

For wine lovers around the world who enjoy  
wine and the good life

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# *Sommelier* **INDIA**

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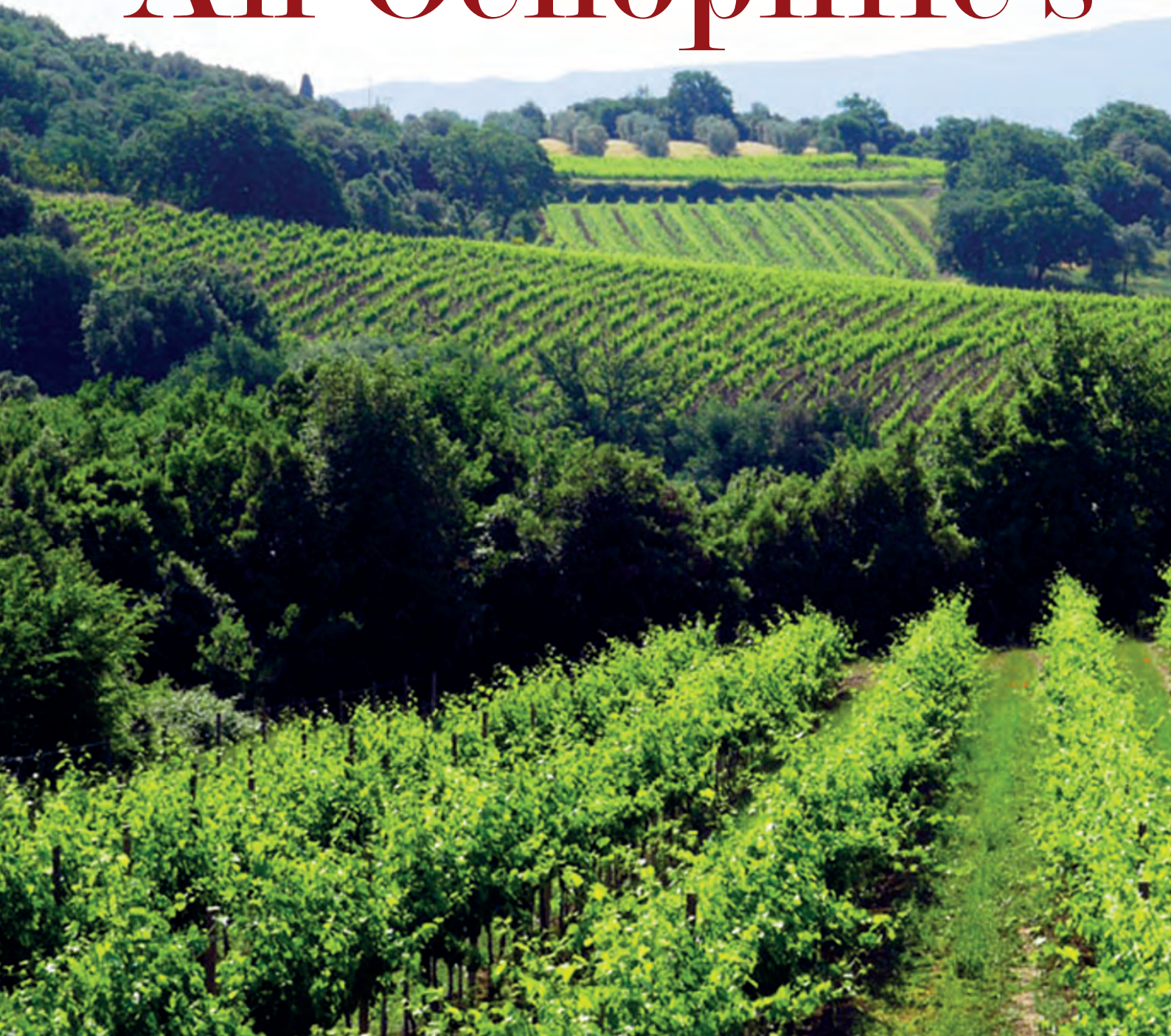
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THIRTSYTRAVELLER

# TUSCANY An Oenophile's



The extensive grounds and vineyards of the estate Col d'Orcia, which literally means the hill overlooking the river, Orcia





# Paradise

One of Italy's great wine producing regions, Tuscany offers the wine traveller a diverse mix of rich experiences. **Michele Shah**, a long-time resident, acts as our guide

**W**hy is Tuscany so eternally popular? And why is Tuscany a destination that tops everyone's wish list? Well, after living here in the heart of Tuscany for over 20 years my answer is *la dolce vita*. The "sweet life" intended as a delightful mix of what makes life almost perfect. A sublime blend of culture, good food, excellent wines and breathtaking landscapes.

