and a sweet cherry finish. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 13%

Highly Recommended (continued) 17-18.25pts (90-94pts)



Col di Lamo 17.5 (91) RB 18.5 JH 19 RG 15
N/A UK www.coldilamo.it
Aromas of berry fruit and eucalyptus. Big, intense palate with massive fruit concentration, lots of new oak tannin and a long, grapey finish. A wonderful wine. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 14%



Il Valentiano, Campo di Marzo 17.5 (91) RB 16.5 JH 18.5 RG 17.5
N/A UK www.ilvalentiano.it
Perfumed nose with cherry, chocolate, vanilla and some oak. Chewy texture packed with layers of flavour with a dry, firm finish. A sturdy yet elegant wine. **Drink** 2014-2017 **Alc** 14%



La Rasina 17.5 (91) RB 16 JH 19 RG 17.5
N/A UK www.larasina.it
Vegetal, brambly fruit on top with savoury, cherry and dried fruit character below. Firm tannins that provide a sturdy structure without masking the fruit flavours. Full of character, but needs time and will reward. **Drink** 2013-2017 **Alc** 14.5%



Molino di Sant'Antimo 17.5 (91) RB 18 JH 18.5 RG 16
N/A UK www.molinosantimo.com
Aromas of leather, bacon, smoke, sweet 'n' sour sauce, chocolate and almonds. Pure and focused palate with dense fruit and tough tannins. Lovely length. **Drink** 2012-2020 **Alc** 14%



Piancornello 17.5 (91) RB 17 JH 17.5 RG 18
£30 *Waitrose* €
Floral, sweet 'n' sour, smoky, raw oak nose with a hint of wild berries. Lovely fruit definition on the palate, chewy tannins and full of energy. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Tiezzi 17.5 (91) RB 17.5 JH 18.5 RG 16.5
£30 *Mille Gusti* €
Spiced, leathery nose with hints of Mediterranean herbs. Subtle pot pourri flavours with rich tannins and a sweet, raisiny finish. **Drink** 2013-2017 **Alc** 14.3%



Caprili 17.25 (90+) RB 15.5 JH 18.5 RG 18
POA *Philippe Alexander Wines*
An earthy, vegetal nose with a hint of plum. Firm tannins and a classic mellow style with careful or little use of French oak. Finishes on sweet, juicy fruit and vanilla. **Drink** 2013-2018 **Alc** 15%



Castiglion del Bosco 17.25 (90+) RB 16 JH 18.5 RG 17.5
N/A UK www.castigliondelbosco.com
Pot pourri, sweet red cherries and mellow fruit on the nose. Packed with flavour, heavy alcohol, lean tannins, and a well-knit savoury finish. **Drink** 2012-2017 **Alc** 15%



Centolani, Pietranere 17.25 (90+) RB 16 JH 18 RG 17.5
N/A UK www.tenutafriggialiepietranera.it
Elegant palate of ripe red fruit, baking spices, smokiness and dried cranberries. A rounded palate with firm structure, astringent tannins from modern oak ageing, and a minty finish. Elegant and classy. **Drink** 2013-2017 **Alc** 14%



Citille di Sopra 17.25 (90+) RB 17 JH 18 RG 17
N/A UK www.citille.com
Intense, smoky aromas with hints of blackcurrant, thyme, salt and freshly crushed black pepper. A chewy character on the palate with a high level of oak tannins and underlying cherry fruit. Needs time. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 15%



Croce di Mezzo 17.25 (90+) RB 18.5 JH 17.5 RG 16
N/A UK www.crocedimezzo.com
Refined nose of blackberry, iris and vegetal fruit. Firm tannins with tangy acidity allowing the fruit on the palate to shine through. A fine wine. **Drink** 2013-2017 **Alc** 13.7%



Donatella Colombini, Prime Donne 17.25 (90+) RB 16.5 JH 18.5 RG 17
POA *Ellis of Richmond*
Youthful aromas of garrigue herbs. Firm but harmonious tannins with a ripe, dense palate. A classic example of a very good Brunello with plenty of potential. **Drink** 2013-2017 **Alc** 14%

Highly Recommended (continued) 17-18.25pts (90-94pts)



Fantì 17.25 (90+) RB 16 JH 18.5 RG 17
 £26 Astrum Wine Cellars, Fine & Rare
 Aromas of chocolate-covered raisins, Tahitian vanilla, hints of fig and dried undergrowth. Very rich, full-bodied and tannic palate distinguished by lingering, layered fruit flavours.
Drink 2012-2020 **Alc** 15%



