



BON COEUR FINE WINES

Your unique wine experience...

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO 2018: UNDERSTATED ELEGANCE



Brunello di Montalcino 2018 En Primeur: Understated Elegance

In recent years Italy's presence within the global Fine Market has gone from strength to strength as customers continue to diversify their portfolios, and look to Italy as a source of new, and attractive opportunities for both drinking, and investment.

In November 2022 the Fine Wine trading platform, Liv-ex, declared "so far this year, Tuscany's secondary market has been led by the 2018, 2019 and 2016 vintages. On a sub-regional level, wines from Toscana IGT (38.4%), Bolgheri (26.9%) and Brunello di Montalcino (23.6%) have dominated trade."

They further commented "recent critical reviews of Tuscany, as well as the en primeur launch of 2018 Brunello di Montalcino earlier this month, have stimulated secondary market demand for the region's wines. In terms of trade, November has been the second-best month for Tuscany so far this year (after April)."

At Bon Coeur, we agree with the market sentiment as we are experiencing first-hand our customers increasing appetite for Italian Fine Wines. It is therefore our belief that campaigns such as Brunello di Montalcino 2018, have created wines with understated elegance for mid-term drinking, and provide a great opportunity to dip your toe into the wonderful world of Italian Fine Wine.

Montalcino: a single township

Located in the province of Siena, 30 miles south of the city with the same name, the medieval village of Montalcino sits atop a jigsaw puzzle of vineyards and cypress trees that encircle the town. It can be said it is the most famous DOCG in Tuscany (perhaps for the exception of Chianti), and without a shadow of a doubt, is the prize jewel in Tuscany's crown.

Despite its modern-day fame, Brunello di Montalcino is a relatively young appellation, as it was in 1888 when Clemente Santi (founder of Biondi-Santi), who first bottled Brunello di Montalcino as we know it. Interest in the area and its wines waned over the next century due to war, depression, and migration to the larger Italian cities. However, this changed when DOC status was achieved in 1966, followed by an upgrade to DOCG status in 1980; awakening a movement that saw the number of new estates grow from 11 in 1960, to a staggering 250+ by 2010.

Brunello di Montalcino is produced from Sangiovese Grosso, known locally as "Brunello", and must be made *in purezza* (meaning 100% Sangiovese). By law, it cannot be released onto the market before 1st January of the fifth year after the harvest (six years if it is a Brunello di Montalcino Riserva) and needs to be aged for a minimum of two years in oak, followed by a minimum four months in bottle (six months for a Riserva).

Zones and Crus

In its simplest form, Montalcino can be best divided into two main sectors: north, and south. The north is found at high altitude where the cool microclimates and stony-galestro soils combine to produce elegant, pure, and refined wines. The south, on the other hand, is found at a lower altitude and the soils are more clay-iron rich and in turn, create fuller, complex, and more powerful wines.

However, upon closer inspection, Montalcino boasts a highly complex patchwork of zones, microclimates and vineyards producing many styles of wine. The topic of introducing an official zoning system has been hotly debated with some stating it will result in greater clarity of regional style and making Brunello di Montalcino more accessible, as well as appealing, to consumers. In theory, the zoning system could be based on the surrounding small villages and hamlets that encircle Montalcino including Bosco (northwest), Torrenieri (northeast), Castelnuovo dell'Abate (southeast), Sant'Angelo [in Colle and Scalo], Tavernelle, Argiano as well as Camigliano (southwest).



Image credit: decanter.com

This approach would be akin to the already established communes of Burgundy, such as Gevrey-Chambertin, Vosne-Romanée, and Nuits-Saint-Georges as well as the appellations of Pauillac, Margaux, and Pomerol in Bordeaux. However, there is reluctance from some estates who claim that lesser regarded areas in the region would be unfairly criticised by wine critics and in turn, be undervalued and neglected by consumers. In addition to this, most producers own vines throughout the appellation and make their Brunello di Montalcino from several plots or vineyards, and therefore see the introduction of designated zoning as counterproductive.

Nevertheless, there is a small group who would like to go (and in some cases have gone) one step further, by highlighting and promoting specific plots and single vineyards that have distinct characteristics thanks to unique terroir. Of course, this is not a new concept as properties have been making single-vineyard wines for many years such as Altesino's 'Montsoli', Il Poggione's 'Vigna Paganelli', as well as Gianni Brunelli's 'Le Chiuse di Sotto'. So, for now, the heated debate continues to rage on...

