



WINE EST. 1976
MERCHANTS

2001 Brunello Report - Greg St. Clair (K&L Italian Wine Buyer)

In southern Tuscany the tiny town of Montalcino sits upon an exposed ridge, its narrow stone streets act as accelerators, amplifying the frigid February winds, focusing their brutally cold, and knife edge points into all who walk her streets. An occasional rain squall blows through just to add an unavoidable, horizontally moving accent to the cold, humidity. Broken umbrellas litter the uncovered trash receptacles around the town, an ever present reminder of the wind's fury. This vivid reminder of nature flexing her muscles is an excellent cue to this vintage's beginning on a frozen Easter Sunday back in April 2001.

Montalcino's elite gathered in its Medici Fortress to debut this much anticipated 2001 vintage, yet the "scoop" was already out. Brunello di Montalcino's extremely long gestation period of more than 4 years allows wine aficionados to get many chances to watch the evolution of each vintage's wine. The 2001 vintage was no secret, aging quietly for years waiting for its release. James Suckling of *The Wine Spectator* was the first to release his scores starting with 98 points for the 2001 Valdicava Brunello di Montalcino, and 90 point scores are falling like crumbs from a loaf of stale, unsalted Tuscan bread. Most of the American journalists I have talked to see this as a great vintage, the *Wine Enthusiast* is releasing there scores now and the *Wine Advocate* to follow soon after, finally catching up to the vintage this year (we hope).

In my article last month I wrote about this 2001 vintage being a synthesis of the 1997 and 1999 vintages. The lush, ripe, thick, low-acid 1997 vintage that put Brunello di Montalcino into all American's wine lexicon and the classically elegant, long, graceful and fresher 1999 vintage that was the purists favorite. 2001 has the weight, texture and structure, that anyone who tastes it will recognize its' importance immediately. The wines' dark, opaque character shows how this vintage's concentration levels are unusual for Montalcino where the difficult to grow Sangiovese grape rarely lends itself to this level of density. The vintage has fully ripened fruit without a hint of the over-ripeness that plagued many wines from the 1997 vintage. When one gets fruit from over-ripe vintages they tend to be mono-flavored behemoths and this tends to make the wines less complex in the long run. 2001's fruit is truly special; the long hang time let the grapes develop complex flavors not just high sugar levels. The supple warmth of this seasoned fruit gives an easy entry into the mouth, yet behind the fruit lays significant tannic structure. The key to Sangiovese is always the acidity and it is the acidity that gives the wine length, elegance, grace and that ever-elusive balance. In the 2001 the linear characteristics of Sangiovese's acidity lend itself perfectly to carry the powerful tannins into balance. Spice, fruit, structure, color, balance, complexity, everything

one could want in a vintage! However, unlike the spectacularly balanced 1999 vintage where almost every producer's Brunello was a textbook example, this vintage seems to have been harder to make for some. I can't give a blanket stamp of approval for this vintage, the good and great producers have made outstanding wine but there are still many wines out of balance. Fortunately the greatest number of these wines won't be coming to America so you won't have to worry, and of course we've tasted through 170 different wines and selected those we think might be of interest to you.

The Wines:

One ultimate word of caution, don't buy the numbers! I received an e-mail from a client who isn't familiar with Brunello, he's a self-proclaimed Burgundy/Pinot Noir nut who doesn't enjoy heavily oaked wines that hide the terroir, or give a manipulated feel to the wines. He then asked to buy some well-known, oaky, manipulated wines from Montalcino because they got high scores. Know what it is you want to drink; ask the questions, fame and points are not the truest path to finding what you like.

The Valdicava isin a word wonderful. I don't always agree with James Suckling's ratings, and truthfully I don't ever remember agreeing with his top pick as the wine of any vintage but it would be hard to argue that this wine isn't anything but superb. Casanova di Neri "Tenuta Nuova" has the feel of the new world, while not laden with obtrusive oak is extraordinarily well made and with the 97 point rating will be getting a lot of attention and will be in short supply. We at K&L decided several years ago that the only way to really sell Brunello was to import directly so we could offer you the best prices on less well known wines, Sesta di Sopra is one of those. This year this tiny winery (333 case production of Brunello) garnered 95 points from James Suckling, needless to say we think he got this one correct and since their debut vintage in 1999 they have made nothing but seriously good wine. This vintage will be selling out rapidly, the best way to keep up is for me to have your e-mail address and you'll be amongst the first to know, send it to me greg@klwines.com. Enjoy!

Greg St. Clair

I scored the wines on a 0-5* system with 5* being the best. Many wines you are familiar with you may not find on this review, it might have to do with what I think will be distribution problems, they aren't imported at all or I didn't score them very high. I've included wines that might not be imported at all if they are good! You might visit Montalcino or the wines may eventually find their ways to these shores.

All of the following are 2001 Brunello di Montalcino

2001 Agostina Pieri 1,333 cases produced *****3**

This small not well-known winery should be better known! Once a piece of the same property as Piancornello just down slope from Sesta it produces wines with real character yet in a very fruit forward style. Stylish, elegant, corpulent, sweet; sort of like a sweet George

Clooney, well dressed and out on the town, smooth and polished with a glint of mischief in his eye.

2001 Altesino 6,666 cases produced ***.5**

The nose is a mix of cherry and plum fruit on the palate; the wine is ripe but has very bright acidity giving the wine a crisp edge. The wine has length and finishes with some fruit, tannin and the bright acidity. Best with a heaping bowl of ribollita. Drink now over the next 4-8 years.

2001 Altesino “Montosoli” 1,250 cases produced ***1.5**

Sweet earth and ripe fruit are on the nose. On the palate the wine has some of the same flavors, some size but lacks definition, lacks focus and overall complexity. For such a “famous” cru as this is in such a dynamic vintage I would hope to have found more.

Drink now over the next 5-10 years.