Gaja, Pieve Santa Restituta, Sugarille 17.25 (90+) RB 18.5 JH 15 RG 18
 £118 Armit, Vinum
 Sweet leather and cherry brandy nose with good lift. Refined, lively palate with concentrated ripe plums, fine tannins and a long, grippy finish. **Drink** 2012-2017 **Alc** 14.5%



Loacker, Corte Pavone 17.25 (90+) RB 18.5 JH 19 RG 14
 N/A UK www.loacker.net
 Ripe, youthful nose of sweet vanilla, chocolate and sour berry fruit. The coarse palate has green tannins and high concentration with a juicy finish. Modern style of production, but needs more time. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Marchesato degli Aleramici 17.25 (90+) RB 17.5 JH 18 RG 16
 £22 Winery Classic
 Big, dense, medicinal herbs and spiced aromas. Rich plum, cinnamon and almond flavours with a tight, tannic and succulent finish. Slight tartness from the acidity, but the fruit overcomes this. **Drink** 2013-2027 **Alc** 14%



Mastrojanni 17.25 (90+) RB 17.5 JH 17 RG 17
 £40 FortyFive10
 Prunes and figs on the nose. Big tannic palate with sweet, spicy and savoury fruit with lots of depth. Very clean, precise, modern winemaking. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Padelletti 17.25 (90+) RB 18.5 JH 16.5 RG 17
 N/A UK www.padelletti.it
 Nuances of black cherry, liquorice and cedary fruit cake. Chunky and leathery palate with firm tannins and high acidity. Class act which needs more time. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Pecci Celestino 17.25 (90+) RB 18 JH 17 RG 17
 N/A UK www.aziendapeccicelestino.com
 Subtle, generous yet subdued nose with elegant complexity of fruit. Tough, tannic palate with good depth of fruit and a long, warm finish. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 15%



Podere San Giacomo 17.25 (90+) RB 17.5 JH 17 RG 17
 N/A UK www.poderesangiaco.it
 Good length on the nose, boasting earthy-tar aromas, perfumed and dried fruit. Warm, fleshy and velvety texture on the palate with a soft round finish. Red fruit and vanilla linger at the end. **Drink** 2013-2022 **Alc** 14%



Sassetti Livio 17.25 (90+) RB 18 JH 18 RG 16
 N/A UK www.pertimalisassetti.it
 Sour berries, tar, tobacco and new leather. An intensely ripe fruit palate with dry, fleshy tannins and firm acidity. One for keeping. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 14%



Scopone, L' Olivare 17.25 (90+) RB 17.5 JH 18 RG 16
 N/A UK www.winescopone.com
 Cherry jam, cassis, caramel and icing sugar on the nose. Dry, firm tannins, but well balanced with concentrated flavours of sour red fruit. An intense, young palate with an abundance of energy. Needs time. **Drink** 2014-2020 **Alc** 14%



Castiglion del Bosco, Campo del Drago 17 (90) RB 16.5 JH 18.5 RG 16
 N/A UK www.castigliondelbosco.com
 Sugary fruit nose, with bright red cherry fruit and a touch of aniseed. Fleshy tannins, a big alcoholic kick and a long, concentrated finish. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 15.5%



Conti Costanti 17 (90) RB 18 JH 16.5 RG 16.5
 £100 Harrods
 Baked fruit, raisins, chocolate and vanilla aromas. Flavours of tar and liquorice with a concentrated, hot palate and firm tannins. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14%

Highly Recommended (continued) 17-18.25pts (90-94pts)



Cordella 17 (90) RB 16.5 JH 18.5 RG 16.5
 N/A UK www.cordellavini.it
 Good intensity and mix of earthy-ripe fruit with touches of vanilla oak on the nose. Fresh palate with dry tannins and a long, peppery finish. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14%



Podere la Vigna 17 (90) RB 18.5 JH 17 RG 16
 N/A UK www.poderelavigna.it
 Attractive, layered nose, with dried petals, sour cherry and a lick of oak. Nice volume on the palate, smoothed-out tannins and good concentration on the finish, with red fruit and a touch of pepper. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Poggio Salvi di Montalcino 17 (90) RB 19 JH 14 RG 18
 N/A UK www.villapoggiosalvi.it
 Light floral aromas with ripe black cherries and sweet raspberries on the palate. Tight, mature tannins, massive intensity and a very long, salty finish. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 13.5%



San Filippo, Le Lucère 17 (90) RB 15 JH 18 RG 18
 N/A UK www.sanfilippomontalcino.com
 Sugary, vanilla oak nose with red berry underlay. Lovely, lush and dried red fruit flavours showing complexity and length. An oak-influenced palate with a nervy finish. **Drink** 2012-2017 **Alc** 14.3%

