

INSPIRATIONAL WINE KNOWLEDGE AND THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE DRINK

fine wine

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WEBAUCTION *fine wine*
SPECIAL



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ANTE PRIME DI TUSCANY IN NEW VINTAGE

TEXT AND IMAGE; URSULA HELLBERG



ANITA AND FEDERICO FAZZUOLI FROM VALDARNO DI SOPRA PRODUCES WINES THAT REFLECT THE AREA'S HISTORY. MONA LISA (IN THE BACKGROUND) WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE LIKED THIS.

This year's edition of Ante Prime di Toscana is a little bit different than usual. This time even the smaller Tuscan wine regions have been included. Not only the "Chianti Family," but the neighboring wine-growing regions opted to present themselves under their own name. At the same time it was the premier of the top class of Chianti Classico Gran Selezione.

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THERE WERE MANY WHO WANTED TO TRY THE GRAN SELEZIONE AT THE WORLD PREMIERE AT THE PALAZZO VECCHIO IN FLORENCE. FRONT LEFT IS CHIANTI CLASSICO PRESIDENT SERGIO ZINGARELLO AND WAITING HIS TURN.

WORLD PREMIERE OF GRAN SELEZIONE

Last year it was announced that the Chianti Classico district in the heart of Chianti, blessed with a new quality grading, Gran Selezione. To be included in this requires that all grapes are grown by the producer, and that they are then stored for at least 30 months, 3 of in a bottled state and that they have been approved by a sensorial technical committee.

Ten percent of the production will consist of Gran Selezione and at the premier of the wine there were 38 producers participating with their own wines. All but two decided that weather wise the 2010 vintage began poorly with a cold winter and spring. The yield was also 20 percent lower than normal. During the tasting, several of the wines showed a remarkable

fruitiness and accessibility. Incidentally, this slightly more fruity style seems to be embraced by more and Chianti Classico producers.

(Which was also apparent the great tasting of the Chianti Clas-



THE CHIANTI PRODUCERS HAVE LAUNCHED A CHARM OFFENSIVE TO CONSUMERS. THIS IS WHAT THE CONSORZIO VINCHI CHIANTI NEW LOGO LOOKS LIKE.

sico 2012 and Chianti Classico Reserva 2011, which will also be released soon) .

Pricewise the Gran Selezione will be much like the price of a Chianti Classico Riserva.

On February 17 was the world premiere of the first vintage Gran Selezione 2010 vintage or older. The new rating was ceremoniously inaugurated in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Not without pride the consortium's president Sergio Zingarelli from Rocca Macie opened the conference. He also pointed out that the location of the premiere, the Salone dei Cinquecento in Palazzo Vecchio in Florence was chosen with with great consideration. Because, namely visitors can view the 1500th century artist Vasari's painting of the black cockerel, the symbol of Chianti Classico.

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THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHIANTI AND CHIANTI

The producers of Chianti Classico are very careful not to be confused with Chianti. Chianti Classico is situated in the heart of Tuscany (between Florence and Siena). The Chianti area is a little “off the map” in the province Arezzo, Florence, Pisa, Pistoia, Prato and Siena.

Chianti was made DOCG in 1984. For years they have sold their wines as Chianti DOCG but in recent years have been proud to profile themselves mutually.

- “We are a family and we follow each other but the market demands variety,” explains Luca A. Alves Franco, of the Vino Chianti consortium’s events department. In recent years the consortium worked hard to promote the 3600 members’ wines. So hopefully this year, visitors will be able to distinguish between a Chianti Colli Senesi, a Colli Fiorentini, and a Chianti Rufina which actually is an appellation that dates further back than the Chianti Classico. The appellation is in the northeast of Florence.

RUFINO OLD IS THE HIGHEST

- “We are not only among the oldest but also the highest” Aleandro Bartolino consortium Chianti Rufino tells us. Warm days and cool nights foster the wines and makes them perennial. There are vineyards situated up to 600 meters above sea level.