Tuscany evokes a Renaissance landscape as no other region does. Its rolling hills clad with vines, olives and cypress trees are just a part of the attraction which draws a huge number of discerning travellers and wine connoisseurs to the area year after year. Its history, traditions and culture extend to magnificent cities, such as Florence, Siena and Arezzo. Its medieval hilltop villages, such as Montalcino and its numerous hamlets scattered around the countryside, evoke a land where time seems to stand still. Its picturesque farmhouses, castles and monasteries are very often home to some of the top wine estates offering exclusive hospitality.

Tuscany is also one of Italy's premium wine producing regions and the wine traveller's visit must include the classic areas such as Chianti Classico, Brunello

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di Montalcino, Nobile di Montepulciano and San Gimignano, all of which lie between the Renaissance towns of Siena and Florence. The choice of wineries to visit is infinite but Chianti Classico makes a good starting point and the area can easily be reached from either Siena or Florence.

**T**he Frescobaldi, a noble Florentine family since 1300 with 700 years of winemaking experience and 30 generations dedicated to the production of great Tuscan wines are the proud heirs of seven estates in Tuscany. In the hey day of medieval Florence, the Frescobaldis expanded their influence as bankers, earning the title of treasurer to the English crown. A little later, with the flowering of the Renaissance, they became patrons of major building works in Florence. From generation to generation the family has always taken care to respect tradition, while acknowledging that growth and progress is achieved by experimentation combined with patience and passion, and in safeguarding the future of the land through minimal environmental impact.

East of Florence in the Chianti Rufina area lies Castello di Nipozzano a historic villa surrounded by vineyards and olive groves in the countryside of Pelago. Castello di Nipozzano has four exclusive rooms where you can enjoy beautiful views overlooking the Arno river. Local Sangiovese-based wines show a restrained, austere structure with good acidity levels, making them age-worthy wines in good vintages. One of the most age-worthy is Chianti Rufina from the Nipozzano estate. Even if you do not stay overnight it is definitely worth a cellar visit with wine tasting and possibly a meal. Giacomo Fani their hospitality manager will make your visit a memorable one. [www.en.frescobaldi.com/estates/estate-nipozzano/](http://www.en.frescobaldi.com/estates/estate-nipozzano/)

Another historic property in the heart of the Chianti Classico region, on the boundary between Siena and Florence is the boutique winery, Nittardi. Peter Femfert, owner of a

**Tuscany evokes a Renaissance landscape as no other region does. Its rolling hills clad with vines, olives and cypress trees are just a part of the attraction**

publishing business and art gallery in Frankfurt fell in love with Tuscany and purchased Nittardi in 1982. The property once belonged to the famous Renaissance artist Michelangelo Buonarroti. Over the years Peter and his wife, Stefania Canali (a historian from Venice) converted the estate into a winery with guest accommodation which consists of two stone houses with five beautiful, lavishly restored apartments surrounded by 15 hectares of premium Chianti Classico vineyards, which are noted for dry, well-rounded wines with soft tannins, fruit sweetness and well-integrated oak. If art is your passion, you can combine wine tasting at Nittardi with a visit to the garden of sculptures which has expanded and grown in recent years. The collection includes 15 lions that welcome visitors to Nittardi. ([www.nittardi.com](http://www.nittardi.com))

On the artistic theme, a visit to the charming 12th century hamlet of Castello di Ama is a must. Art lovers can enjoy some of the finest site-specific contemporary art works created specifically for the estate. Guided tours include the winery and cellars as well as the village of Ama with its ancient chapels, 18th-century villas and historic gardens. With four elegant suites and a Tuscan-style *ristoro* run by talented Chef Giovanni situated in a noble 18th-century villa with terraces overlooking the vineyards, Castello di Ama offers a total immersion experience. Founder and winemaker, Marco Pallanti's fine, elegant wines accompany simple, authentic Tuscan dishes which change on a daily-basis with many ingredients coming directly from the estate's *orto* or kitchen garden. [www.castellodiama.com/en/](http://www.castellodiama.com/en/)