2001 Argiano 12,500 cases produced ****2**

Argiano opens with a nose that is slightly more international than their style has previously been, ripe, plummy aromatics with vanillin highlights are the dominant characteristics. On the palate the wine is very soft and broad with lots of fine grain tannins. Sweet, bright, fruit that is fresh and clean seems to come together in the finish and then is followed by some significant tannin. If you are a lover of the more international style, like big powerful wines with upfront fruit and big structure this wine might be your pass into Montalcino. This is a wine to age for about 5 more years and drink in the 10-15 years from the vintage window, I wouldn't decant.

2001 Banfi 50,000 cases produced ****2**

Montalcino's largest producer has really made a very good wine, even without considering the quantity that they make which is even more impressive. The wine's entry onto your palate gives the sense of size; big, mouth filling, structure; constant characteristics of Banfi's style but the real surprise are the aromas and flavors. The nose only gives a hint of plum and not a lot of clues to the complex flavors in the mouth. On the palate the plum morphs into an interesting blend of wild cherry, earth and plum filling all of the palate and coming into a clean and balanced finish. This wine is drinkable now with some decanting and over the next 10+ years.

2001 Banfi “Poggio alle Mura” 7,500 cases produced *****3.5**

This is very similar to their excellent 1999 yet bigger, bolder and more dramatic. This Poggio alle Mura, I think the best of Banfi's vineyards, is almost always its best wine, it shows

powerful, big, structure but with the concentration to carry it off. Lots of ripe plummy fruit with hints of earthy complexity fill your mouth. It is thick and dense on the palate yet with enough length to balance out the tannins so their fine grained nature takes on a linear personality giving the wine added length. Age this wine for another 5 years and then drink from 2011-2021.

2001 Barbi 1,055 cases produced ***1.5**

One of the oldest wineries in Montalcino and they make truly "classic" style Brunello. The nose has a mixture of plum, cherry and leather. In the mouth the wine is rustic, with tannins, acids, fruit, leather, smoke and gives one the sense of a woody, porcini hunt. On the palate the wine has a long structure and chunky pieces of tannin, not soft and smooth but old style Brunello. The finish is tannic yet comes together well. This is a wine to age for another 5+ years or drink it now with 4-5 hours of decanting and have it with a big piece of roasted pork.

2001 Baricci 1,055 cases produced ******4**

The 2001 Baricci is full of the classic "Montosoli" nose, black cherry, cinnamon, anise cardamom and leather. The power of this vintage really shines through and Sangiovese's linear nature stretches the frame of this feminine wine to Amazon proportions. The wine's sophisticated temperament is inviting and its supple feel relaxes you as it eases from the glass onto on your palate. Focus, long, complexity, structure and finish stand out immediately while ripe layers of spicy black cherry and plum are deposited on your tongue. Vital, lithe, colorful, smooth all rolled into one, the 2001 is the best Baricci for me since the 1985 it must be something for your cellar.

2001 Campogiovanni 7,500 cases produced ****2.5**

Campogiovanni shows the dense structure in this vintage with a thick, concentrated mouth feel. The aromatics are more sweet cherry than plummy or chocolate on the palate with some spice and hints of complex earthiness lingering just below the surface. The wine has length and balance and a certain elegance that give the wine some verve. Drinkable now with decanting and over the next 10+ years

2001 Capanna 3,187 cases produced ***1**

Very rich, thick (not concentrated just thick) on the palate, lots of ripe fruit on the palate yet it seems to be an addled moment for this wine. It does not have much focus; the fruit, structure and size are competing for space and air and none seems to have won. Generally a very solid producer this is a wine to give some time. Still with the puzzled character it still shows enough, structure, balance and fruit to warrant tasting.

2001 Caprili 1,383 cases produced *****3**

Deep, ripe, plummy fruit flows from the glass and in the mouth this wine becomes far more powerful than one might have guessed in the nose. Dense, concentrated fruit with lots of tannic structure, big shoulders, bulging deltoids, Arnold like pectorals. The enormous size of this wine gives it a more rustic character than the quality of fruit portrays. Sweet focused plummy fruit with backbone and direction while powerfully striding towards a long finish. This is a wine for your cellar, 5 years from now it will have begun to shed a bit of the structure and the fruit underneath will blossom, it will age 10-20 years easily.

2001 Canalicchio (Franco Pacenti) 1,250 cases produced ******4**

I love the wines from this winery so you might take that into account as I describe them. This wine is the wind section in an orchestra; its notes just drift over your palate effortlessly as its complex harmony of fruits flow from the glass. Although elegant surely describes this wine it is no lightweight, it is a powerhouse of focus, a lithe, potent wine with layers of spice laden fruit complexity. It is very long, elegant yet sensual, fragrant and truly classic Brunello. The wine is drinkable now with 2-4 hours of aeration and then over the next 10-20 years.

2001 Casanova di Neri 3,760 cases produced ***1**

A hint of wood in the nose joins with soft plummy fruit, touches of leather and earth. In the mouth the wine is easy on the palate, rolling easily to the finish replaying the flavors you find in the nose. This is a graceful, straightforward finish that seems to point towards your fork and a table where bowl of rustic Tuscan stew awaits the joining of these two. Drink now with a couple hours of decanting over the next 10+years.

2001 Casanova di Neri "Tenuta Nuova" 4,252 cases produced *****3.5**

97 points in the *Wine Spectator* and I give it 3.5*. What's wrong with this wine? Well, absolutely nothing it is really good. However for me I feel as if it is a film and Disney has released it and even the PG13 parts are cut out. It has so much potential to be a truly great wine, yet it has been polished to the point that for me there's nothing of interest, where's Cindy Crawford's mole? I'm sure in the inner sanctum of UC Davis they'd find it perfect, because it is! Yet it could have such a distinctive personality I feel as if only part of the wine is being displayed. Perhaps with time this wine might age into a rather interesting character yet I feel as if it has just been awarded the Heisman Trophy, not a great track record for future success.