'There's a tendency towards making Brunello fruitier and more accessible for earlier drinking'
 Richard Baudains



Sanlorenzo 17 (90) RB 14.5 JH 18.5 RG 18
 £40 Selezione Zanotto
 Concentrated, rich, spicy cedar and savoury cherry jam aromas. Layered flavours of dried flowers with firm tannins. **Drink** 2012-2020 **Alc** 14%



Tenimenti Ricci 17 (90) RB 16.5 JH 19 RG 16
 N/A UK www.tenimentiricci.it
 Intense Mediterranean herbs and new leather nose. Savoury, full-bodied, extracted palate, with black cherry jam and spices at the finish. **Drink** 2013-2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Tenuta Le Potazze 17 (90) RB 15.5 JH 18 RG 17.5
 POA Lay & Wheeler
 Delicately refined aromas of dried roses. Sweet and savoury flavours of cherries and candied orange peel. Velvety yet chewy texture with a very soft finish. **Drink** 2012-2017 **Alc**: 14%



Tiezzi, Vigna Soccorso 17 (90) RB 18 JH 16.5 RG 16.5
 £24 Mille Gusti
 Ripe fruit cake, leather and tobacco aromas. A massive palate with rich texture and generous grip. Long, earthy finish with savoury minerals. Needs time. **Drink** 2015-2020 **Alc** 14.5%

Recommended 15-16.75pts

Wine	Score	RB	JH	RG	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Il Marroneto di Mori Alessandro	16.75 (89)	17	16.5	16.5	Discreet nose of autumn leaves and spices. Excellent volume and texture on the palate, very good wood integration, and a long fruit finish.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.ilmarroneto.it
La Mannella	16.75 (89)	16	18	16	Rustic animal aromas, hint of pine resin, baked fruit and chocolate. Savoury palate with glossy texture and a dry, minty finish. Quite a classy wine.	14%	2015-2020	N/A UK	www.lamannella.it
Lisini	16.75 (89)	16	18	16	Baked savoury fruit, a touch metallic and slightly smoky. Perfumed fruit on the palate with a light, elegant body and smooth tannins on the finish.	14.5%	2012-2017	£34-£41	Fine & Rare, Red & White Wines, Yorkshire Vintners
Pennoni Giovanni, Baccinetti, Saporioia	16.75 (89)	18	16	16	Earth, dried fruit, autumn leaves and white pepper aromas. Lean fruit and leathery flavours with smooth tannins and a long, dense, juicy finish.	14.5%	2013-2017	N/A UK	+39 (0)5 77 84 7178
Sesta di Sopra	16.75 (89)	17.5	17	16	Gamey-leather nose, with lots of spice and smoked fruit. Savoury, chewy palate with massive concentration. Intense finish of dried fruit and herbs.	14.5%	2013-2020	N/A UK	www.seastdisopra.it
Tenuta Il Poggione	16.75 (89)	18	16	16	Vegetal, rustic aromas of earth, sour berries and sweet spice. Firm tannins with great depth and lovely aromatic complexity on the finish. Needs time.	14.5%	2015-2023	£30	The Secret Cellar
Tenute Donna Olga	16.75 (89)	16	18	16	Cedar and mint nose with red cherry notes. Good berry fruit impact, medium body and tannins and a fresh, precise fruit finish with some alcohol burn.	14%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.tenutedonnaolga.it

