

# Collector's Guide: Tuscany

Stellar recent vintages, relative value and the rapid rise of certain top names on the secondary market are just some of the reasons why Tuscany is a fascinating wine region for collectors.



Chris Mercer

June 24, 2024



Highly rated recent releases from Brunello di Montalcino and Chianti Classico to coastal Bolgheri and the understated Toscana IGT denominations have underlined why **Tuscany** is considered a treasure trove for collectors at many levels.

Top Super Tuscans have also risen to greater prominence on the secondary market, despite fine wine prices and trading in general going off the boil in the past 12 to 18 months.

This introductory fine wine market guide focuses on Tuscan red wines. It aims to give collectors information on some of the key names and developments by synthesising exclusive recent reports for *Decanter Premium*, as well as market data.

## Tuscany 101: Key styles

Sangiovese comes in different guises, but remains Tuscany's key grape. It's a driving force of Chianti Classico and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, and the sole star of Brunello di Montalcino – three prestigious DOCG zones (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita*) in Italy's wine classification system.

Natural tannins and acidity lend the finest Sangiovese wines great ageing potential, while a complex flavour profile can encompass wild red berries, dark cherry, earthy, herbal and liquorice notes. Yet, some of Tuscany's top wines focus on international grapes, notably Bordeaux varieties Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

This is one of the defining features of many prominent Super Tuscans – albeit there are exceptions – and today these highly prized wines commonly fall within Toscana IGT and Bolgheri DOC denominations.

## Most popular Tuscan wines on Wine-Searcher

As a broad introduction to market prominence, here are the 15 most searched-for Tuscan wines on *Wine-Searcher.com*. (See table 1, below)

## Most popular Tuscan wines on Wine-Searcher

Wine	Denomination	Overall rank (all wines)
Tenuta San Guido, Sassicaia	Bolgheri Sassicaia DOC	6
Marchesi Antinori Tignanello	Toscana IGT	16
Ornellaia	Bolgheri Superiore DOC	32
Masseto	Toscana IGT	41
Marchesi Antinori, Solaia	Toscana IGT	50
Soldera, Case Basse	Toscana IGT*	99
Biondi Santi, Tenuta Greppo	Brunello di Montalcino DOCG	101
Fontodi, Flaccianello della Pieve	Colli della Toscana Centrale IGT	107
Montevertine Le Pergole Torte	Toscana IGT	131
Biondi Santi, Tenuta Greppo Riserva	Brunello di Montalcino DOCG	142
Argiano	Brunello di Montalcino DOCG	165
Il Poggione	Brunello di Montalcino DOCG	178
Tenuta San Guido, Guidalberto	Toscana IGT	205
Marchesi Antinori, Tenuta Guado Al Tasso	Bolgheri Superiore DOC	221
Casanova di Neri, Tenuta Nuova	Brunello di Montalcino DOCG	227

DATA SOURCE: [WWW.WINE-SEARCHER.COM/](http://WWW.WINE-SEARCHER.COM/) JUNE 2024

\*Soldera left the Brunello di Montalcino Consorzio, beginning with the 2006 vintage release (non-Riserva)

## Super Tuscan snapshot

The first five names in this ranking are commonly cited as the most prominent (Super) Tuscan wines on the secondary market.

Sassicaia began as a Vino da Tavola in 1968 (it's now Bolgheri Sassicaia DOC), and was followed by Tignanello and Solaia, and subsequently Ornellaia and Masseto. All use Bordeaux grapes in different proportions. Tignanello is the only one of these five with a Sangiovese-dominant blend.

Both it and Cabernet Sauvignon-led Solaia come from the same Antinori-owned estate in Chianti Classico territory. Ornellaia and Masseto are today owned by the Frescobaldi family.

## More names to know

Prominent wines sitting just outside of the Wine-Searcher top 15 include: Poggio di Sotto, Castello Banfi (Brunello di Montalcino) and Ca'Marcanda (Bolgheri DOC), plus Toscana IGT labels such as Isole e Olena's Cepparello, Tenuta Luce Luce, and Tua Rita Redigaffi.