2001 Casisano Colombaio 4,250 cases produced ****2**

I visited Casisano Colombaio for the first time this year more traditionally styled, soft upon entry in the mouth, developed and aromatic there is a complex blend of fruit, with hints of tea, leather and dark bitter chocolate, balanced on the palate, with tannins in check and an excellent finish. This is marvelous example of Brunello di Montalcino in the classic style. A couple of recommendations for you to best enjoy this wine, I would decant this wine 2 hours ahead of time and serve it with a pork loin roasted with rosemary and potatoes, the

perfect match.. One last thought please don't look for the color to be opaque like so many Cabernets or Syrah, Sangiovese doesn't have that color base, just enjoy!

2001 Castelgiocondo 21,083 cases produced ******4**

Thick, dense, rich, and polished this wine is really well balanced and really has some character. (I wonder why the high quality polishing in this wine is a plus and in the Casanova di Neri it is a negative for me?) A flowing richness eases across your palate, every grain of tannin in line, chocolate covered plums dot your experience with an inherent sweetness that makes this wine irresistible. Graceful like an Olympic diver, you see and feel the strength but it seems so extraordinarily effortless it seems childlike. The wine finishes very well, long and elegant with spicy plum hints as it closes. Drink now with decanting over the next 10-25 years.

2001 Castiglion del Bosco 2,916 cases produced ******4**

Plum and spice, sweetness and fresh leather waft delicately out of the glass. Its complexity seems restrained, yet is really more pacific as you might see in the placid face of the Dalai Lama, so full of character but no need to brag. In the mouth the wine is thick, concentrated and powerful, yet overwhelmingly supple, not loud just big, strong and confident. The wine with this sort of description could have nothing but excellent balance and this leads to a wonderfully complex, long finish. The wine reminds me of an elegant, sophisticated, country Lady, whose power is subtle but far reaching. Age 3-5 years and then drink over the next 15+ years.

2001 Cerbaiona --- cases produced *****3**

The nose shows lots of ripe plum and wild cherry with hints of earth. On the palate the wine is big, dense and shows a lot of power and a long, linear structure. The flavors are ripe plum and earth and they come together playing off the long balanced structure. The wine finishes clean and has lingering hints of fruit and earth. Age 3-5 years and then drink over the next 10-15 years.

2001 Ciacci Piccolomini 4,166 cases produced ******4**

For me this is the best Ciacci since the 1995, however this wine has what some of the others have been missing for me a real balanced center, they always have ripe fruit but when they can get that interior structure their wines sing. Focus was the first word in my notes, with spicy, plummy fruit, plump yet with really clean, bright focused fruit. Sumptuous in the mouth showing all of the warm flesh that Ciacci produces so well while balancing it gracefully while its lingering fruit and spice line up for an intriguing finish. Drink now with decanting and over the next 10+ years.

2001 Col d'Orcia 16,333 cases produced ****2**

On the southern slope of Montalcino in the Orcia River valley Col d'Orcia makes a wine with more traditional flavors, no toasty vanilla from barriques, just sweet pure Sangiovese. Col d'Orcia is a large landowner and they utilize their unique vineyard exposure, vineyards that stretch up the hillside a few hundred meters, giving their wines distinct benefits and allowing them to use the best parcels for Brunello.

2001 Coldisole 3,133 cases produced ****2**

Lush, soft and enticingly drinkable fruit roll across your palate in waves of pleasure. Ripe plum and sweet cherry fruit are balanced and make this a very easy wine to drink. Supple, clean and with a nice finish this is really a very drinkable wine! Drink now over the next 10 years.

2001 Collosorbo 4,500 cases produced *****3.5**

Collosorbo is part of the "Sesta Group" and this wonderful zone seems to produce sensationally good wine very consistently. This wine's perfume is of sweet, dark cherry, ripe plum, and chocolate with almost a Zin like intensity. However in the mouth the wine really has great balance the ripe and fleshy texture wraps itself around and interior core of structure that gives the wine its tremendous length. Soft and smooth upon entry the wine is lively and fresh for the ripeness inherent in the fruit. Underneath this façade of sweet fruit is a wine with real power, density while still being luscious in the mouth. The finish is full of zippy fruit, clean and long. This wine will drink well now with some decanting and over the next decade plus.

2001 Costanti -?- cases produced *****3.5**

When they drew up the definition for classic Brunello it was with Costanti in mind. One of Montalcino's most storied producers, Andrea Costanti makes wine with terroir, power and concentration. The 2001 is powerful, yet it does not dominate on the palate it has a light touch. It is concentrated, but not heavy, full of fruit but balanced clearly a wine capable of aging several decades. Several levels of fruit, earth and spice, a wine drinkable now yet will reward patient cellaring. One extra word if you ever see any of Andrea's 1997 that is the wine of the vintage grab it and toss it in your cellar for another decade and you'll be highly rewarded!

2001 Cupano 83 cases produced (not a typo) *****3**

I can feel the sun shining on these grapes, the warmth it gives, brilliant colors, sweet ripeness, spicy, toasty aromatics flood onto the palate where the round, ripe, richness, powerful depth, and structure unite into a bold, dramatic chocolate, plummy, powerhouse of a wine. More of an international flare, sexy, muscular, unrepentant, on the beach at Cannes in a pair of Speedos, I think I'd need sunglasses to drink this wine, not brash but you can't, not notice it. It has such an easy feel on the palate, pleasing, plump, and satisfying with a bright,

demonstrative definition in the finish. Drink now with a couple of hours in a decanter or it will improve continue to evolve for another 4-5 years and then age gracefully.

2001 Donatella Cinelli Colombini 3,583 cases produced ***1**

Bold, brash and somewhat square in the mouth this is a more rustic and would more likely be named “gli ultimi uomini” (the last men) to its counterpart “Prime Donne” (First Ladies). However the wine is reminiscent of Brunello in the 1970’s but with a bit more fruit, rustic, like a contadino returning from the field after a long day of pruning, his hands are calloused, rough and dirty. In his eyes there is a certain rascality that gives this wine some character and if you had a bowl of ribollita in front of you, drizzled with fresh extra virgin olive oil on a cold winter night, this would be very good. Drink now over the next 10+ years.