Recommended (continued) 15-16.75pts

Wine	Score	RB	JH	RG	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Castello Banfi	16.5 (88)	18.5	14	17	Black tea and prunes with savoury herb aromas. Rich, ripe Sangiovese fruit with a grippy edge underneath a very fleshy palate. Long, salty, mineral finish.	14%	2012-2017	£27-£39	Bibendum, Fine & Rare, Harrods
Rendola	16.5 (88)	16	17	16.5	Vegetal nose of green herbs and leather. Intense acid-fruit entry, nervy oak tannins, bone-dry finish with floral red cherry aromas. Very well-made.	13.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.rendola.com
Ridolfi	16.5 (88)	17.5	15	17	Lightly medicinal nose with some vanilla, nutmeg and plum jam. Good length and freshness on the palate, with nice grip at the finish. Well-handled oak.	14.5%	2013-2017	N/A UK	+39 (0)5 77 84 92 50
San Felice, Campogiovanni	16.5 (88)	16.5	17	16	Sweet wild berry nose, with floral notes and a touch of white pepper. Sweet fruit palate, very big alcohol and high acidity with an oaky finish.	15%	2013-2020	£29-£30	Bibendum, The Sampler
San Filippo	16.5 (88)	16	18	15.5	Mature, slightly faded nose of orange peel and incense. Astringent tannins with a lingering and pleasing finish of dried fruits and savouriness.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.sanfilippomontalcino.com
Talenti	16.5 (88)	15	17	17.5	Smoky, slightly vegetal nose, with a ripe, fleshy fruit background. Intense and concentrated palate with a dry finish. Needs time.	14%	2014-2020	£30	Bibendum
Terralsole	16.5 (88)	17	16	17	Leather, game, crushed black pepper aromas with medicinal fruit of prunes and cherry brandy. Full-bodied palate with ripe fruit and astringent tannins.	14%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.terrasole.com
Armilla	16.25 (87)	13	18	18	Strong sweet 'n' sour and savoury aromas. Lush fruit but in an old-fashioned style. Dry, tannic palate with a long, lingering finish.	14%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.armillawine.com
Bonacchi	16.25 (87)	16	18	15	Smoky, concentrated bitter cherry and plum jam nose. Bags of dried figs on the palate with ripe tannins and a concentrated finish. Elegant and classy.	13.5%	2013-2020	N/A UK	www.bonacchi.it
Cava d'Onice	16.25 (87)	16	18	15	Smoked fruit, spiced oak, dusty and vegetal aromas with hints of ripe savoury fruit. Big, fleshy, tannic palate with a dry finish of bitter herbs.	14%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.cavadonice.it
Fuligni	16.25 (87)	16	16	17	Vanilla bean, sweet oak and red fruit aromas. Dry palate and astringent tannins - very concentrated fruit with a forward finish. Needs food.	14.5%	2013-2017	£38	Fine & Rare
Innocenti	16.25 (87)	16.5	18	14	Smooth, complex fruit aromas - well-made, elegant wine. Good concentration of bitter cherry fruit and classic savoury character with firm tannins.	14%	2015-2020	N/A UK	www.innocentivini.com
La Palazzetta	16.25 (87)	16	16	16.5	Jammy aromas with peppermint and a touch of vanilla. Firm and dry palate finishing with sweet oak notes.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.fanti.beeeworld.it
Mastrojanni, Vigna Loreto	16.25 (87)	16	16.5	16.5	Very mature colour for its age. Robust earth notes and firm fruit aroma. A masculine palate with firm, chewy tannins and tobacco-tinged fruit.	14.5%	2012-2017	£46.70	FortyFive 10
Mocali, Vigna delle Raunate	16.25 (87)	14.5	17	17.5	Pot pourri, raisins and sweet cherry nose. Ripe tannins and big alcohol on the palate with vegetal flavours and medicinal herb notes.	14%	2012-2017	N/A UK	+39 (0)5 77 84 94 85
Pinino	16.25 (87)	18	14	17	Rustic sweet 'n' sour bitter cherry aromas with delicate florals. Ripe tart palate with well-distributed tannins and a chunky, sweet fruit finish.	14%	2013-2017	£35	Vinum
Poggio il Castellare	16.25 (87)	17	15	17	Loose, jammy, dried fruit nose, with some earthiness and spicy oak. Rich, round palate with alluring sweet fruit and astringent tannins. A food wine.	14.5%	2013-2017	£30	Boutinot