Chianti Classico is absent from the ranking above, but has a rich history; its geographic boundaries were first established in 1716 by Grand Duke of Tuscany Cosimo III. Antinori, Frescobaldi, Fontodi, Castello di Ama, Ricasoli and Querciabella are just some of the top producers in the region.

Fattoria Le Pupille in Maremma, southwest Tuscany, is best-known for its Saffredi label but makes several wines, including small-volume Le Pupille from Syrah grapes. Meanwhile, **Tenuta di Capezzana's Treffiano** is a key label in the Carmignano DOCG.

## Top Tuscan vintages

Headline vintage ratings are always an over-simplification, but top vintages in the past decade include 2019 and 2016, particularly in Brunello di Montalcino and Bolgheri, with 2015 not far behind. Brunello 2010 is also considered a modern benchmark, while excitement has been building around Tuscany's class of 2021, too.

Other vintages have been marked by the usual extremes of cool and wet conditions (2014) or extreme heat and drought (2017). Nonetheless, as various Decanter reports have shown, pleasurable wines from these vintages do await those prepared to do some careful selection.

## When are the wines released?

Minimum ageing requirements play a role in the timing of new vintages.

**Brunello di Montalcino:** No release before 1 January in the fifth year after harvest (i.e. 1 January 2024 for the 2019 vintage), with two years in oak and four months in bottle. Riserva wines must be aged for an extra year, with six months in-bottle.

**Chianti Classico:** Gran Selezione and Riserva wines must be aged for at least 30 and 24 months respectively, each with three months in-bottle. Annata wines must be aged for 12 months. Individual estate schedules will vary. Biondi Santi released its Brunello di Montalcino 2018 wine (non-Riserva) in March 2024, and its 2016-vintage Riserva in 2023, for instance. **Tenuta San Guido:** This producer prefers to maintain direct importer relations in its key markets. Its Sassicaia and Le Difese wines are released each February, with a later release for its Guidalberto label.

## Tuscany and La Place de Bordeaux

Many top Italian wines have turned to La Place de Bordeaux to increase their international distribution. Masseto was one of the earlier adopters, joining La Place in 2009, with its 2006 vintage, closely followed by Solaia. But Bordeaux négociants have begun handling a growing number of Italian fine wines since then.

Today these also include the Super Tuscan Tignanello and Ornellaia which (at least partially) release their new wines in March and April respectively.

Other Tuscan wines released on La Place de Bordeaux include:

- **Solaia**
- **Bibi Graetz Colore**
- **Castello di Fonterutoli Siepi**
- **Caiarossa**
- **Podere Giodo, Brunello di Montalcino • Tenuta di Biserno**

## Chianti Classico Gran Selezione coming of age?

There is plenty to discover in Chianti, and within the historic Chianti Classico DOCG zone specifically.

‘I think it’s a region that’s got huge potential,’ said Katherine Fisher, speaking to *Decanter* in her role as Italy buyer at UK-based merchant Goedhuis Waddesdon.

So-called ‘additional geographical units’ (UGAs) can now be used on labels of top-tier Chianti Classico Gran Selezione wines, as part of efforts to deepen knowledge of the region.

Fisher said there is work to do on ‘education and clarification’ to help consumers understand the wines better, but she added: ‘If you can get beyond that, there are really good wines at fantastic prices to be found.’

Chianti Classico DOCG wines don’t have a significant presence on the secondary market, but the 10-year-old Gran Selezione category could be interesting for collectors to watch.

Wines must be estate-grown, and *Decanter* Italy expert Michaela Morris recently noted how the category has become a home for projects focused on specific vineyard sites. Her review of new releases in 2024 included a 97-point rating for Querciabella’s Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2019. ‘The estate’s third release, this Gran Selezione is among the top wines from Chianti Classico’s 2019 vintage,’ Morris wrote. ‘Just 4,000 bottles were produced from Querciabella’s site above 500 metres on the steep, stony slope of the Ruffoli hill.’