2001 Donatella Cinelli Colombini “Prime Donne” 833 cases produced *****3**

Flashy, barrique filled nose that covers some truly dynamic Sangiovese fruit. Smooth and polished in the mouth that shows hints of the spicy earth, wood and fruit waiting to evolve. Perfectly made, balanced and a long and powerful finish. This is a wine that should head right to your cellar for a few years of aging to let the truly great fruit emerge. It will be drinkable now with decanting but it will certainly have more completeness to it in 3- years. I’d wait. It will then age for 10-15+ years.

2001 Fanti 4,750 cases produced ****2**

Fanti is Flashy, it should be their bumper-sticker. This wine is Hollywood, sunglasses with rhinestones, lots of bracelets, dark tans, low cut dresses and wealthy plastic surgeons. This is a wine you can’t help but notice, very well made but it has a megaphone strapped to the glass saying “Hey, Look at me”! This wine seems to be falling out of its’ glass. Dark and lustrous in the glass, lots of sweet, ripe fruit fills your nose, swimming pools full of flavor, smooth, lush and exceedingly enticing it just is a sexy wine. I have a hard time thinking about the aging potential of this wine, so much upfront fruit it clouds my vision. Drink now it’s an experience.

2001 Ferrero 399 cases produced *****3**

Lush, broad strokes of chocolate and black cherry gently layer your palate with a velvety texture that coaxes warmth and roundness out of the wine and into your mouth. This gorgeous Sangiovese is full-bodied, ripe and with structure that shows underneath but in a smooth, sensual way, no pressure or force. Strong, soft shoulders hold up the prodigious weight effortlessly. This wine is sultry, I feel like I’m in a harem when I drink it, pouring across your palate as if you’re sliding around on a bed of satin cushions. Although certainly capable of an extended life it is remarkably drinkable now and will continue to improve for years to come.

2001 Fornacina 916 cases produced *****3**

Showing the POWER of this vintage Fornacina makes a bold footprint on your palate with dense, ripe, plummy fruit enough to hide the powerful structure that lies just below the surface. The wine has a great central focus to its fruit and balance yet the power seems brooding, its dark and mysterious, muscle over steel, no cherubs here. Still the wine finishes well, no edges, no exaggerated tannins just oozing power. A wine to lay down or drink now if you like young Petite Syrah.

2001 Fossacolle 1,055 cases produced *****3.5**

A nose that is full of explosive, complex fruit and spice bursts out of your glass showing oodles of freshness. On the palate the wine is concentrated, powerful yet bundled with waves of supple muscle that coax the sweet spiciness out of the wines middle. A long, vibrant finish that says, "I've got a load of well balanced fruit in here". This wine is slightly more international in style due to all of the upfront fruit but well made and tasty. Drink now with decanting and then over the next 10+ years.

2001 Fuligni 1,916 cases produced *****3**

I've always loved the Fuligni style their soft, elegant (excuse me French purists, I hate to use it but it is a good descriptor) almost Burgundian feel in the mouth leaving a sweet-leather reminiscence. This 2001 is the younger sister of the family and she's looking to play Power Forward in the WNBA, very different than the classic reserved nature of this estate. This wine is bold, loud, strong and proud and you won't be able to miss its size. Dark cherry like fruit with fine grain tannins are deposited on the palate but in a muscular, dense, powerful style.

2001 Gianni Brunelli-Le Chiuse di Sotto 698 cases produced *****3**

The ever larger than life Gianni Brunelli, hangs out with George Clooney, Dustin Hoffman and Sting who all frequent his restaurant in Siena. A real rag to riches story Gianni makes a really good and serious wine. The wine is bright, fresh cherry in the nose that evolves into a more complex darker cherry flavor, enhanced by a bit of spicy intrigue. There is enough richness on the palate to flesh out the wines structure, it shows good weight, yet with a certain spring in its step. A solid finish, with very good balance this is a wine that will age well but you could drink it now with a few hours of decanting.

2001 Gorelli, Le Potazzine 1,366 cases produced *****3.5**

Le Potazzine, the cherubic looking birds on the label, reminded their grandmother of the producer's daughters hence the name. The soft, forward, sweetness of this wines first pace into your mouth is cherubic, baby fat, warm and ripe. Upfront this wine is all about fruit sweetness and you'd think initially that "fruit bomb" might be your next descriptor, yet the wine has real structure, shoulders underneath this veneer of sweet fat and is really balanced on the palate. The wine has a flow on your palate that says, "I'm going to be important when I grow up", more senatorial than movie star or sports figure, but a populist not an aristocrat.

2001 Il Marroneto 1,093 cases produced ***3

Il Marroneto is very traditional in style and hails from the *versante Senese* zone with more earth and spice than fruit yet with plenty of ripe cherry and a very concentrated character without high alcohol. Long, linear yet dense with a soft, sweet center, lots of fine grain tannin, it gives the feeling of restrained power, energy ready to burst forward shredding the tannic shield. A wine that will age well, and not for those looking for the drop of Merlot like sweetness this is classically styled Brunello.

2001 Il Marroneto “Madonna delle Grazie” 416 cases produced ****4

The Madonna delle Grazie is structurally long, big shouldered with a lot of up front density, lots of size but focused. Complex earth, animal that *savage* seductiveness, very heady as the bouquet pours out of the glass, violet as well as the ever-present tangy earthiness, however underneath is a cauldron of ripe fruit, focused, excited and intense. This wine has a LONG life ahead of it but certainly will reward the patient.

2001 Il Palazzone 395 cases produced ***3

This is an excellent wine and classic Brunello. The nose has ripe, plummy fruit that has spice and hints of much more behind and is somewhat restrained not revealing all it has immediately upfront. Intertwined with this fruit and spice are nuances of leather, earth and subtle Asian spices. In the mouth it is luxurious without being fat; it strides across your palate with a determined gait like a sensual male, not dark and brooding just emanating a certain intrigue and certainty. It has a long and easy finish, with allusions of tannic structure, long and elegant yet saying “I am Sangiovese at my best”.

