

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

International Edition

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The Wisdom of White Wines

I guess the title is making most of our readers think wines have, like to say, a conscious life and intelligence, such to give them wisdom, that rare quality time, sometimes, gives some persons. Wisdom is a quality commonly associated to experience and maturity, characteristics which can be acquired with time only. The contribution of time is rarely associated to white wines as, in most of the cases, it is believed these wines are destined to a quick consumption, just in time before the next vintage. I confess I have always had a certain predilection for mature white wines, those to which has been allowed to benefit of time in order to get the chance of aging and evolving, while becoming, in this sense, *more wise and rich*. Wisdom, like to say, is mainly expressed by a richer organoleptic complexity, in other words, a wine requiring a higher attention while giving back more intense and rich emotions.

In this sense, it is interesting to go a little back in time - indeed, not so far - when the "fad" wanted crisp and immediate white wines, very young wines and with pale colors. A fad which is not still passed and taking its origin about few tens of years ago. At those times, in fact, white wines with a pale and light color were very common, they were so pale as to be oddly defined "paper white", like to say, you cannot get a white whiter than this. Discolored wines - or better to say, deprived from their yellow color - by using an aggressive and violent filtering process in order to make them pale and inexpressive in their appearance. A process which did not end in the winery and filtering only, it was something taking its origin from the vineyard, where everything was aimed to the production of a wine destined to a short life, just the time it took for the next harvesting.

The fad has been successfully fed both by the market and producers who, more or less pleased by this *fad*, have contributed to feed it and adapted themselves to the circumstance, by producing white wines destined to an immediate consumption. Most of the consumers have adapted themselves to this fad too and - when they were about to pick a wine at a restaurant - they preferred with no hesitation the most recent vintages. White wines of the past vintage, as soon as the ones of the new harvesting were released, were considered "old" and,

in this case, it meant a decrepit wine and not drinkable anymore. A vicious fad in which obsolescence become aggressive and quick, something similar to what it is happening to smart-phones and computers which, in just one year or so, they are considered surpassed and old, therefore to be replaced. By acting like so, we believe we are modern and keeping up with times but, to be confident, it seems we need a better awareness and wisdom, maybe renewed and more modern.

I am not saying I do not like young white wines, even those evidently made for an immediate consumption: sometimes they are immature and predictable, even though there are so many which can be considered amazing. I however admit when I go to "trusted" restaurants, in case I see a mature white wine - and, of course, a wine of which I know about its quality of taking advantage of time - I always choose that. It should be said, when I make this choice I always cross my fingers and hope they properly kept the bottle during its amazing journey in time. Sometimes the choice is disappointing, a risk which is also taken with red wines that, by looking at their labels, they clearly state their age. In that case, the reasonableness of the restaurateur offers the replacement of the bottle, in case - of course - this was agreed before uncorking the bottle, saved the cases of evident keeping faults or *cork taint*.

It is now some years I am glad to see the number of producers offering non vintage white wines is constantly increasing. It is the sign consumer are becoming aware of the fact white wines can also give huge emotions after having took advantage of time. A characteristic that - in any case - must originate from vineyard as well as adopting the highest strictness and rigor from winery to glass. In this sense, there are no big differences from red wines: in both cases they must be produced with the explicit goal of giving them the chance to evolve with time, and sometimes this is a risky task. Not all white wines, just like reds, are suited for the long aging, but in case they are made with this specific goal in mind, in most of the cases you get a stellar wine. This is particularly true for whites, as time can attenuate the strong organoleptic impact of yeast - either selected or indigenous, it makes not difference - therefore allowing the true character of the wine and grapes to be revealed.