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Vintage and growing conditions

Winter 2017/18 saw average levels rainfall throughout the appellation in addition to a few episodes of snow, which replenished the water table following an extremely hot and dry summer (2017). However, temperatures were above the seasonal norm throughout January until the end of February, when a sudden cold snap struck and they plummeted to lows of around -10°C.

In March there were several bouts of rain and a further fluttering of snowfall, yet not enough to cause any real concern, and temperatures returned to the annual average by the end of the month. As April arrived many producers feared another devastating episode of Spring frost (such as in 2017), but thankfully this did not materialise and so vigneroni could breathe a sigh of relief. Bud break occurred a little later than usual (in the middle of the month), slowed down due to rain and cooler temperatures.

In May regular rainfall was again a common occurrence coupled by high temperatures, which prepared the vines for the warm summer ahead. Flowering was slightly delayed (a result of late bud break) and took place towards the end of the month. June and July saw warmer temperatures arrive, yet without the extreme heat peaks of previous solar vintages. Thanks to the good levels of soil moisture the vines coped well with fruit set completed by mid-June, and véraison by the end of July.

August was marked by sporadic rain showers throughout most of the month accompanied by normal temperatures of around 25°C. However, the combination of rain and warmth resulted in increased humidity and the need for strict daily vineyard management to mitigate the risk of disease (namely downy and powdery mildew). The most pressing challenge facing producers was how to manage the “cooler”, wetter climate, and therefore skill in the vineyard (canopy management, protective sprays and choosing when to harvest and strict selection protocols) as well as experience in the winery (controlled maceration, gentle tannin extraction and reduced ageing periods in oak) were imperative in crafting balanced, elegant and approachable wines.

After a drop at the end of August, temperatures rose again (to around 30°C) in early September, combining with the famous Tramontana wind that helped to dry grape bunches, and ensure good ripening ahead of the approaching harvest. However, Mother Nature had one last plot twist in store with unwelcome rain arriving in the second half of the month, forcing some producers to pick early in fear of grapes becoming diluted, or even worse, losing the harvest to rot. However, those who had nerves of steel decided to wait and pick later (some well into mid-October) to guarantee optimal phenolic and physiological ripeness.

As always, and perhaps more importantly with a vintage such as 2018, the decision to pick is dependent on vineyard management, location, altitude, and microclimate; as well as producer preference and style to demonstrate estate terroir and uniqueness to the best of their ability, as well as staying true to the Brunello di Montalcino style.

The Chairman of the Consorzio del Vino Brunello di Montalcino declared “2018 is once again a classic vintage. The weather again brought mild temperatures, not too hot in comparison to recent years. The maturations were a bit longer, without heat peaks. The 2018 has acidity, elegance, well-constructed and persistent tannins, with a very fresh base fruit.”

The Consorzio del Vino Brunello di Montalcino has awarded the 2018 vintage 4 out of 5 stars.

What the critics say

The 2018 vintage is a break in style from the recent run of solar vintages over the last few years. So, what are the leading critics thoughts on the latest vintage and its wines?

The Drinks Business' Filippo Bartolotta stated in his article ***Brunello di Montalcino 2018: the power of lightness and agility*** *"this vintage asks for a more mindful and accurate evaluation... I started to look and analyze the wines with more concentration, looking for the finesse of the tannins, the delicate extractions, the refreshing gentleness. Those winemakers who didn't attempt to build a fortress but focus on a more severe section of fruit had allowed the life of an ethereal and vibrant Brunello... Montalcino shows once again its moment of maturity and adulthood in the world of fine wines, both under a technical point of view with the ability to produce great fine wines even in difficult vintages like the 2018 and under an economical side."*

Vinous' Eric Guido further commented in his publication ***2018 Brunello di Montalcino: The Rubik's Cube Vintage*** *"two thousand-eighteen is a producer's vintage, where diligence in the vineyard and severe selection paid off... at the top level, many of the 2018 Brunellos come across as quite Burgundian in nature, where a combination of vividly dark, ripe fruit, balanced acidity and refined tannins add a brilliant dimension that shines already today yet promises a steady and prosperous evolution over time... If selective, I think consumers will find a few gems within the 2018 vintage..."*

Walter Speller (Jancisrobinson.com) concurred in his review ***Brunello 2018 – enjoy this style while you can***, noting that *"2018 may not be a vintage for laying down, but its freshness may well be wistfully remembered in years to come... So far, I have tasted only the cream of the crop, but I can already say with some certainty that the Brunello 2018s are heterogeneous. Like every testing vintage, it mercilessly reveals each producer's talent for interpreting the vintage in the best way and their intimate knowledge of their vineyard site. Precise vineyard location and the influence of soil and topography played a fundamental role in 2018..."*