2001 Il Poggiolo 833 cases produced ***3

This wine is very good, very demonstrative fruit, cherry and plum that have a warm ripeness about them. The wine has serious structure, there is a bit of tannic grip in the mouth, yet they are sweet tannins and appropriate for the size of the wine. Balanced but a bit square on the finish this is a wine for your cellar.

2001 Il Poggione 12,500 cases produced **2

One of the guideposts to Brunello, Poggione has produced an excellent wine but of massive proportion for them and a signal as to what the vintage is like for the rest of Montalcino. Big, powerful structure, I like to call it shoulders, dictate the wines character. Here the fruit is plummy, round, full giving an unctuous feeling on your palate, not 10-40W but definitely you feel the density. The fruit is evenly ripe, and what it might lack in layers of complexity it makes up for in saturation, deep, rich and luscious. Poggione, a traditional producer, is never one to have an opaque, dark colored wine, yet in this vintage it is dark for them. In the finish you feel the dense fruit, big shoulders with a bit of tannin but nothing obtrusive, coming

together in a neatly balanced finish. It will take some time for this wine to come to full maturity but it has so much fruit it could be drunk younger too.

2001 La Fortuna 2,000 cases produced *****3**

There is a particular energy in this wine that resonates from an interior core of structure. The wine's warm, sweet ripeness is full of intense plum and dark cherry aromatics that seem poised to jump out of the glass. The thick, lush, yet dazzlingly fresh fruit character is accented with hints of earth, spice and mineral that is wrapped around a powerful foundation. While profoundly concentrated the silky texture of this wine sends waves of smooth, unctuous, texture across your palate. Powerful, complex, drinkable, age worthy this luscious Brunello shows the great balance inherent in this 2001 vintage and it will age well for another decade plus.

2001 La Gerla 2,083 cases produced *****3**

La Gerla is really on in this vintage, coming from the Versante Senese this wine is poetry. The aromas flow out of the glass with a baked apple, cinnamon spice (undeniably unique), and sweet black cherry that is compelling. The center of the wine has great focus, linear yet with ripeness that gives weight on the palate. The finish is balanced, alternating spice and earthy complexities mixed in with sweet ripe fruit. This is really wonderful wine and will age 20+ years easily, yet drinkable now with a few hours of decanting.

2001 La Gerla "Vigna gli Angeli" 541 cases produced *******5**

This is my #2 wine of the vintage. It is a classically styled wine from the *versante Senese* with layers of spice; powerful yet sinuous structure no angles or harshness just sweet, sheer power. The length of this wine is impressive but it is how all of the muscle and power coil themselves together in the center of the wine that makes such a dramatic statement. This wine has a voice, strong, immediate and clear; it has tremendous range it can hit the high notes in a swirling crescendo of bright fruit aromatics that furiously line up to exit the glass. Yet its real power lays mid palate where a powerful tenor voice thunders across your palate with a vibrato that rivals the San Andreas Fault. This wine has power yet does not seem heavy it has an elegance, balance and grace all the while this force attracts all of your senses you can't get away from it, it is the Siren's song ever pulling you in. The finish.....well it hasn't yet. This wine is absolutely stunning, balanced enough to drink now with a couple of hours in a decanter but will last 20-30+ years.

2001 La Mannella 1,166 cases produced ***1**

This wine is like a cool fresh breeze on a hot summer afternoon, it is refreshing, elegant, easy, like someone massaging your shoulders, it is very relaxing. Couched among many monster powerhouses this wine would be lost merely because of its size. Yet the inherent pleasure in this wine, its perfectly ripe dark cherry and plum fruit character, graceful entry are just what you will want in the next years to drink with your meal. A wine that is lively, poised

and just very easy to drink while adding to the enjoyment of your food without dominating everything around it. It is like a breath of fresh air.

2001 La Mannella "I Poggiarelli" 291 cases produced *****3**

La Mannella is a small producer on the Versante Senese, Marco Cortonesi produces honest, elegant and deliciously drinking wines. His "I Poggiarelli" vineyard release is truly a step up in quality. Layers of complex dark wild cherry flavors jump out of the wine that highlights a real *savage* character, spice, saddle leather, earth all balanced in a supple, graceful wine. No blockbuster alcoholic monster, just a really complex, fun wine with elegance, charm more like Audrey Hepburn but with a tan, on the beach, and after a few cocktails.

2001 La Rasina 1,250 cases produced ***1**

Boom! Sweet, soft, toasty vanilla, ripe, forward and explosively fruity La Rasina isn't something you can ignore while tasting; it takes up all the senses in your mouth. Lush, round and juicy fruit coupled with a big dose of barrique make this wine very flashy, I'm thinking Carmen Electra, it is in your face, it takes up all of the screen time.

2001 La Rasina "Il Divasco" 191 cases produced ****2**

Double Boom! Il Divasco is a dense, powerful, muscular wine, where its sibling is leaves off the structure in this wine takes over. Loads of sweet, ripe, plummy fruit, packed into a very structured, big shouldered wine. The barrique character is very present but one gets the feeling that it will dissipate over time as the wine ages. No subtlety in this wine it is about straight forward power, it feels more like an outside linebacker circling around the end chasing a quarterback, shirt tucked in neatly, huge biceps (no tattoos), ready to pummel someone.

2001 La Velona 1,141 cases produced ******4**

This wine feels classy, Mercedes convertible, expensive clothes, excellent winemaking. It has a nose that is full of complex fruit character, plum and wild cherry dance together in a slow moving ballet, flowing gracefully from one to another. On the palate the wine is dense, muscular and gives a feeling of smoothness yet structured and balanced. The finish is complex fruit, supple and yet you feel the undeniable power beneath this sweet exterior. Drink now with several hours of decanting or age for 10-20 years.

2001 Le Gode 583 cases produced ******4**

I remember tasting this wine for the first time; it actually brought tears to my eyes. The harvest was wonderful, not a grape that wasn't perfect. In the mouth the wine is fruit poetry, long, graceful lines of spice sheathed in a core of bright cherry laced with deep, sweet plum flavors. This wine has a long, muscular focus, yet supple, yielding, still graceful however

demands attention, built from the inside out, full of intensity that just vibrates in your mouth. Smooth, it rolls across your palate like spreading butter on bread, filling every taste sensor with an extended finish. Classic wine from the northern edge of Montosoli, I love this wine.

