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The Ultimate Brunello Di Montalcino Estate - Castiglion Del Bosco

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In Montalcino, home to the iconic Brunello di Montalcino, there are dozens of beautiful panoramas where vineyards dominate the landscape and seem to go on forever. While it's difficult to proclaim one area as the most beautiful or jaw-dropping, anyone who has ever seen the Castiglion del Bosco property would never forget the splendor and majesty of this estate, which is clearly one of the most remarkable anywhere in the world.

While this area, just a few miles northwest of the town of Montalcino has been in existence as an agricultural site for over 1000 years, the true identity of Castiglion del Bosco emerged in 2003, when Massimo and Chiara Ferragamo from the renowned family of fashion designers, purchased the estate, transforming it into one of luxury for its visitors (more on that later) as well as a top producer of Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany's most powerful and longest-lived red wines.

The estate is among the largest in the Montalcino area, comprising 5000 acres, much of which are forests, while vineyards account for 152 acres. There are two principal vineyards; Capanna, the source for the various examples of Brunello produced at the estate, and Gauggiolo, the fruit of which is primarily used for Rosso di Montalcino, which is lighter in body and more approachable upon release than Brunello.



Winemaker Cecilia Leoneschi in the vineyards at Castiglion del Bosco PHOTO COURTESY OF CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO

Cecilia Leoneschi oversees wine production and currently crafts several examples of Brunello di Montalcino, most notably the classic version; a single vineyard wine known as Campo al Drago and a *riserva* Brunello known as 1100 or Millecento; this name in honor of the founding of the estate. The current release of the classic Brunello (black label) is 2017, which was a very warm growing season. Yet as robust as the wine is on the palate, there is good acidity to give the wine proper balance; this is due to the elevation of the Capanna vineyard, which ranges from 820 to 1600 feet above sea level. This is one of the highest vineyards in the Montalcino production zone, which means that harvest is often later than neighboring estates; this guarantees better fruit and tannin ripening, resulting in wines of notable balance.

The current 2017 Castiglion del Bosco Brunello di Montalcino features ripe red currant and morel cherry perfumes along with notes of thyme and turmeric; well-balanced with firm tannins, this will need a few years to round out, but promises to be in excellent shape within 8-12 years (I give the wine a score of 90 points).

The most famous Brunello here is Campo del Drago, sourced from a small plot within the Capanna vineyard. This is the highest point of the estate, with soils dominated by rock schist. There are strong winds at this site, making it an ideal place to plant Sangiovese, as temperatures are never too hot, while the weather cools down dramatically in the evening. The current release is from the 2017 vintage; matured for 24 months in French oak, this is a powerful Brunello that offers intriguing, sexy aromas of orange zest, morel cherry and a note of cacao on the nose. I found the wine to offer excellent complexity and typicity, as well as notable persistence; look for this wine to be at its best in 10-12 years (92 points).

The current release of the 1100 Millecento Brunello is from the outstanding 2016 vintage, one of the finest for this area in the last two decades. Offering intriguing aromas of orange peel, morel cherry, caraway and a hint of paprika, this is full-bodied and has very good acidity (a signature of the 2016 vintage), excellent complexity and a lengthy finish that is perfectly balanced. This particular wine shows the true character and potential of Brunello di Montalcino at Castiglion del Bosco, and while it could be enjoyed with *bistecca fiorentina* tonight, it would be better paired with food after a few years; I predict this wine will drink well for at least 15-20 years, and I wouldn't be surprised if it was still enjoyable a few years after that; this is an outstanding wine (94).



Along with Brunello di Montalcino, Castiglion del Bosco also releases Rosso di Montalcino. Produced entirely from Sangiovese, just as with Brunello, Rosso di Montalcino is a lighter wine, often produced from younger vineyards; while it has some of the same characteristics and flavors of Brunello, this is a more charming wine to drink at an earlier age.

While there are some excellent examples of Rosso di Montalcino produced by other wineries, few take this wine as seriously as Castiglion del Bosco. For the 2020 vintage, Leoneschi has produced three separate examples of this wine, which I believe is a first for Rosso di Montalcino. *L'America*, named for the fact that the workers harvesting the grapes thought this plot at the end of the estate was so far away it seemed like America, was aged only in steel, and is a delightful Rosso that can be enjoyed tonight or over the next three to five years (92 points).

Gaggiolo, produced from the eponymous vineyard at the estate, is a bit spicier with more weight on the palate; this will be at its best in four to six years (91), while the Deimassi bursts with ripe red fruit and offers great concentration on the palate, along with outstanding harmony and a lengthy finish. This is one of the most impressive examples of Rosso di Montalcino I have ever tasted, as you could surprise a lot of people if you told them it was actually a Brunello - the wine is that rich and complex! This should be at peak in 10-12 years, which is something not typical for Rosso di Montalcino. If you love these wines, do what you can to find a few bottles, some to enjoy now, and some to lay away for a few years (93).



Outdoor terrace at Prima Pietra winery, Maremma PHOTO COURTESY OF CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO

Castiglion del Bosco also owns a winery in the Maremma district on the Tuscan Coast, about a two-hour drive from their Montalcino estate. Named Prima Pietra, the wines here are produced with Bordeaux varietals, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. The namesake wine, Prima Pietra is a notable blend of four varietals; the newly released 2019 is typical of the ripe black fruit found in this area's wines; given the richness and the young tannins, this will be at its best in seven to ten years (90).

The best wine from Prima Pietra is Per Massimo, named in honor of Massimo Ferragamo, and it is a beauty! 100% Cabernet Franc, this has great complexity, with impressive richness on the palate, an extremely long finish and round, velvety tannins; the 2019 offering is excellent, and while it would be an ideal partner with roast lamb or a steak tonight, this will improve for the next 10-12 years (92).



If you are in the Montalcino area, try and schedule some time for a visit to Castiglion del Bosco. You can book a private tasting of the wines (including older vintages of Brunello), and take a cellar tour. The luxurious hotel here, operated by Rosewood Hotel and Resorts is a great place to relax, and the hospitality is second to none. There are two restaurants, specializing in local cuisine (the Tuscan Kale salad is wonderful!), and as you might expect, the wine list is extraordinary, offering not only the Castiglion del Bosco wines, but also products from some of the most famous estates in the world.

There is even an 18-hole golf course on the property, designed by 1973 British Open champion Tom Weiskopf; this is the only private golf club in Italy.



Finally, if you can't make it to Montalcino, there is a Castiglion del Bosco wine lounge in Florence, which offers all the estate's wines in a gorgeous setting. It seems that the owners have thought of everything!

For more information on Castiglion del Bosco, see their [website](#)



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