Renieri	16.25 (87)	15	16.5	17	Smoky, ashy fruit nose with subtle, elegant undertones of herbs and eucalyptus. Richer style with high complexity and layers of flavours.	14%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.renierimontalcino.com
Roberto Bellini & Patrizia Mazzi, Podere Brizio	16.25 (87)	16.5	15	17	Leather, toffee, raisins and chocolate - an old-fashioned nose. Chewy, robust palate with high acidity. Concentrated. Needs time, but has promise.	14.5%	2014-2020	N/A UK	www.poderebrizio.it
Roberto Cosimi, Il Poggiolo	16.25 (87)	15.5	16	17	Aromas of herbs and new leather. Tight, savoury palate with bitter dark chocolate on the finish.	14%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.ilpoggiomontalcino.com
Tenimenti Angelini, Val di Suga	16.25 (87)	18.5	16.5	14	Sweet and savoury red fruit with earthy mineral aromas. Austere but lovely rich texture on the palate with long fruit and tannic finish. Excellent grip.	14.5%	2013-2017	£33.50	Bancroft Wines
Bellaria, Assunto	16 (86)	16	16	16	Robust, earthy wine with chocolatey fruit and wild herb aromas. Big palate with sweet, juicy fruit and an alcoholic finish.	14.5%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.aziendabellaria.it
La Poderina	16 (86)	18	13	17	Vanilla bean, coffee and berry fruit aromas with vegetal and green flavours. Fresh palate with good volume, tart acidity and astringent tannins.	13.5%	2013-2017	£26	Italian Continental
Uccelliera	16 (86)	14	17	17	Toffee apple notes on a leafy, chocolatey nose with dried fruits. Tangy acidity and slightly green, astringent tannins on the palate.	15%	2013-2017	£50	Alliance Wine, Justerini & Brooks
Valdicava	16 (86)	15.5	18	14	Rich summer pudding fruit on the nose - lively and inviting. Ripe, lush palate with firm, supporting tannins. Finish of sweet ripe fruit and a touch of mint.	14%	2013-2017	£46	Fine & Rare, FortyFive10
Baricci	15.75 (85+)	16	14.5	17	Rose pot pourri, dried figs and a lighter fruit style on the nose. Round yet lean palate with a sweet entry and a bitter finish.	14%	2012-2017	£32	Raeburn Fine Wines
Canalicchio di Sopra	15.75 (85+)	15.5	16	16	Modern, sweet berry aromas with a touch of white chocolate and nice savouriness. Firm, chewy tannins on an intense, juicy palate.	14.5%	2012-2015	£28.27	Fine & Rare
Castello Romitorio	15.75 (85+)	14.5	15.5	17	Savoury, herbal nose, with notes of tar, leather and hints of vanilla. Full-bodied and dry palate with a glossy fruit finish.	14.5%	2013-2017	£33	OW Loeb
Franci Franca	15.75 (85+)	14.5	16	17	Ripe banana aromas with firm, spicy fruit on the palate and a lush juicy character. A punch of firm tannins and sweet fruit on the finish.	15%	2012-2017	N/A UK	www.tassimontalcino.com
La Gerla	15.75 (85+)	15	17	15	Traditional aromas of leather and baked fruit. Round, sweet palate of velvety fruit and chewy tannins. A classy wine.	14%	2012-2017	£32	Mille Gusti
Luca Brunelli, Martoccia, Brunelli	15.75 (85+)	17	16	14	Raisins, figs and Turkish Delight on the nose. Linear, tight palate with elegant underlying fruit and a long finish. Clean, modern style of winemaking.	14%	2012-2017	£30	Alliance Wines
Mocali	15.75 (85+)	11	18	18	Vegetal and leathery aromas that follow through much better on the palate with chocolate and dried figs. Tangy and spicy flavours with a velvety finish.	14%	2012-2015	N/A UK	+39 (0)5 77 84 94 85
Poggio Rubino	15.75 (85+)	17	14	16	Floral aromas, with underlying black cherry and a touch of talc. Round, warm palate with bitter chocolate and white pepper, lots of weight and length.	14.5%	2013-2017	N/A UK	www.poggiorubino.it
Roberto Cosimi, Terra Rossa	15.75 (85+)	16	17	14	Modern style of winemaking and use of oak. Luscious fruit, baking spices and vanilla aromas. An elegant palate with coarse tannins and fine length.	14%	2013-2020	N/A UK	www.ilpoggiomontalcino.com