2001 Lisini 4,025 cases produced *****3**

On the road from Sant'Angelo in Colle to Castelnuovo dell 'Abate Lisini has the classic warmth and ripeness of this south facing zone. In great years like this the great structure of the vintage gives a great focal point to the ripe fruit. This vintage Lisini got it perfect the soft ripeness is given a great canvas of structure to play on. All of this gorgeous fruit is propped up with young muscle and structure wrapped in a warm cloak of spicy, supple flowing fruit. Wonderful wine to drink now with some decanting and will drink well over the next 5-10 years.

2001 Livio Sassetti "Pertimali" 1,583 cases produced *****3**

The "Peasant Poet" Livio Sassetti is one of a kind, wearing the perpetual, cherubic smile of a young boy. This vintage Livio's wine is very soft, lots of rich fruit and some spice and herb in the background, rich and fleshy on the palate with a balanced and enduring finish. A very good wine but it doesn't seem to have the classic *savage* signature that Livio's wines have, maybe the fruit is just overwhelming it at the moment. Drink now with decanting or over the next 10-15 years.

2001 Mate' 166 cases produced ****2.5**

One of the ever-increasing numbers of new producers entering the Brunello market Mate' has made a really good wine to start with. The nose has lots of toast and a sweet animal, earthy leather character that is inviting. In the mouth is ripe, full and fills your palate with solid complex fruit. A good finish rounds the wine out nicely. Drink now over the next 5-10 years.

2001 Mocali 2,000 cases produced *****3**

Lots of black fruit and wild cherries fill your nose as the wine gently flows from the glass. Big, dense and ripe on the palate with lots of plummy character, the wine is ripe yet structured. The wine's big shoulders underneath add a sort of cowboy rawness to the wine, it shows a well put together finish and balance. Drinkable with decanting now and over the next 10+ years.

2001 Mocali "Vigna delle Raunate" 500 cases produced ****** 4**

The nose on this wine is really complex, loads of black fruit, spicy cassis, with complex herbs, leather and earth right behind. On the palate this wine is bold, dense and it fills your

mouth with complex fruits, muscular structure and a nervous energy that seems to want to make the wine get bigger. Focused, yet young, bold and energetic in the mouth this wine seems like a stallion in the starting gate, nostrils flaring, untamed and rippling with muscle. Drink now with several hours of decanting and over the next 10-20 years.

2001 Pian dell'Orino 791 cases produced *****3.5**

The quality evolution at this tiny estate has been dramatic. Mike P. I tasted everything from their cellar through 2005 and we are supremely impressed by the quality of fruit character, the real terroir and subtle winemaking. Their 2001 is dense, muscular and dark like an Olympic swimmer returning from a month at the beach. Those muscles are long and sinewy, graceful, full of power yet the wine strides with an elegant balance, oozing confidence still with a reserve reminiscent of nobility. There is a chocolaty, cassis, plum like flavor that fills the mid palate coiled around a powerful interior structure that gives the wine great length and allows these flavors to linger in the finish. Mixed in with the warm fruit-filled ripeness are hints of animal, fresh glove leather, stones and wild herbs that are subtly present yet add to the complex background and are more present in the finish. Long, powerful and decidedly delicious this is a wine that will age 10-15 years easily although so well balanced you could drink it now.

2001 Pian delle Vigne (Antinori) 15,000 cases produced

At the far western boundary of Montalcino Antinori's corps of winemakers craft this wine yearly. Their position always gives them maximum ripeness and the key for them is to find structure. Soft and fleshy the wine feels like Napa, warm, ripe and very fruit driven, broad on the palate and easy to drink, No edges or out of balance tannin, perfectly made. I don't feel this is a wine with an incredibly long life but it is fun to drink now for those who are looking for a more internationally styled Brunello.

2001 Piancornello 1,416 cases produced *****3.5**

Just down slope from Sesta on the south face of Montalcino this property continues to produce marvelous wine. Piancornello's trademark of ever-present ripeness of fruit is there but with an incredible focus, a spine of structure that is the defining feature for greatness at this winery. The wines are always pretty, smooth, soft and fruity but this year the structure defines the fruit it isn't just mono-flavored it stands out not just plum, there's wild cherry and a hint of floral zip is mixed in too. Spice however is what drives this wine, supple warmth on your palate yes, but the multi faceted fruit flavors that are bright, fresh, and clean allow the spicy nature to stand out bringing in earthy notes, leather, and touches of middle-eastern spice. Excellent drinking wine but will age well for 15-20years.

2001 Pinino 1,166 cases produced ****2**

A new entrant on to the commercial scene, this tiny winery was the property of an ex-patriot Montalcinese and was purchased in 2004 by an international group of wine lovers who have

turned their passion into wine. I visited this vineyard 2 years ago and was blown away its position. On a hill above and overlooking Pertimali in a small amphitheatre like formation facing to the southwest, wow its beautiful. The wine from this vintage had already been made when this new group bought the winery. It is forward, soft and shows lots of supple, up front fruit that exhibits a delicate rose like aromatic, balanced with dark red fruits. The wine is balanced, soft and very drinkable yet not without structure, it will drink well 10-15 years. The 2004 Rosso was a blockbuster; look for this new consortium to have a dynamite wine in the future.

2001 Poggiarellino 225 cases produced *****3.5**

Tiny Poggiarellino was last year's introductory success, its forward drinkability and price had everyone jumping out of their shoes. The 2001 shows that last year was no fluke in fact this wine has gone from fun to important. The 2001 lays a powerful, focused center right down the middle of your palate and is rich, fleshy with a chocolaty, ripe cherry flavor filled body. The wine has considerable depth and a texture that makes me think of a Bistecca Fiorentina. Where the 2000 had loads of plump and fun fruit, this vintage shows far more complexity, layers of spice, distinct mineral components and a truly dramatic and long-lasting finish where the spice and mineral go on forever. Capable of aging 15-20 years easily yet balanced and rich enough to excite anyone today! 2,700 bottles made!