“The Azienda Frascale is situated at 560 meters,” he says.

The Best known from this district, is however, the Frescobaldi, Castello di Nipozzano, which accounts for half of the 2.4 million bottles produced here annually. The predominant grape is the Sangiovese. In Chianti Rufina they also produce exquisite vino santo wines. Keep an eye out for particularly Azienda Agricola Frascale, Fattoria I Veroni and Dreolini. We can also mention that the Vino Santo (made from Trebbiano and Malvasia) is now leaning towards a sweeter style than before.

- “In the past, these wines were considered to be an aperitif but today they go best with dessert, cheese or chocolate truffle,” adds Aleandro Bartolino.

The island of Elba is not considered to be part of Chianti but well into Tuscany. Elba has a long tradition of wine-growing and already the roman nobleman and author Pliny wrote of the island which was famous for its great wine. In more modern times, Napoleon commented positively on the island’s wines. Also on Elba their sweet wines are very good indeed.

Aleatico dell’Elba is a passito wine made from the the blue Aleatico



IN THE BEAUTIFUL SALA DANTE, SAN GIMIGNANO, A HIGHLY REGARDED TASTING WAS HELD WHERE THE INDIGENOUS VERNACCHIA GRAPE WAS CONFRONTED WITH THE AUSTRIAN GÜNER VELTLINER.

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grape. The wine is well appreciated and received DOCG status in 2010. The indigenous white grape, Ansonica, is also very popular in sweet wines. Further to that it is used extensively in Elba's dry white wines, which marries especially well with the island's specialty, fish soup Cacciucco.

VALDARNO DI SOPRA

This fairly new DOC (2010) selected a picture of the Mona Lisa in front of a bridge and a river landscape as its logo. It is no coincidence that the landscape that da Vinci painted the background of this famous painting, is of this region. The river Arno stretches from Arezzo in the east and finishes near Pisa in the west. It's right here, above the Arno River Valley, that the vineyards, which bear witness to this denomination, are situated.

One of the wine producers in Valdrano di Sopra is the Fazzuoli family who has cultivated wine in this region for almost 150 years. Currently their fattoria id runs by Federico and Anita Fazzuoli. The predominant grape is Sangiovese, but they also grow Merlot, Cabernet, Syrah and old vine like Colorino , Canaiolo and Pignitello.



MAYBE IT WAS THE WINE OF THIS TYPE THAT KEPT NAPOLEON IN A GOOD MOOD DURING HIS 100 DAYS ON THE ISLAND OF ELBA.

Pignitello is a local Tuscan grape which means tiny fist. It didn't have much more than this ancient grape variety, which is now making a comeback. The grape is thick skinned rich in tannin and gives dark wines with the great flavor of dark berries. The family has been growing bio dynamic for nine years now. Anita points to the label on a bottle that clearly states "does NOT contain sulfide."

- "It is good for us women," she says, we can easily get headaches from wine."

VERNACCIA MEETS GRUNER VELTLINER

To achieve some counter balance to the dominance of the red wines, then we round off here with the latest news from San Gimig-

nano DOCG which was Italy's first DOCG which turns 40 this year. Here the white Vernaccia grape reigns supreme, and so does Letizia Cesani, the consortium lady president, who still has a year left on her second term of office.

She is particularly pleased to see the cohesion between the cultivators is getting better and better every year.

- Now everyone is working towards a common goal works for a common goal. "It is important that we stick together," she says "especially when we are so close to each other in such a limited area."

At this year's Ante Prima they organized a bi-athlon between the Vernaccia grape and another European white grape. This time the choice fell upon the Austrian Grüner Veltliner, which turns out to have many similarities with the Vernaccia di San Gimignano. The Vintages which were tasted were spread out over four decades. It was a very interesting encounter between the two grape varieties, both of which knows how to age gracefully. In fact the older the better. Imagine if only this could apply to us humans too!