

SUMMER 2021 ₹250

Sommelier INDIA

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TASTINGS

Brunello di Montalcino 2016 One of the best vintages since 1990

Text and tasting by Michèle Shah

It was great to get back on the road after so many months of not attending any 'live' tasting activity and drive to Montalcino, a picturesque cross-country drive that takes me about 1.30 minutes from my home in Tuscany (near Arezzo). We are still in lockdown, but I had all my papers and permits in order to go. An icy wind greeted me on arriving in an empty Montalcino, which on a week-end is usually bustling with tourists, but this was the first time all the wine shops and restaurants were closed due to lockdown.

Tasting at Consorzio Brunello to Montalcino

On special invitation from the Consorzio Brunello to Montalcino a few members of the press were invited to taste the newly released vintage **2019 Rosso di Montalcino**, the **2016 Brunello di Montalcino** and the **2015 Riserva di Brunello di Montalcino**.

Having heard that the 2016 was a great vintage, I was very eager to taste the wines and found it to be one of the best vintages of Brunello that I've tasted

in recent years. Said to be comparable to the 1990 vintage, this is the one to put down in your cellar if you are looking for a Brunello.

It had all the qualities of a fine age-worthy Brunello, with amazingly finely woven tannins and great acidity. As I tasted through about 60 Brunello 2016s, I was struck by the consistency of the vintage and one that showed distinction between the terroirs and subzones. Some of my favorites were showing really fine elegance.

What struck me particularly about the 2016 vintage was that a good number of lesser-known producers were making consistently above-average wines, with consistent tannic structure and great depth. The elegance of Sangiovese really stood out.

The Riserva 2015 – also from a great vintage but very different in character – is opulent with lush, ripe fruit, and more aromatic and upfront than the austere and reserved 2016.

The beauty of vintage character is that each vintage is different and will evolve over time in different ways.



Michèle Shah, writer and wine critic based in Tuscany

These are definitely two great vintages to enjoy over the coming years.

Tasting at Col d'Orcia of Brunello di Montalcino

The tasting and lunch with Count Francesco Marone Cinzano was at his benchmark Brunello estate, Col d'Orcia. Its philosophy is based on sustainable, biodynamic farming and the wines were elegant and age-worthy.

Ghiaie Binache Sant'Antimo Chardonnay 2011 – Still rocking!

Rosso di Montalcino 2012 – Extremely fresh and vibrant.

Banditella Rosso di Montalcino 2010 – A beautiful vintage, still very expressive and lush.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2006 – Classic vintage, from a blend of vineyards, fresh with typical Brunello earthy notes.

Poggio Al Vento Riserva 2001 DOCG – Single vineyard Brunello di Montalcino. This was just amazing, still youthful, with fresh silky tannins, and elegant complexity, a lovely wine.

Olmaia S Antimo Cabernet DOC 1999 – Blissful, youthful wine of powerful expression but always with Tuscan sentiment and reserved elegance

Pascena Moscadello di Montalcino 1999 – This one was an explosion of ripeness with hints of orange marmalade, apricots, nuts and balanced with smooth citrus finish. ♦