2001 Poggio Antico 6,160 cases produced *****3.5**

Amongst Montalcino's highest altitude for vineyards Poggio Antico makes an elegant wine, in years past it was sometimes brittle. This vintage the wines are really good, some changes in winemaking have given the wine freshness, and the vintage has provided the substance. The nose is spicy full of a wonderful *sauvage* character that is loaded with sage, heather and wildflower. In the mouth it is rich, not soft but still smooth, like layers of muscle, taut when flexed but supple when relaxed. The finish is long, elegant and loaded with earth and spice. This is a very good wine, drink now with lots of decanting or aged 10-20 years.

2001 Poggio Antico "Altero" 2,700 cases produced *****3.5**

This is the barrique aged version of Poggio Antico and it too is singing! However with a sort of baritone barrique voice, its denser, thicker and darker than the Poggio Antico (one wouldn't refer to the Poggio Antico as normale or regular) but really good. Really good length, dense, ripe fruit character on the palate and an excellent finish. This is a very good wine, drink now with lots of decanting or aged 10-20 years.

2001 Poggio il Castellare 2,083 cases produced ****2+**

This is a full-bodied, powerful wine with dense fruit and big shoulders. It has lots of soft flesh making the entry onto the palate very easy and approachable. The mid palate has lots of plummy fruit with soft tannins underneath but a luscious mouth feel. There is a lot of richness in this Brunello and a remarkably delicate finish for such a thick wine.

2001 Salicutti 775 cases produced *****3**

This is a big, muscular wine, with powerful tannins yet so much ripe fruit that it can really pull it all together. Lots of plummy, chocolaty fruit line the powerful, tannins making them smooth but they're still there. The wine is big, thick and rich on the palate with loads of fruit and touches of wood spice. Slightly square in the vintage but I think over time the wine will gain more linearity in the classic Sangiovese style. If you like 'em chunky you can drink this one now, or within the next couple of years but best at 10- 15 years from the vintage.

2001 Sesta di Sopra 333 cases produced ******4+**

The nose of Sesta di Sopra just jumps out at you, spicy, complex, wild cherry fruit, with hints of sage, leather, intriguing, seductive and inviting. On the palate the wine is broad, full-bodied and rich yet not heavy, it has an elegance, more like a lithe, muscular athlete, supple yet forceful and is full of the complex character evident in the nose yet is slightly plummy, meatier, warmer, sweeter. As the wine lies on your palate its incredible length begins to blossom, as you follow its ever lengthening finish seems to be depositing mineral character, iron like, focused, powerful and very, very long. This wine will be able to be drunk now with a couple of hours in a decanter but will continue to improve easily for another decade plus.

2001 Tenute Silvio Nardi 12,500 cases produced *****3**

To like this wine you have to like wines with lots, and lots and lots of structure. If you do this is your wine because it is really good! Layers of focused, sweet, plummy fruit course in and around the tannins to give the wine a really vibrant character. Long, structured finish with the inevitable tannins present make this wine a flashback to the Brunelli of the 1970's where it was loads of structure except this has fruit to go with the tannin. Enjoy putting it in your cellar for a decade it will be worth the wait.

2001 Tenute Silvio Nardi "Vigneto Manachiara" 916 cases produced *****3.5**

The nose on the "Manachiara" is fabulous, maraschino cherry, mixed with sweet leather, sage and thyme. On the palate the same flavors carry on accompanied by some ripe plum all couched in a big, tannic structure but with enough fruit density that the tannins are in balance. Very good interior structure gives the wine great length with the spice and fruit following right behind. Put in your cellar for another decade and you will be gloriously rewarded.

2001 Siro Pacenti 2,500 cases produced *****3.5**

I think this is where James Suckling of the *Wine Spectator* and I tend to disagree. He likes wines that have barrel structure, polish and are reminiscent of Cabernet's structure. The Siro Pacenti is truly an excellent wine and Giancarlo Pacenti is really a good winemaker, yet for me much of the winemaking is not allowing the delicacy and subtle character to emerge. Only the masculine traits show up in the flavor profile, and they're great but I know this

wine could be REALLY good if it had a more complete vision of Sangiovese all of its warts and moles don't need to be airbrushed. Yet if you like wines with a delicate international style this wine will knock your socks off. The wine has spicy, ripe fruit with great mouth feel, balance and a luscious finish. If you like this style I'd drink it now with decanting and it will age easily for 10-15 years however I'm unsure of what the evolution will reveal.

2001 Solaria 1,083 cases produced *****3.5**

This classic representation of the vintage has sweet, ripe fruit with a great backbone of structure and focus. More plum than cherry in the mouth Solaria has a certain feminine elegance, yet doesn't lack for muscle or verve. On the palate its fruit seems sinuous, with long elegant strands of flavor intertwining soft, plump, sweet spots that make the wine structured yet smooth and feeling luxuriant. A comfortable warmth arises out of this delicious fruit that is just inherently pleasing and it carries through into the long and sumptuous finish. Drink now with decanting and over the next 10-15 years.

2001 Talenti 2,166 cases produced *****3**

Broad and rich in the mouth were my first impressions of this wine. It gives me the impression of a very warm fall day, late afternoon, sitting outside under an umbrella, my skin is feeling the glow from being out in the sun earlier in the day. Languidly laying on a chaise lounge, drinking a beer and eating freshly cut prosciutto and melon. Muscles feeling the days work and they throb with the satisfaction of hard, physical labor. This wine has a sweet fat belly, yet its muscles are powerful, and the wine is clever not expending too much of its energy to blow waves of fruit out of the glass. This wine is in it for the long haul and its classic styling, and flavor profile is geared for a decade from now. Oh, you can drink this wine now. Yet you will want to age it, for it is only then that this wine will rise from the chaise lounge and show its complexity, suave nature and be intellectually stimulating. Excellent wine.