In his article ***Can Brunello's cool and classic 2018 vintage be considered great?*** James Suckling declared *"the 2018 vintage seems to be characterized by the diversity of vineyard sites around Montalcino... many of the wines we tried show excellent balance and drinkability. But they clearly are not at the same level as those from the great 2015 and 2016 vintages. The season was cooler compared with a string of warmer vintages in the last decade, and many producers we spoke to called it a 'classic' vintage, more akin to vintages of the 1990s... these wine are attractive to drink now but aren't for long term aging... so, be choosy when you are buying 2018 Brunellos."*

Decanter's Michaela Morris summarised aptly in ***Brunello di Montalcino 2018: full report plus top-scoring wines*** *"Though 2018 has neither the sumptuousness of 2015 nor the profound depth of 2016, it is much more elegant than 2017. Regardless, 2018 is a vintage that should be enjoyed – rather than condemned – for its airiness; especially given that there are plenty of ripe, hot vintages coming down the pipeline... While 2018 proposes a few fantastic wines to tuck away, it is not a vintage to seek out for long ageing. Most wines will be accessible immediately and be at their best within the next 10 to 12 years."*

Our Buying Policy

We continuously review our En Primeur buying policy based on the performance of each vintage, with a focus on sourcing wines that we believe are the best from the appellation. We can therefore give you, the customer, a more personal and tailored service to suit your requirements. We are very happy to talk you through the vintage and discuss what will best suit your cellar/palate.

We believe we have once again rightly concentrated on offering a more quality focused selection from the vintage that we feel will provide pleasure for short-to-midterm drinking. Furthermore, as your independent wine merchant it is our job to search for new and exciting producers, and we are therefore delighted to include Ciacci Piccolomini d’Aragona to our 2018 En Primeur offering.

I do hope you enjoy reading this report. If you require further information on the Brunello di Montalcino 2018 campaign; please do not hesitate to contact me, where I would be more than happy to help.

Best wishes,
Andrew Ray
Wine Buyer & Private Client Associate Director

Key

IB:	Prices quoted In Bond (excluding Duty, VAT, and logistics charges)
EST.:	An estimated price as confirmed pricing and allocations have yet to be released.
ON ALLOCATION:	Wines are sold on an allocation basis, please contact the office if interested.
RECOMMENDED:	A firm favourite.
NEW:	A new wine offered in this En Primeur campaign.

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Please note that all En Primeur wines are sold In Bond (excluding UK VAT and Duty) by the case as stated. They do, however, include shipping costs and insurance into our UK bonded warehouse at Moor Park.

The wines are due to arrive in Spring/Summer 2023. Once they have physically arrived, if you wish to transfer your wines to another UK bonded warehouse or have them released from Bond to a UK mainland address, please be aware that UK Duty, VAT, and/or delivery and logistic charges will be applicable.

For further information, please contact a member of the Private Client Team. E & OE.

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ARGIANO



ARGIANO
CANTINA DAL 1580

Established in 1580, Argiano boasts a rich and illustrious history as one of the oldest estates in the region, a founding member of the Consorzio del Brunello di Montalcino, as well as producing one of the first “Super-Tuscans”; Solengo with legendary oenologist Giacomo Taschis. The Brazilian financier, André Esteves, purchased the property in 2013. Extensive investment and development in both the vineyards and cellar have been undertaken in the quest for further greatness, under the watchful eye of Head Winemaker and CEO: Bernardino Sani (pictured).

Located 13km to the south-southwest of Montalcino in the village of Sant’Angelo in Colle, known for its warmer and drier climate, which as a result produces muscular, powerful, and complex wines. Argiano own 50-hectares of prime south-facing vineyards making them a formidable producer in the appellation. Nevertheless, there is no compromise on quality. The mapping of their vineyards into six separate zones, the introduction of organic viticulture in addition to ultra-modern facilities in a new, custom built winery allows Bernardino to produce multi-layered, yet balanced, and elegant wines with a true sense of place.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2018

RECOMMENDED	£180 IB (6x75cl)
MAG	£65 IB (1x150cl)
D.MAG	£140 IB (1x300cl)

A selection of vineyard plots aged between 15-60 years old on clay-limestone dominant soils. Aged in traditional Slavonian barrels for 30 months, followed by further bottle ageing before release.