**B**adia a Coltibuono Abbey in the hills above Gaiole in Chianti is a wine resort that was originally a Benedictine monastery founded by the Vallumbrosan monks over 1,000 years ago. Its age-old tradition of vine growing is now carried on as a family enterprise, run by Emanuela Stucchi Prinetti, creating a strong sense of continuity between past and present. The formal gardens, the frescoes in the





Above: Aerial view of Nittardi Estate set among 15 hectares of vineyards with beautifully restored guest accommodation.  
Inset: Peter Femfert with his wife, Stefania and son, Leon



Left and below: The Castello di Ama restaurant, located in an elegant 18th-century villa. Bottom: Villa Cerna's Val delle Rose estate







Above: Marchesi Leonardo Frescobaldi, patriarch of one of Italy's most illustrious winemaking families, surveying his estate. Right: Elegant salons and frescoed rooms are part of the historic charm of Badia a Coltibuono, which was originally a Benedictine monastery. Below: A buffet spread of classic Tuscan specialties on the garden terrace of Coltibuono's restaurant



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refectory and the old vaulted cellars are a special attraction. Coltibuono offers cooking classes and caters for bed & breakfast. Here you can learn how to make your own pasta, taste some of the authentic produce of the land such as capicollo, fresh pecorino cheeses and enjoy the experience over a good glass of wine in the historic kitchens of the abbey. Guest accommodations include restored apartments or individual bedrooms transformed from the former monk cells. ([www.coltibuono.com](http://www.coltibuono.com))

Just 16 km from Coltibuono is Castello di Brolio in Gaiole owned by the Ricasoli family, an ancient aristocratic line of barons. Brolio produces some of the finest wines from Tuscany. It was Bettino Ricasoli, the “Iron Baron”, who many years ago perfected the classic formula for Chianti Classico to become one of the great international successes of the wine world. The castle itself, known for its fine collection of historical artefacts and magnificent grounds is situated in one of the loveliest and wildest spots in Tuscany with views which, on a fine day, stretch as far as the steeple tops of the city of Siena. ([www.ricasoli.com/en/](http://www.ricasoli.com/en/))

**O**n the way to Siena in Castellina in Chianti visit the Villa Cerna Estate ([foresteriavillacerna.it/en/chianti-wine-tasting-villa-terna-tour.php](http://foresteriavillacerna.it/en/chianti-wine-tasting-villa-terna-tour.php)). The Cecchi Family Group was founded in 1893 by Luigi Cecchi, a man of vision who understood the potential and quality of Tuscany wines, in particular the character of its indigenous Chianti Classico. Villa Cerna is the perfect setting to immerse yourself in a total wine experience with tastings, seminars, winery visits and fine dining and perhaps even truffle hunting. In their Val delle Rose estate in the Maremma coastal area of Tuscany, you can enjoy fine wines and dining with sizzling live jazz or take a unique biking tour through their vineyards.

Montalcino is a typical Tuscan hilltop town dominated by its imposing fortress built in 1361. Located 40 km south of Siena, it produces



Courtesy: c James Martin, Wandering Italy

Tuscany's quintessential Sangiovese with plenty of personality known as Brunello. Credit for “inventing” this unique clone goes to the Biondi-Santi family.

Just a few kilometres southwest of Montalcino is the Col d'Orcia Estate, purchased by the Cinzano Marone family in 1973. Count Francesco Marone Cinzano took over the running of the estate in 1991 converting it in 2010 to become Tuscany's largest organic winery with a total of 142 hectares of vineyards, of which 102 hectares are exclusively planted to Brunello di Montalcino. Col d'Orcia estate is one of Montalcino's largest wineries, its 520 hectares of land offer great bio-diversity in farming, its own animal husbandry, ancient grains, olive groves, honey, truffles, and tobacco, which until 1952 was valued more highly than Brunello vines. A walk through the estate, provides a unique insight into the management of an organic farm with biodynamic practices. The cellar tour includes an exclusive Brunello barrel tasting which culminates with a tasting of six wines and a light but elegant lunch in the estate's villa. This is an estate where you can increase your knowledge of Brunello and – if your pockets are deep enough – enjoy some historic vintages selected from Count Francesco's personal Brunello library! ([www.coldorcia.com](http://www.coldorcia.com)) ♦

*The best way to tour Tuscany is to fly into Florence or Pisa for low cost flights (Ryan Air and Esayjet) and rent a car.*