Recommended (continued) 15–16.75pts

Wine	Score	RB	JH	RG	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Sesti, Castello di Argiano	15.75 (85+)	17	15	15	Toasty-leathery oak nose, with a perfumed, old-fashioned style of fruit. Sweet ripe juicy fruit entry with mid-weight tannins and a firm structure.	14%	2012–2015	£48	Armit, Tanners
Tenuta Carlina, La Togata	15.75 (85+)	14.5	16	17	Sweet red fruit, toasty oak and rugged nose. Supple, austere palate with solid tannins. Finishes on a dry note.	13.5%	2012–2015	N/A UK	www.brunellotogata.com
Villa I Cipressi	15.75 (85+)	16	15	16.5	Soft, perfumed nose with light savoury berries and iris root. Firm, dry palate with marked acidity and coarse oak tannins on the finish.	13.5%	2013–2017	N/A UK	www.villacipressi.it
Vini Italiani da Sogno, Carillon	15.75 (85+)	14	16.5	16.5	Chocolate, vegetal and dried red fruit aromas. Austere palate with astringent tannins and a rustic finish.	13.5%	2012–2015	N/A UK	+39 (0)6 68 80 30 00
Voliero	15.75 (85+)	16.5	14	16.5	Strawberry compote, baked cranberries and vanilla bean aromas. Intense sweet fruit on the palate with an austere, lean finish.	15%	2013–2017	N/A UK	www.casato1.it
Citille di Sopra, Vigna Poggio Ronconi	15.5 (85)	15.5	15	16	Spicy fruit, marshmallow and pear aroma with hints of wet earth, ferns and berries. Firm, dry palate with astringent tannins and a bitter finish.	15%	2013–2017	N/A UK	www.citille.com
Gianni Brunelli, Le Chiuse di Sotto	15.5 (85)	15	17.5	14	Herbaceous and perfumed boiled fruit and coffee. Firm robust tannins balanced with just enough fruit. Definitely needs food!	14%	2012–2015	£29	The Wine Society
Il Marroneto di Mori Alessandro, Madonna delle Grazie	15.5 (85)	16.5	14	16	Fresh crunchy fruit with oaky complexity on the nose. Big, sweet, juicy berry fruit palate with firm oak tannins and astringent acidity.	14.5%	2012–2017	£60	Premier Vinters
Roberto Cosimi, Bramante Cosimi	15.5 (85)	17	14.5	15	Baked pears and cinnamon, with red fruits and herbs. Savoury, intense palate with grippy tannins and slightly aggressive acidity, but good prospects.	14%	2013–2017	N/A UK	www.ilpoggiomontalcino.com
San Polino	15.5 (85)	15.5	15	16	Sweet fruit pastilles and cappuccino nose, with a hint of green herbs. Dry and tannic palate with good fruity finish and glossy alcoholic texture at the finish.	14.5%	2012–2015	£42	Dynamic Wines
Tenuta Oliveto	15.5 (85)	12	17.5	17	Vegetal fruit style – quite meaty and spicy. Rich, robust flavours with moderate tannins and a good balance of fruit.	14.5%	2012–2017	N/A UK	www.tenutaoliveto.it
Verbena	15.5 (85)	15	15	16.5	Green tea, leaves, prune juice and fig aromas. Round sweet fruit entry with a big alcoholic follow-through and slightly coarse tannins.	14%	2012–2017	N/A UK	www.aziendaverbena.it
Altesino, Montosoli	15.25 (84)	15.5	16	14.5	Dried fruit and leather with ground coffee on the nose. Underripe, woody tannins, but sweet and sour, juicy fruit. Oak dominates the finish.	14.5%	2013–2017	£31.36	Fine & Rare
Fattoria dei Barbi, Vigna del Fiore	15.25 (84)	14.5	14.5	17	Ripe, concentrated black cherry fruit, stewed and leathery nose. Robust, chewy palate with tangy acidity and a bitter finish.	14%	2012–2015	POA	Enotria
Fattoria La Lecciaia	15.25 (84)	16.5	14	15	Star anise, fennel and sweet vanilla aromas with undertones of game. Full, chewy palate with flavours of tobacco, leather and astringent tannins.	14%	2012–2015	N/A UK	www.lecciaia.it
La Mannella, I Poggiarelli	15.25 (84)	13	15.5	17	Spicy and succulent fruit with sweet, sour and savoury Sangiovese typicity. Robust weight with modern oak usage and rustic tannins.	14.5%	2013–2017	N/A UK	www.lamannella.it
Lambardi	15.25 (84)	17	15	14	Restrained modern nose, with aromas of sweet oak, vanilla and blackberry. Chunky, tart and dry palate with good ripe flavours and length.	14%	2013–2020	POA	Lay & Wheeler
Le Chiuse	15.25 (84)	15	13	18	Complex, evolved nose of tar, savoury herbs and hamster cage. Intense tannins, high alcohol, sweet fruit and glycerine finish.	14%	2012–2015	N/A UK	www.lechiuse.com
Le Ragnaie, Ragnaie VV	15.25 (84)	14	16	16	Toasted vanilla and sweet cherry fruit aromas. Full bodied, voluptuous palate with firm tannins and an oaky finish. Needs time.	14.5%	2014–2017	£55	Justerini & Brooks
Luce della Vite	15.25 (84)	16.5	14	15	Baked apples, chocolate, cedar, metallic and spicity nose. Concentrated, warm, extracted palate, with long, intense, tar, leather and liquorice finish.	14.5%	2012–2017	£80	Jeroboams
Poggio Antico	15.25 (84)	15.5	14	16	A talcum powdery nose with minerals, dried dates and leaves. Good fruit impact on the palate, great development, fine tannins, and a rich, warm finish.	13.5%	2012–2017	£41	Fine & Rare
Poggio San Polo	15.25 (84)	15	15	16	Jammy fruit, incense and smoky nose. Dry palate with tight and ashy tannins and a linear, clear direction. A well-made wine.	14.5%	2014–2017	£40–£50	Fine & Rare, Liberty Wines
Tenuta di Sesta	15.25 (84)	15	13	17.5	Ripe green apple fruit on the nose. Dry and aggressive palate with heavy use of oak somewhat masking the fruit.	14%	2012–2015	N/A UK	www.tenutadisesta.it
Villa Le Prata	15.25 (84)	14	14.5	17	Mature, leathery nose with slightly oxidised fruit, dried rose petals and black pepper. Robust, rubbery texture with astringent, sweet tannins.	14.5%	2013–2017	POA	Jascots Winemercants
Canalicchio di Sopra, Franco Pacenti	15 (83)	15	15	15	Spicy sweetness of new oak aromas, with a touch of incense and game. Rich, extracted palate, with savoury fruit and raw tannins.	14%	2012–2017	N/A UK	www.canalicchiodisopra.it
Castelli Martinuzzi	15 (83)	16	14	15	Vanilla, rose and fruit pastille aromas, with underlying black cherry and plum. Warm palate with a round, sweet underlying fruit and a tight, tannic finish.	14%	2013–2017	£25	Cadman Fine Wines
Fossacolle	15 (83)	14	15	16	Vibrant, vegetal aromas dominate subtle fruit notes. Zingy fruit flavours, green and stalky tannins with astringent acidity.	14.5%	2012–2015	£35–£43	Fine & Rare, Liberty Wines
Scopone	15 (83)	15	15	15	Sweet, jammy fruit aromas. Robust texture on the palate with dry tannins and an alcoholic kick on the finish.	14%	2013–2015	N/A UK	www.winescopone.com
Tenuta La Fuga	15 (83)	16	13	16	Ripe, straightforward, synthetic fruit gum aroma. Austere palate with astringent tannins and a full finish.	14.5%	2012–2015	N/A UK	www.tenutefolonari.com
Vitanza, Tradizone	15 (83)	16	13	16	Rustic, leathery, meaty and mineral-laced nose. Full-bodied palate with depth of tannins and a long, liquorice and black cherry finish.	14.5%	2013–2015	£29	Phoenix Wine Agencies