“Camphor, forest berry, dark spice and new leather aromas form the enticing nose. Elegantly structured and radiant, the linear, vibrant palate delivers ripe red cherry, pomegranate, ground clove and peppercorn set against a backbone bright acidity and taut, fine-grained tannins. What a beauty.”

97/100 points. Drink 2026-2038. Kerin O’Keefe

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“A bright and fresh 2018 with cherry and floral aromas and flavors. Medium body, refined tannins and a linear finish with bright acidity. Tangy and energetic. Tight at the end. A year or two will open it, but already a beauty.”

94/100 points. James Suckling

“Argiano is back on track with this excellent value 2018 Brunello. Packed with flavour, it shows the vintage well: while colour is scarce - pale garnet in hue - aromas are vivacious and enticing with spiced cherry and Mediterranean flowers bursting from the glass. Midweight and fluid, it belies the vineyards’ warm southern location. Tannins are fine and layered, with a chalky texture.”

93/100 points. Drink 2023-2031. Michaela Morris (Decanter)

“The 2018 Brunello di Montalcino wafts up with a dark and balsamic blend of black cherries, worn leather and savory herbs. This is soft-textured and supple on the palate, gaining tension through a mix of tart wild berries and nuances of sour citrus, as a hint of sage adds contrast toward the close. It finishes grippy and long, leaving a staining of primary concentration to linger, as tarry red currants and hints of graphite linger on. The 2018 is currently wrapped up tightly in its youthful state, demanding cellaring to reveal its charms.”

92/100 points. Drink 2025-2031. Eric Guido (Vinous)

“Maturing mid ruby with orange tinges. Soft, sweet fruit nose that is not entirely open. Ripe fruit flavours layered with supple acidity. Seems straightforward but the finish is surprisingly layered and well balanced with cracking tannins.”

16.5/20 points. Drink 2023-2030. Walter Speller (JancisRobinson.com)

BANFI



Banfi was created in 1978 by the Italian American brothers, John, and Harry Mariani, when they acquired the castle and surrounding vineyards to the southwest of Montalcino in Sant'Angelo in Colle (a stone's throw from Argiano).

The aim was to simply produce the best Brunello di Montalcino possible from the carefully nurtured vineyards and state-of-the-art winery. As a result, the Mariani's hired one of the greatest Italian winemakers of the time, Ezio Rivella, to turn their dream into reality. The estate is still family owned, now in the capable hands of the third generation with Cristina Mariani-May (pictured), as well as her cousin; James Mariani. Cristina has been involved with the winery since the early 1990s, where her mantra has always been "in the pursuit of excellence", which has driven Banfi to become one of the most prolific producers in Brunello di Montalcino.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2018

£175 IB (6x75cl)

Vineyards are nestled between the Orcia and Ombrone rivers to the south of Montalcino on stony, calcareous soil. Aged for a minimum of 4 years, of which 2 are in a combination of French barriques and Slavonian casks.

"This has a pretty nose of dried roses, cocoa powder, red tea, hazelnut skins, cherries, plum stones and sandalwood. Full-bodied with very finely-knit tannins and zippy acidity. So much life and energy. Drink from 2023."

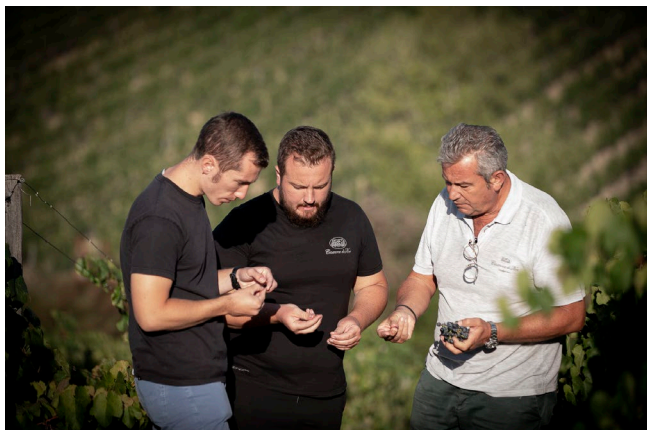
93/100 points. James Suckling

"There's a mentholated freshness to the 2018 Brunello di Montalcino Castello Banfi, as swirling unlocks further depths of dried cherries, mint leaf and worn leather. This is soft and round on the palate, with ripe red fruits and pretty floral tones offset by a twang of sour citrus. The 2018 tapers off lightly structured yet fresh, as inner rose and hints of salted licorice fade."

