



MONICA LARNER - 7th Oct 2021

## Italy, Tuscany: Icons

I can't imagine a report to write more fun than this. In this collection of 90 wines from across Tuscany, I focus on many of the heavy-hitters, or the icon wines, that have brought *vino italiano* to the world stage. These are the benchmark bottles that have given rise to the spectacular growth we have seen among worldwide collectors and the various indices, like Liv-ex or the London International Vintners Exchange, with regards to Italian fine wines.

In an article published on September 3, 2021, the group registered "the definitive high jump of Italian fine wines" in their Live-ex Classification 2021. Italy accounted for 83 wines on the index, representing a 112% increase over 2019, or the last time the list was published.

"Italian wines rank among the top wines of the world as fine wine buyers cast their nets wider and deeper in search of greater value," said Liv-ex in their press release.

Arguably, no wine nation has performed better than Italy during these trying pandemic times. Although we can't know how long this upward performance trend will last, it has certainly been an exciting ride so far.

As readers know, I have worked hard these past years to highlight many of these icon wines in special spotlights and one-off articles timed to the wines' commercial releases.

Last year, I published a series called The Tuscan Twenty (actually, it started off as The Tuscan Ten, but then it started to grow). By the end of 2020, my series had gone beyond The Tuscan Twenty, and I contemplated changing its name once again, to The Tuscan Thirty.

To make things easier, I scratched that idea this year and instead opted to publish this article simply called "Tuscany: Icons."

In addition to the wines presented in this article, some of my icon reviews have already been published. You can find my reviews of the following wines in their respective spotlight articles: Tenuta San Guido 2018 Bolgheri Sassicaia; both the Masseto 2018 Masseto and the Ornellaia 2018 Bolgheri Superiore Ornellaia; the Marchesi Antinori 2018 Tignanello and the Guado al Tasso 2018 Bolgheri Superiore Guado al Tasso; the Marchesi Antinori 2018 Solaia; and the Bibi Graetz 2019 Colore and his 2019 Testamatta. I also published a barrel sample review of the Petrolo 2018 Galatrona, but I will offer a definitive review of that wine in my annual coverage of Tuscany's tiny Valdarno di Sopra appellation.

I wanted to bring more of the vintners' voices into my coverage of these Tuscan icon wines, so I mailed out a brief questionnaire to all of the producers represented in this article and have translated their answers here below. I hope you enjoy this format and find it useful.

Vintage	Wines	RP
2019	Tenuta di Trinoro	100
2018	Castello di Ama L'Apparita	99
2019	Tua Rita Syrah Per Sempre	98
2018	Fontodi Flaccianello della Pieve	98
2018	Le Macchiole Scrio	98

## The Castello di Ama 2018 L'Apparita – by Marco Pallanti

### 1. What was the first year of production for this wine?

1985

### 2. Which vintages have been released (or vintages in which the wine was not made)?

Between 1985 and 2018, we produced all vintages except for 2002 and 2012.

### 3. What was the name of the winemaker at the beginning and the name of the current winemaker if changed?

It has always been me: Marco Pallanti.

### 4. How many bottles are produced per year?

It has always remained a small production: between just under 3,000 and a maximum of around 6,000 bottles. As for 2018, the number is written on the label.



### 5. Is the wine a single vineyard or a blend?

It is from a single vineyard, positioned in front of the fermentation cellar.

### 6. Could you tell me about the spirit/identity of this wine? What is its significance to you?

It is a perfect example of how the Ama terroir manages to produce local wines even from international varieties. It has the classic characteristics of Merlot, forged by the terroir of Castello di Ama: fruity aromas with notes of spices deriving from the calcareous soil; good freshness, thanks to the altitude of the vineyard between 480 and almost 500 meters; elegance in the tannins that are never aggressive but velvety; and excellent longevity and durability.

### 7. Could you tell me about the evolution (in the vineyard or in terms of enology) that the wine has undergone over the course of its lifetime?

The quality of the grapes from this vineyard made us understand from the very first year, the splendid 1985 vintage, the importance that this wine would have for both Castello di Ama and Tuscany. I remember that it was the first pure Merlot produced in Tuscany. [It was] harvested by hand in crates, with very soft crushing and destemming, indigenous yeasts, fermentation in stainless steel, numerous concentrated pump-overs in the first phase of fermentation and long maceration (on average three to four weeks). As for refining in barrique, in the first years we used 100% new oak, which has been reduced to the current 50% new and 50% neutral regime used the previous year. In all, [the wine spends] 13-16 months in barrique and subsequent bottling.

### 8. Could you mention two or three bottles (Italian, French or others) that were a direct inspiration for you when you started this project?

Honestly, we've never had any role models to inspire us. We like elegant wines, and we have always tried to achieve a wine that is undoubtedly powerful but at the same time very elegant. Our pedoclimatic conditions have favored us by giving us the opportunity to create a wine that, together with the fact of being Merlot, is unmistakably Castello di Ama.