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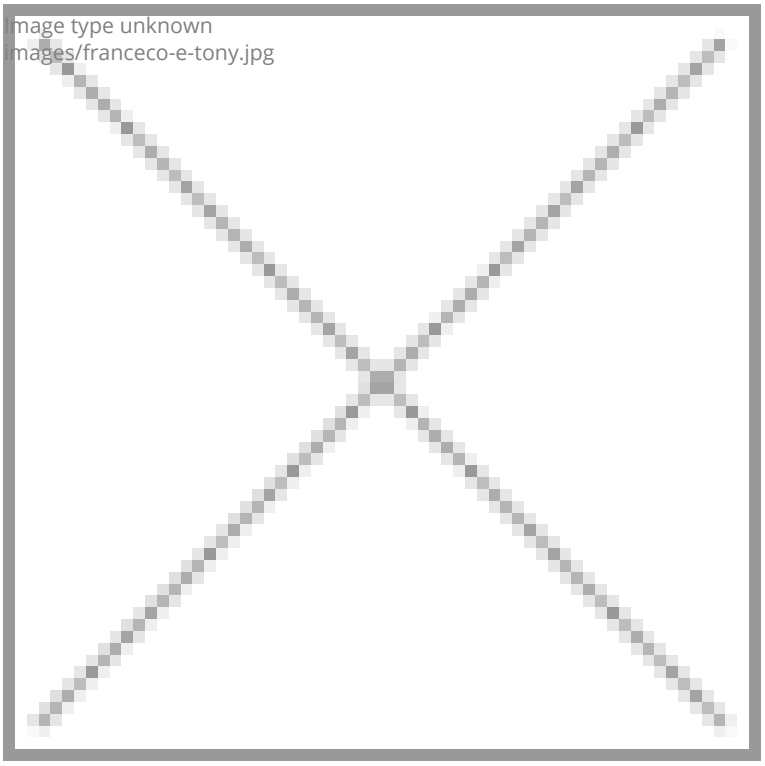
ITALIAN



Canalicchio di Sopra by Tony Wood I first became aware of this estate following the phenomenal success of their 2010 vintage. Admittedly the 2010 Brunello release was a resounding triumph for many wineries in Montalcino, but the wines of Canalicchio di Sopra were the most talked about in terms of quality. This winery had always been well respected in the wine making region of Montalcino, but now this was something else...I recall friends in the London wine trade were calling me to see if I could search out some bottles in Italy for their clients were eager to land one of their highly prized BDM 2010. Over the thirty five plus years I have followed Italian wine, I have noticed this unexpected fame sometime a 'one hit wonder' but this is definitely not the case at Canalicchio di Sopra. As great as their BdM 2010 was, I have tasted many wines from this estate since that have eclipsed that venerable imbibe. My journey to Montalcino on this particular Thursday in June was one of high expectation, apprehension and inquisitiveness, mainly because I had so many questions... It was a glorious day weather wise after so many weeks of rain, admittedly, the heavens did open later in the afternoon, after the joy of my work had been utterly fulfilled. Finally I met with the front man of Canalicchio di Sopra: Francesco Ripaccioli, a young man in his mid thirties.Within an hour or so of wine chat and viewing many of the vineyards, I realised I was in front of someone "wise beyond his years". His brother Marco's commitment is evident through his meticulous management of the vineyards producing optimum fruit quality. His sister Simonetta,