90/100 points. Drink 2024-2028. Eric Guido (Vinous)

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CASANOVA DI NERI



Casanova di Neri

Founded in 1971 by Giovanni Neri, Casanova di Neri is without a doubt one of the superstar producers in Montalcino. The estate has been in the capable hands of his son, Giacomo Neri since 1991, who now works alongside the third generation and his two sons: Gianlorenzo, and Giovanni (pictured).

Giacomo has expanded holdings organically over the last three decades through acquiring some of the best vineyards in the region and now owns 63-hectares of vines throughout Montalcino, as well as the single plots of 'Cerretalto' and 'Tenuta Nuova' as well as the most recent addition 'Giovanni Neri'. This patchwork of vineyards allows the estate to create a blended and balanced expression of Brunello di Montalcino, together with their highly sought-after single-vineyard bottlings. Casanova di Neri's philosophy is to produce Brunello di Montalcino that are approachable and drink well in their youth, yet also have the complexity, concentration, and structure to age impeccably.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2018

£260 IB (6x75cl)

£105 IB (1x150cl)

Simply referred to as 'etichetta bianca' (white label) so as not to be confused with their other Brunello di Montalcino bottlings. It has been produced since 1978 and is their flagship wine; a blend of two sites from the north, and northeast of Montalcino. Aged for 42 months in oak barrels, followed by a further 6 months in bottle.

"Lots of clean cherry and plummy character to the nose and palate. Medium- to full-bodied with dense, chewy tannins and a long finish. Lovely freshness of fruit here, but give the tannins a year or two to sink in. 40th anniversary bottling. Best from 2024."

92/100 points. James Suckling

"The 2018 Brunello di Montalcino keeps me coming back to the glass to take in its pretty bouquet of dusty florals, exotic spices and dried strawberries. This is like pure silk on the palate, seamless and supple, with depths of dark red fruit and mineral tones that add a more tactile feel the close. Balsam herbs, cedar and tobacco all resonate throughout the long and dramatic finale, as fine tannins frame the experience with youthful poise. As is often the case, Casanova di Neri is a master at creating one of the region's most balanced and enjoyable 'entry level' Brunellos."

92/100 points. Drink 2025-2031. Eric Guido (Vinous)

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“Celebrating its 40th anniversary with this 2018 release, Casanova di Neri’s ‘Etichetta Bianca’ has been made since 1978. It blends fruit from plots in the Torrenieri area, where the estate was first established. Tasted five months after bottling, the 2018 is still emerging from its wood-ageing cocoon. Cedar and grilled meat eventually give way to wild mountain blossoms. It’s angular at this stage as nervous acidity, granular tannins and polished oak wrap around sinewy fruit - it needs time to come together but shows promise on the finish, signing off with juicy cherry and enticing truffle.”

91/100 points. Drink 2024-2031. Michaela Morris (Decanter)

Brunello di Montalcino ‘Tenuta Nuova’ DOCG 2018

£520 IB (6x75cl)

£195 IB (1x150cl)

First produced in 1993. Grapes are sourced from the single vineyard of ‘Le Cetine’ situated between Sant’Angelo in Colle and Castelnuovo dell’Abate, where the south-facing vineyard produces rich, opulent, and intense wines. Aged for 36 months in 500L oak tonneaux, followed by a further 12 months in bottle.

“Lots of red plums and cherries on the nose with a palate that has a full body, thick silky tannins and a fresh and flavorful finish. The tannins are in good balance against the ripe fruit. Fresh and transparent at the end. Drink or hold.”

94/100 points. James Suckling

“The 2018 Brunello di Montalcino Tenuta Nuova is spicy and intense, wafting up with a wild mix of sweet herbs, cloves, dried citrus peels and crushed red plums. This is darkly elegant and refined, with polished red and black fruits elevated by hints of lavender and mint; yet beneath, a web of fine tannins slowly saturates the palate. Hints of cranberry and tangerine mingle with lavender through the long and structured finale, as the 2018 finishes beautifully balanced and classic in feel. With maturity, this may deserve an even higher score.”

93+/100 points. Drink 2025-2033. Eric Guido (Vinous)

“From the estate’s Cetine vineyard, located to the southeast of Sant’Angelo in Colle, this Tenuta Nuova bottling has a Mediterranean feel and a sensuous charisma. A relatively early harvest date of 16 September preserved freshness in the grapes. Under a top-note of wood emerges lavender and balsamic herbs. There’s ample concentration of ripe red cherry infused with cinnamon and wrapped in malleable tannins. Sapid, tangy acidity buoys the whole. The sleek and sophisticated wood should digest with another year in the bottle.”