Fair 13–14.75

■ Antinori, Pian delle Vigne 14.75 (82) ■ Casanova di Neri 14.75 (82) ■ Castello Banfi, Poggio Alle Mura 14.75 (82) ■ Colleceto 14.75 (82) ■ Cupano 14.75 (82) ■ Donatella Colombini 14.75 (82) ■ Fattoria dei Barbi 14.75 (82) ■ Fattoria La Lecciaia, Vigna Manapetra 14.75 (82) ■ Fattoria La Maggia 14.75 (82) ■ Ferrero 14.75 (82) ■ Il Paradiso di Frassinia 14.75 (82) ■ La Cerbaiola Salvioni 14.75 (82) ■ La Velona 14.75 (82) ■ Le Ragnaie 14.75 (82) ■ Marchesi di Frescobaldi, Castelgiocondo 14.75 (82)

■ Piccini, Villa al Cortile 14.75 (82) ■ Tornesi 14.75 (82) ■ Argiano 14.5 (81) ■ Camigliano 14.5 (81) ■ Palazzo 14.5 (81) ■ Collosorbo 14.25 (80+) ■ Le Ragnaie, Fornace 14.25 (80+) ■ Palazzina, Le Macioche 14.25 (80+) ■ Poggio Antico, Altero 14.25 (80+) ■ Casanova di Neri, Tenuta Nuova 14 (80) ■ Fornacina 14 (80) ■ Pieri Agostina 14 (80) ■ San Polino, Helichrysum 14 (80) ■ Sasso di Sole 14 (80) ■ Tenute Silvio Nardi 14 (80) ■ Altesino 13.75 (79) ■ La Fornace di Giannetti Fabio 13.75 (79) ■ La Fortuna 13.75 (79) ■ Máté 13.75 (79) ■ Poggio Nardone 13.75 (79)

■ Lazerretti 13.5 (78) ■ Collemattoni 13.25 (77) ■ La Torre di Luigi Anania 13.25 (77) ■ Tenute Niccolai, Podere Bellarina 13.25 (77) ■ Casa Raia 13 (76) ■ Geografico, Castello Tricerchi 13 (76)

Poor 11–12.75

■ Tenuta San Giorgio, Ugolforte 12.75 (75+) ■ La Fiorita 12.25 (74) ■ Podere Colombaio 11.75 (72)

For full UK stockist details, see p90

My top three Richard Baudains

■ **Tenuta Friggiali** 'Lovely wine, with a freshness, intensity, tightly packed concentration of aromas and elegance which stands out in a vintage which is more about chunky tannins than refinement. And there's a hint of authentic Sangiovese austerity, too. Great potential.'

■ **Gaja, Pieve Santa Restituta, Rennina** 'In the past I have tended to find Gaja's Brunellos impeccably crafted but lacking a bit of personality. Both the crus tasted here from this vintage stepped out of that mould for me. Rennina is more closed, but intriguing, Sugarille more open and perfumed. Both with bags of style.'

