

# The Best Tuscan Wines You've Never Heard Of

11 bottles to look out for that aren't Super Tuscans or Chianti.

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FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: DARIO MIALE, ORNELLAIA, TENUTA L'IMPOSTINO

From [Chianti](#) and Brunello di Montalcino to the great [Super Tuscan](#) blends that can cost as much as a mortgage payment, [Tuscany](#) is home to some of the most sought-after wines in all of Italy.

Yet despite the region's familiarity, it still has the ability to charm and surprise. This was made brilliantly clear during a dinner this past summer at [Ristorante Bracali](#) in Massa Marittima, a two-Michelin-starred gem that proved to be one of the most profound and heartfelt meals I had all year, anywhere in the world.

It's owned by the visionary chef Francesco Bracali and his brother, the brilliant Maître Luca Bracali, who is in charge of service and wine. Over the course of a tasting menu that forced me to reconsider everything I thought I knew about Tuscan wine and food, I was reminded, yet again, that the wines of Tuscany are full of the kind of wonder that only the best regions ever approach, and at a wide range of price points.

But even there, in a restaurant with an incredibly broad and deep wine program, the guests' tendency is to lean on the most familiar ones.

"In our restaurant, less-known wines can be appreciated by the clients only if proposed in a single pairing with a specific dish," Luca said, "otherwise the tendency is to choose big names, internationally known and especially old vintages." Still, he added, "Clients are sometimes curious about small wine estate from the area where our restaurant is located."

That's the key to fully appreciating the range of pleasures that Tuscan wine is capable of: Remaining open to them all, from the most famous names that command thousands at auction to the less-familiar ones whose magic is no less profound because of their lower price or lack of familiarity. Luca poured me a Trebbiano - Malvasia Bianca - Ansonica Costa Toscana Bianca from Ampeleia, for example, that took my breath away, and can be found for less than \$30 in the United States.

Here, then, are 11 dry Tuscan wines (no Vin Santo here, though you should definitely be drinking more of them!) worth looking for, listed alphabetically, that aren't Super Tuscans or Chianti. I adore and collect those like many wine lovers, but sometimes the most memorable ones are the least expected.

## **2016 Basile "Cartacanta" Montecucco Sangiovese DOCG (\$13)**

Plush and with a propulsive sense of energy, this tastes of plum sauce, Chinese five-spice powder, cherries, and something almost meaty. It's a stunning value in Tuscan Sangiovese.

## **2016 Biondi-Santi Rosso di Montalcino (\$100)**

This is as good as Rosso di Montalcino gets. A pure beam of cherries, violets, and lavender is anchored by a hint of forest floor, before flavors of plums, juniper berries, licorice, and star anise coat the palate. Monumental.

## **2018 Castiglion del Bosco Chardonnay (\$23)**

Lifted with floral, fennel bulb, tarragon, and lemon blossom notes, this beautiful Chardonnay is anchored by hard autumn fruit. It's a remarkable value at less than \$25.

## **2015 ColleMassari “Poggio Lombrone” Montecucco Sangiovese Riserva (\$41)**

Sourced from 60-65-year-old vines, this is dense, deep, and rich, with brambly berries and spice aromas leading to a decadent palate of cherries, candied violets, blood oranges, and chocolate-covered orange peels.

## **2013 Il Borro “Bolle di Borro” Metodo Classico Brut (\$90)**

This serious sparkler is produced from single-vineyard Sangiovese that spent 60 months on the lees prior to being disgorged. The first vintage was in 2011, and this 2013 is fantastic: It rises from the glass with strawberries, orange marmalade, and sweet spice, and turns to flavors of fresh-baked brioche, strawberry jam, pomegranate, and mineral that sings through the finish.

## **2017 Ornellaia “Poggio alle Gazze” (\$65)**

What a fantastic expression of Sauvignon Blanc, with grapefruit, fennel bulb, and mineral to spare, all of it finishing on an unexpectedly salty note that makes this particularly perfect alongside fresh fish and seafood.

## **2018 Peteglia Montecucco Vermentino (\$25)**

This unexpectedly aromatic wine benefits from 12 hours of skin contact prior to an extended fermentation. The result is a wildly complex white in which aromas of orange oil find their counterpart in a salty palate flecked with melon rind, lemon pith, orange blossom, and almonds.

## **2018 Poggio Stenti Maremma Toscana Vermentino (\$24)**

A bracing white that smells of hard apples, lemon pith, and salty mineral, all of which set the stage for a savory, bone dry palate of Seckel pears, more lemon pith, and a sense of salinity that rings through the finish.

## **2015 Poliziano “Asinone” Vino Nobile di Montepulciano (\$55)**

Silky and generous, with ripe tart cherries and a hint of tobacco, this vibrates with spice and violets, and lingers with a mouthwatering cherry- and leather-kissed finish. Excellent concentration and length.

## **2016 Rocca di Montemassi “Le Focaiè” Sangiovese Maremma Toscana (\$12)**

Finding the perfect razor’s edge balance between meaty, floral, and peppercorn-spice aromas, this beautiful Sangiovese fans out with lovely flavors of fig paste, star anise, pink peppercorns, and plums.

## **2015 Tenuta L’Impostino “Ottava Rima” Maremma Toscana (\$15)**

An unexpected blend of Sangiovese and Alicante, this is a seriously accomplished wine, especially considering the price of \$15. Dark cherries, spice, and dried oregano make for a red that’s just as delicious on its own as it is with a meal. There is also a phenomenal agriturismo on the property.