93/100 points. Drink 2024-2032. Michaela Morris (Decanter)

Brunello di Montalcino ‘Giovanni Neri’ DOCG 2018

NEW / ON ALLOCATION

£545 IB (3x75cl)

The first release of this single vineyard (positioned in between Castelnuovo dell’Abate and Sant’Angelo) with remarkable terroir, where the 50-year-old Sangiovese vines produce a pure, authentic, and unmistakably elegant wine. Aged for 30 months in oak, followed by a further 22 months in bottle.

“Lovely ripe fruit on the nose, with cranberries, plums, morello cherries, white truffles, red tea and white pepper. The tannins are very fine, creamy and expansive. Coating and generous, yet fresh. Wonderful length and depth. From a 7-hectare parcel of 50-year-old vines. Try this from 2025.”

98/100 points. James Suckling

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"I have long awaited the first rendition of the Giovanni Neri Brunello di Montalcino, and the 2018 does not disappoint. Here I'm finding a beguiling mix of lavender, white pepper and crushed stone giving way to dried black cherries and foreign spice. This washes across the palate with a supple wave of ripe red berries carried by vibrant acidity, as nuances of sour citrus and clove resonate throughout. Its tannins are crunchy, almost chiseled in feel, yet coupled with a staining of primary concentration that lingers under an air of violet inner florals, tapering off with tremendous length and structured for a long and balanced maturation. Made from vines that are 50 years old, the Giovanni Neri hails from a vineyard acquired in the southeast of Montalcino. This is a fabulous debut bottling."

94/100 points. Drink 2025-2033. Eric Guido (Vinous)

"Casanova di Neri's newest Brunello hails from a 7ha plot purchased in 2017. In the slightly untamed area of Sesta, in Montalcino's southeast, the vineyard boasts vines over 50 years of age. A superbly multifaceted wine, it expresses becoming scents of aromatic herbs and blood orange. Velvety layers of fleshy persimmon and ample pliable tannins are countered by citrussy acidity. There's a crunch of pomegranate as well as chocolatey depths of exotic carob. Plenty of verve and vibration here."

94/100 points. Drink 2024-2036. Michaela Morris (Decanter)

CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO



Castiglion del Bosco is an iconic estate with records dating back to the 11th century, as well as being another key participant in the creation of the Consorzio del Brunello di Montalcino. After many years laying in ruin, the winery was purchased in 2003 by fashion guru: Massimo Ferragamo, who immediately began an extremely ambitious restoration project to return the estate to its former glory.

Only the very best will do at Castiglion del Bosco, from the immaculate 62-hectares of vines to the purpose-built state-of-the-art winery, as well as the combination of superstar winemaking team of Cecilia Leoneschi (pictured), and consultant oenologist Nicolò D’Afflitto. There is no expense spared in their quest to produce world-class Brunello di Montalcino, and as a result, Castiglion del Bosco has emerged from the shadows and rightfully taken its place on the world stage.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2018

RECOMMENDED

£222 IB (6x75cl)

Grapes come from the single vineyard of ‘Capanna’, which is in the cooler climes of the Bosco sub-region to north-west of Montalcino near Buonconvento. It is a single 42-hectare site where the combination of altitude and Galestro sandstone-clay soils produce refined, aromatic, and complex wines.

“Ripe berries and hints of red licorice and herbs on the nose, following through to a medium-bodied palate with fine, tightly packed tannins and a taut finish for now. Give it two years to unwind a bit. Try from 2025.”
93/100 points. James Suckling

“A dusty blend of cedary spice, mentholated herbs, rose petal and sour cherry wafts up from the 2018 Brunello di Montalcino. It’s round and supple in feel, with floral-laced red and black fruits complemented by a subtle tinge of sweet spice. This leaves a bitter twang of sour berries, while a burst of residual acidity adds a cheek-puckering freshness, and a gentle tug of tannin slowly recedes. The 2018 has improved each time I’ve tasted it in the last five months, and it now shows the ruggedness of Northwestern Montalcino Sangiovese, but in a wonderfully balanced way.”

93/100 points. Drink 2024-2031. Eric Guido (Vinous)

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“Rather than exploding with fragrance, the 2018 unveils its evocative floral scents slowly. These reach a crescendo on the palate, melding seamlessly with cheerful pure pomegranate and cherry flavours. Supple tannins are velvety in texture. Unforced and fluid, this is hard to resist now.”

93/100 points. Drink 2023-2031. Michaela Morris (Decanter)

“Mid to deep ruby. Perfumed, spice nose with mineral notes. Fine polished fruit that is truly fresh. Long, grainy tannins. Lush and fresh at the same time.”