who not only manages the estate's 5 star hotel and spa but also has valuable input into decision making in all sectors of this enterprise. A very young team, in terms of years, but exceptionally knowledgeable in hands on experience. The history of Canalicchio di Sopra has been well versed and indeed the estate's website is an extremely valid contributor to this sequence of the dynasty. Without wishing to 'copy and paste' the history of Canalicchio di Sopra from the early 1960's to the present day, my focus of interest lies in the past 15 to 20 years that have transformed this very good estate into one of the top wine estates in Montalcino. One of Canalicchio di Sopra's keys to success was to solely concentrate on one grape varietal: Sangiovese. As a result of that decision the winemaker can evaluate how this grape expresses itself in the various parcels of land that make up the 18.5 hectares under vine. This enables the winemaker to fully understand the different nuances each terrain brings to the cellar and identify the micro parcels of the individual vineyards. Over the years a bank of detailed knowledge was built and Francesco and his team can produce a wine that firstly satisfy himself and his clientele after. An introduction to the wines of Canalicchio di Sopra: Rosso di Montalcino DOC Vintages 1975-2021 100% Sangiovese. Mainly from Canalicchio Cru vineyards. Soil made up with clay with elements of magnesium, iron and manganese. Sometimes a splash of input from Montosoli Cru, the marl component assisting the sapidity and minerality. Brunello di Montalcino DOCG Vintages 1966 - 2018 100% Sangiovese. Produced from vineyards that are over 10 years old. The balsamic influence coming from the plantings of the north side of Montalcino. This blend is the result of two terroirs the Cru Canalicchio and a 'galestro' soil with a high mineral component, in addition, a loamy characteristic with a high presence of silt similar to the Cru Montosoli. Brunello di Montalcino Riserva DOCG Vintages 1987/88/90/95/97/98/ 99 2001/3/4/5/6/7/10/12/13/15 and 2016. 100% Sangiovese. From two vineyards Vigna Vecchia Mercatale and Vigna Montosoli Filari Lunghi. The Mercatale has clayey soil, with vast deposits of mineral content, showing in the wine as a mixture of sapidity and structure.The Filari Lunghi has marl with high mineral content and a mix of clay, lime and a pebbly texture, the later assists in an uplift in the PH of the soil. Brunello di Montalcino La Casaccia DOCG Vintages 2015/16/17 and 2018. 100% Sangiovese. Primary clay with mineral elements, calcium interwoven with pebbly soil. These special locations guarantee full sun exposure. Brunello di Montalcino Vigna Montosoli DOCG Vintage 2018 From the highest elevations of Vigna Montosoli Filari Lunghi, soil type marl with very dense mineral concentration, again clay loam with intense levels of lime and pebbles. Vines planted 1997. It would be remiss of me not to mention two irreplaceable names that preceded the present incumbents, namely Primo Pacenti the winery's founder in 1962 and his son in law Pier Luigi Ripaccioli whom joined Primo in 1987. To the visitor Canalicchio di Sopra shows a modern, well managed, wine estate with a very young ownership and management team. But that would be just the tip of this iceberg, look below the waterline and you will find 50/60 years of experimentation, intelligent thought process, long years of trail and tribulation that lead to the ultimate goal of peer acknowledgement and world wide acclaim. I can only imagine Primo and Pier Luigi looking down from their lofty abode, and agreeing their legacy is in excellent hands. Francesco then offered a memorable flight... Tasting Notes: Canalicchio di Sopra BdM 2018 Medium ruby red in colour. White cherry, wild strawberry, goji berries, dry floral underbrush, a dusting of exotic spice, salty liquorice and a hint of cedar balm. Focused. Balanced. Precise. Finely etched minerality. Very persistent intense finish. Points 95 TW Canalicchio di Sopra Vigna La Casaccia BdM 2018 Ruby red in colour. Wild meadow florals and violet awaken the senses. Wild black berries, boysenberry, dark plum and blackberry assisted by refreshing acidity and rounded tannins lift the palate to experience the layered intensity and textural resonance. The sheer appeal of this wine is mind blowing. Balance and energy are a given... Points 97 TW Brunello di Montalcino Vigna Montosoli 2018 Ruby red in colour with bright garnet red undertones. Aromas of violet and distant rose petal. Bing cherry, loganberry, spiced orange peel. Fine but grippy tannins vie with citrus infused menthol acidity. Notes of tobacco, liquorice and rhubarb come and go on the mid palate. Stunning textural lightness. Exudes class. A close full of energy

and individuality. Points 98 TW Brunello di Montalcino 2013 Bright ruby red in colour. Aromas of red fruits and berries and white florals. Compact, forest floor, dried mushroom and blonde tobacco. Savoury. Juicy. Slate minerality. Tannins provide structure that texture, acidity and balance interplay. Still showing youthful tendencies. Linear close. Points 94+ TW Brunello di Montalcino 2008 Deep ruby red in colour with light amber rim. Super concentration of red cherry, berries, blood orange, prune and spice. Earthy notes.Fully placed on its plateau, full bodied but not heavy, white smoke and roast meat notes on the medium length finish. Points 94 TW I was also offered the unreleased Brunello 2019 and Brunello Montosoli 2019 (see pictures) and have decided to publish my findings on these two wines with the other 2019 BDM releases later in the year. A visit to the "state of the art" cellar followed by an encounter with the BdM 1966! The welcome invitation for lunch at Il Boccon Di Vino brought two further gems: Rosso di Montalcino Rosso 2016 Intense ruby red in colour. Distant violet floral aromatics and rose petal. Mixture of red and black berries, light notes of spice maybe pepper. A young Brunello so compact with a balanced fruity structure that plays to the finish. Points 93 TW Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2010 Deep intense ruby red in colour. My first thought was: ‘this is still a baby’. Black cherry, plum, redcurrant, toasted tobacco, dried lavender, fully integrated fine tannins counter balanced with fresh acidity. Spice and pepper notes. Would have loved to re-taste this over 24 hours. This is a massive wine that takes time to fully appreciate.The reserve of energy this wine contains is mind blowing. Points 98+TW My thanks to Francesco and his family for a special day in Montalcino that I will always remember with appreciation and gratitude. Leggi l'articolo completo © Tony Wood Italian Wine 2023