

## Brunello di Montalcino: The 10 must-know estates

The producers of Montalcino are steadfast in their dedication to the Sangiovese grape – they even have their own name for it. Monty Waldin picks 10 top wineries from the DOCG region, exploring their differing approaches to this singular red variety and the noble wines it makes.



Monty Waldin  
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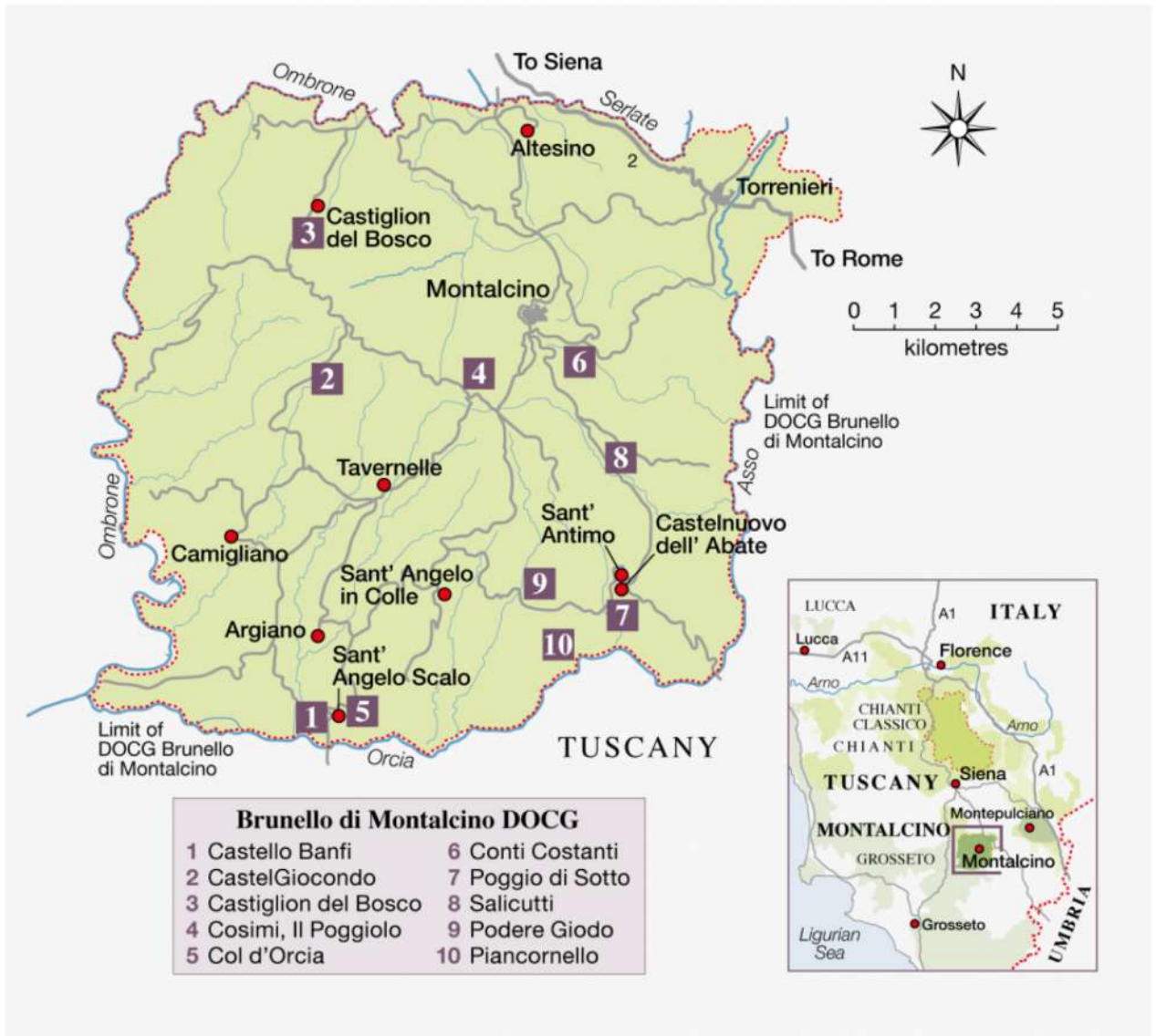
Castiglion del Bosco Credit: Charlie Dailey

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Brunello is simply the local name for Sangiovese, used since 1865, when a producer in Montalcino made Italy's first 100% Sangiovese wine. The region's 250 wineries are mostly small scale – 20ha or less – and in total make up 3,500ha

under vine, or about 15% of the land. The western, more sea- influenced flank has the fewest wineries, but its vineyards are some of the region's largest.



## Castiglion del Bosco

The 'fortress in the woods' is one of Montalcino's most isolated vineyards, with 62ha of vines surrounded by 1,200ha of woodland – yet it was a founding member when Montalcino's wineries created the region's first official rules in 1966. Massimo Ferragamo of fashion fame purchased the estate in 2003 and brought new impetus; the estate's Brunellos are now really easy to enjoy.

'The vines get cool air from the forest,' winemaker Cecilia Leoneschi says. 'We rejigged the vine supports to get riper, more even-sized bunches. We ferment Sangiovese cooler and longer now, which the yeast like, as there is less stress. We make sure the yeasts get the food they need by sowing plants in the vineyards, which naturally put nutrients in the soil which end up in the grape juice. The aromas and flavours emerge gradually and are more refreshing. This then encouraged us to dial down the oak.'