17++/20 points. Drink 2023-2030. Walter Speller (JancisRobinson.com)

Brunello di Montalcino ‘Campo del Drago’ DOCG 2018

NEW

£475 IB (6x75cl)

Grapes are also sourced from the single vineyard of ‘Capanna’, but from a specific 3.5-hectare plot. It is the highest (450m), and finest part of the vineyard, which creates a wine with impressive structure, unique character, and great aging potential.

“Fascinating nose of pungent mushroom, almost truffly notes, together with ripe red berries and a twist of more exotic dates. Full-bodied with an excellent balance of ripe fruit, velvety but not chewy tannins and a long, tasty finish. You want to drink this now, but it will continue to improve with age. Best from 2024.”

95/100 points. James Suckling

“It's more brooding than the classic Brunello, showing sweet spice and cedar-infused black currants and plum. Full but not rich, it's shored up by gravelly tannins and scores of acidity. The palate hints at forest undergrowth, mint and stone, though this will need a few more years to reveal all of its nuances.”

95/100 points. Drink 2025-2035. Michaela Morris (Decanter)

“The 2018 Brunello di Montalcino Campo del Drago wafts up with a compelling mix of crushed stone, savory herbs, wild strawberries and rose tones. This is elegant yet finessed in feel, with silky textures and pure, ripe red and blue fruits that take on a crunchy feel toward the close, as inner violet and lavender tones arch across the palate. Long and sapid, the 2018 finishes lightly tannic, packed full of salty minerals, and with floral perfumes that go on and on. Often dark and brooding to the extreme, I was very impressed with this 2018 Campo del Drago. There's beautiful balance here, but also admirable depth for this vintage. Well done.”

94/100 points. Drink 2025-2033. Eric Guido (Vinous)

“Lustrous ruby. Truly has the ‘wow-factor’ nose. Still a little tight and closed but with real purity of fruit on the nose and with an iodine hint. Pure fruit with lashings of fresh acidity and rich, long, finely grained tannins. Real elegance combined with concentration. Not ready yet.”

17.5/20 points. Drink 2023-2030. Walter Speller (JancisRobinson.com)

CIACCI PICCOLIMINI D'ARAGONA



CIACCI PICCOLOMINI d'ARAGONA

Located to the southeast of Montalcino, close to the beautiful medieval village of Castelnuovo dell'Abate, the Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona estate can trace its rich heritage back as far as the 17th Century. After several centuries of ownership under different noble families, the Ciacci family from nearby Castelnuovo dell'Abate purchased the entire estate and retained it for over a hundred years until the death of Countess Elda Ciacci in 1985. As the Countess had no children, she left the property to her long standing and well-respected Estate Manager: Giuseppe Bianchini.

Giuseppe applied a brand new and refreshing philosophy to the palazzo, which in turn improved quantity and more importantly quality, as well as opening the door to the export market. Sadly, Giuseppe passed away in 2004, however, his hard work and dedication has been continued by his son and daughter, Paolo, and Lucia Bianchini (pictured), who have developed the property and wines to be known as one of the most distinguished Brunello di Montalcino producers.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2018

NEW

£185 IB (6x75cl)

Grapes come from an 8-hectare plot with marl dominant soils in the heart of the Val d'Orcia, which are kept cool by a combination of altitude (340-360m) as well as the nearby Orcia river. Aged for 24 months in 20-75hl Slavonian oak barrels, followed by a further 8 months in bottle.

"Forest berry, spice, hay and menthol aromas mingle with whiffs of new leather on this stunning, fragrant Brunello. A top-scorer vintage after vintage, the 2018 combines elegance and a full body, delivering dried cherry, blood orange, licorice and ground clove alongside firm but refined tannins. Bright acidity keeps it energized while a saline mineral note adds depth to the finish."

97/100 points. Drink 2026-2038. Kerin O'Keefe

"Roasted herbs, walnuts, olives, dried cherries and balsamic on the nose with a touch of leather and sage. It's full-bodied with firm, finely-knit tannins. Creamy and so well integrated with depth and class. Try after 2024."

95/100 points. James Suckling

BON COEUR FINE WINES

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“The 2018 Brunello di Montalcino is dark and brooding, taking its time to blow off a whiff of mocha before opening up with a mix of dried red fruits, cloves and rosemary. This is unsurprisingly pure and lifted in style while maintaining elegance, as ripe red and black fruits cascade across a core of vibrant acidity. The 2018 leaves the palate buzzing with residual tension, as fine-grained tannins penetrate deeply, and hints of tart wild berry and a dusting of cocoa slowly fade.”