■ **Croce di Mezzo** 'A new producer for me and one of the revelations of the day. Less oaked than many we tasted, it was vibrant with intact berry fruit and floral aromas, a splendid grippy intensity and an authentic, slightly edgy Sangiovese character.'

My top three Jane Hunt MW

■ **La Colombina di Caselli Anna Maria** 'Layers of complexity and a beautiful expression of Sangiovese. Three years in a combination of *botte* and barriques has not subdued the lush fruit nor overburdened the wine with tannin. Indeed, fruit, tannins and acidity are in perfect balance.'

■ **Fattoi** 'An extraordinarily lively, youthful wine still, given its 40 months in oak. Wonderful complexity of spice, dried fruits and rose petals. A mellow, smooth texture with fine elegance. Ready to enjoy now.'

■ **Pietroso** 'One of the longer-established estates in Brunello, its 2007 has superb fruit complexity and carefully balanced oak, tannin and acidity. Despite three years in *botte*, the colour is still youthful and bright. Ready now but one of the few which will go on for several more years.'

NB: the tasters' top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines' identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors

Reacting to the results Richard Baudains

The results show 2007 was a solid vintage but with few real highs. However, a decade of investment is now paying off, particularly through new, quality-minded estates



Richard Baudains is a Decanter World Wine Awards Regional co-Chair for Italy. He is based in Italy and written on Italian wine for *Decanter* since 1989.

RUMMAGING THROUGH BACK issues of *Decanter*, I see that when Brunello was last tasted – the 2004 vintage in 2009 – the panel was less than impressed. The 2007s here fared much better. The high number of Recommended and Highly Recommended wines tells the story of a solid and well-made vintage, with a consistency that has often been missing in the past. Having said that, there were only two Outstanding scores, which suggests little buzz factor. One has to wonder whether the consorzio's five-star, post-harvest rating of the vintage was not overly enthusiastic.

There isn't much in the results to support the case for sub-zones, which appear not to determine quality. Scores range widely within the same communes and there are high-scoring wines from all four corners of the DOCG zone, including fringe areas whose suitability for growing top-level Sangiovese has been questioned, such as Torrenieri in the north-east and Sant'Angelo in the extreme south.

As for individual producers, there are some disappointments. A few established and highly regarded names, such as Salvioni, Baricci, Silvio Nardi and Franco Pacenti, ranked lower than you'd expect, with scores that do not reflect their usual standards. On the basis of this showing, you'd want to have the excellent 2006s from any of these producers in your cellar rather than the 2007s. But

My top three Rosemary George MW

■ **Gaja, Pieve Santa Restituta, Rennina** 'Benchmark Brunello, from the estate belonging to one of Piedmont's leading wine growers, whose expertise has been successfully transferred to Tuscany. An elegant, cedary, smoky nose, with a beautifully harmonious and understated palate. The balance displays elegance combined with concentration and ageing potential.'

■ **Donatella Colombini, Prime Donne** 'Donatella comes from a old Montalcinese family. Her brother Stefano runs Fattoria dei Barbi and she has successfully created this, her own estate, with a first vintage in 1998. Her wines age in barrel and *botte*, and there is a certain richness on the nose, with a firm tannic streak, which will soften with time.'

■ **Baricci** 'One of the traditional estates of Montalcino, and 1971 was the first vintage that Nello Baricci put in bottle. I liked this wine for its elegance; there was some lovely subtle fruit balanced with a streak of tannin. You might say that it was a touch old fashioned – but in the best sense of the word.'

there are also lots of positives: other top names like Gaja, Costanti, Ciacci Piccolomini, Donatella Colombini's Prime Donne, Fattoi and Caprili all gave very good accounts of themselves. Loaker's previously rather erratic organic wine showed well, as did Cantina di Montalcino. Despite local scepticism in a part of Tuscany dominated by grower-producers, this co-op is starting to prove its worth.

Whatever the relative merits of the vintage, the tasting confirmed that the underlying trend in Montalcino is positive. There has been a flood of investment into the area over the past 10 years with the results becoming apparent. You see it in the performance of high-profile estates such as Ferragamo's Castiglion del Bosco or Mastrojanni (now owned by Illy Coffee) but also – and most interestingly – in the number of emerging boutique wineries with top quality Brunello, like La Colombina, Padelletti, Canneta, Belpoggio, Terre Nere, Citille Sopra, Le Cacce in Villa, Croce di Mezzo and Col di Lama, to name but a few.

'The tasting confirmed that the underlying trend in Montalcino is positive'