

Tasting Wines from Bolgheri and Castagneto Carducci

Charles Scicolone (December 02, 2009)



The Chamber of Commerce of Livorno, the City of Castagneto Carducci and the Consorzio Vini Bolgheri D.O. offered a Bolgheri D.O.C. Wine Tasting at the Core Club in Manhattan. The event also featured a preview of a photo exhibition of the Bolgheri-Castagneto Carducci Vintage Green by Massimo Vitali and Albrecht Tuebke

My first assignment as the Wine and Food Editor of www.i-italy.org [2] was an invitation to a tasting of Italian wines from Bolgheri, a frazione (administrative division) of Castagneto Carducci in the province of Livorno on the west coast of Tuscany not far from the sea. The producers of these wines were there to present their wines which always make it more interesting for me. There was also a preview of a photo exhibition of the Bolgheri-Castagneto Carducci Vintage Green by Massimo Vitali and Albrecht Tuebke.



The area first caught the attention of wine lovers in 1972 when Decanter Magazine organized a tasting based on Bordeaux blends from around the world. The wine of Tenuta San Guido Bolgheri Sassicaia DOC came in first and the rest is history.

I tried the 2006 vintage of this wine at the tasting and the blend of grapes is still the same: 85% cabernet sauvignon and 15% cabernet franc. The wine is aged in French oak barriques (one third new) for 24 months. Piero Incisa della Rocchetta was pouring the wine and his uncle, Marchese Nicolo Incisa della Rocchetta, the owner of the winery, was also at the tasting.

Many famous producers from other parts of Tuscany have bought land and established wineries here. Since most of them felt that the grapes that are used to make Bordeaux would do very well, almost all of the wine is made from cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, and merlot and in some cases a little petit verdot. Very little sangiovese is grown in the zone. However Michele Satta of I Castagni does make a 100% sangiovese IGT "Cavaliere" that is aged in barriques for 12 months

In the 1980's the press in the English speaking world began to write about wines from Tuscany made from Bordeaux grapes and aged in barriques (225 liter French oak barrels) as Super Tuscans. Soon the Bolgheri area was producing many Super Tuscans.

Marchese Piero Antinori established Tenuta Guado Al Tasso. His Bolgheri Superiore DOC Guado Al Tasso is made from 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% merlot and 10% syrah and aged 14 months in new French oak barriques

Piero's brother Ludovico founded Tenuta dell'Ornellaia. It is now owned by Frescobaldi. Bolgheri Superiore Ornellaia DOC is made from 60% cabernet sauvignon, 22% merlot %, 14 cabernet franc and 4% petit verdot and aged in French oak barriques for 18 months.

Sassicaia, Ornellaia and Guado Al Tasso were the "big three" at the tasting and command the highest prices. They all sell for about \$100 a bottle. Of the three, the Sassicaia was showing the best and seemed to have less of the international flavors and aromas.

Among the wines that I liked were the Bolgheri Superiore DOC "T A M" from Batz Ella. It is made from 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Cabernet and aged in French oak barriques for 24 months. They did a great job of integrating the wine and the wood. It is a very well balanced wine.

Giovanni Folonari was pouring Bolgheri DOC Campo Al Mare made from 60% merlot 20% cabernet sauvignon 15% Cabernet Franc and 5% petite verdot(\$36)The wine is aged in one year old French oak barriques. I spoke with Giovanni about that state of the wine business both here and in Italy and we both hoped it would get better. His wine was very well balanced, and elegant with good fruit flavors and aromas. .It was the most natural wine at the tasting.

Guicciardini Strozzi Bolgheri Superiore DOC "Vigna RE" is made from cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and merlot and aged for 18 months in 225 liter oak barrels. I think prince Strozzi himself was pouring the wine.

Philharmonica is a large company that has holdings in Italy and other countries.

The export manager Pepe Schib Graciana was pouring the Bolgheri DOC Superiore "Millepasse" made from cabernet sauvignon petit verdot and merlot and aged for 24 months in French oak barrels that were 50% new and 50% one year old. Mr. Graciana said that they were trying to make the wines less international in style but at the same time making them ready to drink sooner.

The Il Paleo from Le Macchiole is IGT Toscana and is made from 100% cabernet franc. Having a wine made from 100% cabernet franc from this area is very unusual. It is aged 14/16 months in new barriques- 90% in 225 liter barrels and 10% in 112 liter barrels.(\$90)

Poggio al Tesoro winery is a partnership between Allegrini, a producer in the Veneto and Leonardo La Cascio, president and CEO of Winebow imports. Their IGT Toscana wine is Sondaia made from



cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and merlot. It is aged in 225 liter oak barrels- 50% new and 50% one year old for 18 months.

The wines poured by the producers were the new releases. These wines seemed for the most part less oaky and less international in style than they did in the past. There was less use of new French oak barriques and a better integration of the wood and the wine. The price of the wines at the tasting ranged from \$36 to over \$100

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