92/100 points. Drink 2024-2031. Eric Guido (Vinous)

“Maturing mid ruby with bricky rim. Balsamic and ripe on the nose and with generous, ripe, sweet fruit on the palate. Easy to like and completely ready now.”

16/20 points. Drink 2023-2028. Walter Speller (JancisRobinson.com)

Brunello di Montalcino ‘Pianrosso’ DOCG 2018

NEW / RECOMMENDED £265 IB (6x75cl)

Only produced in the very best vintages from a careful selection of grapes that are sourced solely from the 11.69-hectare single vineyard of ‘Pianrosso’. Aged for 36 months in 20-62 hl Slavonian oak barrels, followed by a further 8 months in bottle.

“Camphor, forest floor, wild berry and dark spice aromas lead the way. Full-bodied and supremely elegant, the delicious palate deliver ripe Morello cherry, crushed raspberry, licorice and tobacco framed in tightly woven, velvety tannins. Bright acidity keeps it balanced and lifted.”

98/100 points. Drink 2025-2038. Kerin O’Keefe

“This is so complex, with lifting citrus and herb undertones to the blue and red berry fruit. Thyme, sage and lavender, with mocha and clove, too. Full-bodied, full of depth and intensity, with firm yet seamless tannins. Evolves to espresso. Balanced, powerful and very long. Try after 2025.”

97/100 points. James Suckling

“Dark depths of crushed plums and black cherries are offset by notes of rosemary, spiced citrus peels and hints of cocoa as the 2018 Brunello di Montalcino Pianrosso opens in the glass. This is an especially racy style for Ciacci Piccolomini d’Aragona, with cooling mineral tones and zesty acidity propelling its ripe berry fruit and hints of sour citrus across the palate. While structured, this finishes with tremendous energy and freshness, leaving the mouth watering with a lingering bitter hint of balsamic spice. The 2018 may not possess the power often associated with the Pianrosso, but it instead impresses with its lively and spicy character.”

94/100 points. Drink 2024-2033. Eric Guido (Vinous)

“Both of Ciacci Piccolomini’s 2018s offer a ‘deliciousness’ of taste and a truly umami quality, however the Pianrosso selection delivers greater Brunello satisfaction. Not quite 12 hectares, this iron-rich marly vineyard soaked up just enough warmth to clearly demonstrate its southern origins. It has more shape, form and depth to lend endurance. Iron and salty minerals emerge from a backdrop of persimmon and hibiscus, finishing with Mediterranean herbs. Docile and yielding, the gentle sandy tannins give textural complexity as well as an immediate drinkability.”

92/100 points. Drink 2023-2029. Michael Morris (Decanter)

“Deep ruby with bricky rim. Concentrated sour-cherry nose with a suggestion of gingerbread. Becomes more complex with aeration. Lush, ripe fruit on the palate with polished tannins and tangy acidity. Great length and very accessible.”

16.5/20 points. Drink 2023-2030. Walter Speller (JancisRobinson.com)

PIEVE SANTA RESTITUTA (GAJA)



Gaja is one of Italy's most famous producers, who caused quite the controversy in 1994 when they expanded from their native Piedmont into Tuscany with the purchase of Pieve Santa Restituta in Montalcino. It has taken some time for the Gaja family to be accepted into the Montalcino community, however, Angelo Gaja's perseverance has been paid off, as they have risen to become one of the key producers in the appellation.

The original estate constituted of 16-hectares of vines nestled away in Tavernelle (next to the iconic Gianfranco Soldera Case Basse property) to the southwest of Montalcino, so there is no denying the exceptional quality of the terroir. In 2005, a following 10-hectare site (referred to as 'Deserti') near Torrenieri in the northeast was incorporated into its holdings.

It is worth noting that there are only three Brunello di Montalcino wines created at Pieve Santa Restituta; a straight Brunello (released in 2005), and two single-vineyards: Rennina (released in 1994) and Sugarille (released in 1995). Now with 20 vintages behind them, Gaja arguably craft some of the finest Brunello di Montalcino and now more than deserve their place at the table.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2018

EST. £350 IB (6x75cl)

The estate's signature wine and a radical move away from the single-vineyard wines at the time of its first inception in 2005. A blend of fruit grown on the highest sites in both 'Sugarille' and 'Rennina', as well as from the 10-hectare 'Deserti' parcel.

Unfortunately, critics have not yet tasted this wine.