2001 Tenuta Caparzo 7,500 cases produced ***1**

The nose starts out plummy and shows a bit of leather and earth; on the palate it gradually expands showing some earth and leather. In the finish the plummy fruit comes through with some tannin making a pleasant straightforward wine. Easy drinking over the next 3-8 years.

2001 Tenuta Caparzo "La Casa" 1,666 cases produced *****3**

"La Casa" has the best position (S-SW) on the Montosoli hill, and in this vintage it seemed to absorb all the power the hill has. The wine is dense, thick and fleshy yet in this "classic" vintage I would have thought there would have been more definition to the wine. It is really good but in one of the premier spots in Montalcino one would have thought of greatness. However it is really good, and perhaps with some age some of the dense fleshiness will lean out and the real "La Casa" will come forward. Age 4-6 years and then drink over the next 10-20 years.

2001 Tenuta Vitanza 958 cases produced ****2.5**

Loads of sweet fruit fill your nose as aromas pour from the glass, on the palate the wine is thick and has gobs of dense fruit but comes off a little square with some more evident tannin. Some sweet leather mixes into the dense, plummy fruit and comes together in the finish which is surprisingly delicate for all of the inherent power and tannin in this wine. Drink now with some serious decanting or age 3-5 years and then drink over the next 10-20 years.

2001 Terralsole 1,153 cases produced *****3**

Mario Bollag, the former owner of Il Palazzone, has created a tremendous new property in the southeastern corner of Montalcino near Castelnuovo dell'Abate. Here the winery is aptly named (Earth to the Sun) and this new terroir is bathed in a glorious sunny southern exposure. The nose is a blend of complex fruit that shows a sweet ripeness and hints of leather and spice. In the mouth the wine is lush, round and ripe yet with exceptional balance for such a ripe wine. Powerful, dense and complex yet with a spice and fruit filled intrigue this wine is very solid. Drink now with decanting and then over the next 10-15 years.

2001 Uccelliera 1,000 cases produced ******4**

The nose is full of a complex mix of fruit, spice, earth and leather. On the palate the wine is luscious, yet bridled. It isn't fat it's luscious, spicy, bright and clean while still being full, soft and yes luscious. Lots of plum, ripe cherry and spice come through in the mouth along with some fine-grained tannin. The mid palate is really balanced and full of complex fruit character. Spice, fruit and the fine-grained tannins accent the finish in the Uccelliera. An excellent wine that is drinkable now with decanting or capable of aging 10+ years with no problem.

2001 Valdicava 2,500 cases produced *******5**

Hopefully you will get to taste if not drink this wine. As I write this we have sold out and are looking to get more, it is worth it, BELIEVE ME! I should say that I count owner/winemaker Vincenzo Abbruzzese as a personal friend and have known him for a long time so you might think I'm prejudiced. No I'm just lucky, I get to drink a lot of it!! The nose is decidedly demonstrative full of wild cherry, coffee, plum, toffee, and that earthy *savage* character that define Vincenzo's wines so well. The nose by itself is so enticing you could give it top marks without even tasting it, yet the wine in the mouth it is so engaging so entirely exotic, balanced and exciting its hard to contain oneself. If you don't know Brunello I'll give you a Bordeaux analogy, it's like Margaux and Haut Brion in one glass. The supple warmth in the mouth, the luxurious density while remaining so entirely light and delicate, couples with an exotic aromatic profile that whisks your senses away to a Turkish harem. Veils of flavor, aroma and structure are in this wine, they are too light, too ethereal, and too heavenly to be called layers. The finish is remarkably refreshing, not dense or heavy, not overblown just sensual, real and oh sooooo good. As good as this wine is, and it is every bit

and better than I have written, next year the 2001 Valdicava “Madonna del Piano” Riserva comes out.....It is.....well that’s it....It is. Drink today, tomorrow, ten years from now it won’t matter it is poetry in a bottle. Buy any bottle you see.

2001 Vasco Sasseti 2,000 cases produced *****3**

This is an old style wine that is just a true classic. The nose has alternating layers of earth then plum like fruit that resonate with *veritas*. On the palate the aromas turn to flavors but are balanced by wonderful acidity that seems to give the wine a sparkle of brilliance. Supple, easy to drink, very well balanced with a long finish. Delicious. Drink now with decanting over the next 10+ years.

2001 Verbena 1,308 cases produced ***1.5**

I loved the 1999 Verbena it was great, in the 2001 they used a bit more new wood, well maybe more than a bit and the wine has some very forward toasty, oaky aromatics at the moment. On the palate it is lush, soft and carries a serious amount of weight to it. In the finish the wine has come together texturally but still carries the big dollop of vanilla. Will it age out or will that be the flavor profile. If you are a Napa Cab lover this will probably seem like a normal flavor level to you, I’m rather sensitive. people who make this wine are really wonderful and they have an excellent consulting enologist, Attilio Pagli. It is drinkable now over the next decade.

2001 Villa I Cipressi 333 cases produced ****2**

This very small producer’s wine really caught me with its effortless freshness. The nose is fresh, cherry and plum delicately playing with each other that shows a warm bit of sunshine as they come together. On the palate it is balanced with sweet cherry and hints of plum that flow together. The wine is not overly complex and it isn’t a wine for 20+years but it made me want to drink a glass.

2001 Villa Le Prata 500 cases produced ******4.5+**

Who? You might say. This producer’s 1999 was my “Wine of the Vintage” it was great! NO still IS Great! The 2001 is certainly in the top ten wines of this vintage once again. Its nose is wild, *savage*, full of wild cherry, plum and spice that seamlessly fold into one another. On the palate the wine is gracious, warm and just flows to all corners of your mouth carrying the complex, spicy fruit, to blend with hints of toffee and chocolate. Long, supple, muscular and very feminine, its like an enchantress’s eyes are reeling you in, so exotic, pleasurable, sinful. The finish is more of the same that exotic incense, wafts over your body, you can’t resist, just always reaching for more. Sensational! Drinkable now with decanting but best after 3-5 years and then over the next 15+.

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