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In my personal cellar I have many mature white wines, waiting for the right occasion and the right time - mine and of the wine - to be uncorked. A symphony of aromas giving a new and renewed dimension, like to say, a rich and wise tale only time could teach to that wine. It is a feast of complex and rich sensations which may be considered "odd" to the ones preferring the so called "fruity" wines or maybe very careless in listening to a wine. The idea some producers - while others were doing this for a very long time - are supporting the concept of production and commercialization of mature white wines, it is something I really like. Many producers have always believed in this and have done this for a long time, while facing hard times in trying to sell their wines to a market mainly requiring wines of the latest vintage only and to be forgotten with the next harvesting. Others, which may have been tempted by the idea, are trying to follow this trend, at last. This is probably the consequence of the higher awareness of certain consumers who are not interested in those easy wines and being similar to hundreds of other ones. Maybe this is just a new wine fad, one of the many already seen in the past. In the hope it is going to last for a very long time, I make a toast with a white wine. Mature and wise, with some years lived in meditation inside the bottle, of course.

Antonello Biancalana



WINE TASTING

Contrasts of Sagrantino and Sangiovese

This month we are comparing Sagrantino di Montefalco and Brunello di Montalcino's Sangiovese. Two magnificent grapes yet very different, both capable of making excellent wines.

Sagrantino and Sangiovese, two famous grapes, the former exclusively associated to Umbria and, in particular, Montefalco, the latter typically associated to Central Italy, Tuscany and Emilia Romagna in particular. Sangiovese is also cultivated in Umbria and, in most of the cases, it is blended to other grapes, rarely vinified alone. Sangiovese is the absolute protagonist in monovarietal red wines of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, a leading grape for both regions. Sagrantino is known for its richness in polyphenols, a characteristic resulting in robust and astringent wines, something forcing producers to a strict evaluation of polyphenolic ripeness of the grape and proper vinification. Also Sangiovese is capable of making wines of remarkable structure, it is less astringent and makes of crispness one of its main and appreciated qualities.

From a wine making point of view, Sangiovese is an evidently more versatile variety than Sagrantino, with which are produced wines having different characters and, sometimes, opposed. Sangiovese is in fact suited for the vinification of many styles, from immediate and crisp wines, to robust and complex results. Sagrantino too proved to have a certain versatility, even in the production of classic method sparkling wines, however its richness in polyphenols makes it more critical when used for the making of certain styles. As opposed to Sagrantino, Sangiovese is widely spread and it is found in the vineyard of many Italian regions, even in Sicily and Veneto. Sagrantino is a variety specific to Umbria and, in particular, its presence outside the area of Montefalco appellation is very limited and rare.

The origin of Sagrantino is not clear, a condition the grape of Montefalco has in common with other varieties considered indigenous to Italy. There are many theories about the origin of Sagrantino, however no one of them can be considered reliable and certain, as there are no evident and historical proofs about its origins. What can be considered certain is the long tradition of Montefalco for viticulture and, in particular Bevagna, was mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his important *Naturalis Historia*. In the past they tried to identify Sagrantino with the ancient variety *itriola* - sometimes called *hirtiola* - but it is very likely it was not the red grape of Montefalco. Andrea Bacci associated Itriola to Passerina, whereas other scholars, in particular archaeologist Carlo Pietrangeli, believed this grape was Sagrantino. These hypotheses could not be proved, though.

Among the theories about the origin of Sagrantino, it is believed the grape was introduced to Montefalco by some Franciscan monks coming back from Asia Minor. This theory would also suggest the origin of the name as it seems Sagrantino was used for the production of wine to be used in sacred rites. If it is true the origin of the grape is not certain, what it is certain is the relationship of Montefalco with viticulture and wine. The cultivation of the vine is in fact dated back

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Published by
Antonello Biancalana

Address

WEB: www.DiWineTaste.com E-Mail: Editorial@DiWineTaste.com

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to the first century DC and, very important, Montefalco was one of the few cities in Italy where the cultivation of the vine was done inside the city walls. The importance of vine and wine in Montefalco became very high, as in the sixteenth century harvesting was regulated by specific communal laws. It can however be said at those times the presence of Sagrantino in Montefalco was known and strong, its wines were already famous and appreciated in the near Perugia and in Papal States.

The origin of Sangiovese is, for certain aspects, unclear and rich of uncertainty. There are in fact two Italian regions disputing the origin of Sangiovese: Emilia Romagna and Toscana, regions in which this variety is widely common. The origin of the name is clearer and it is believed to derive from *sanguis Jovis* - blood of Jupiter - and, in its many variations and dialectal adaptations, today it is called Sangiovese. It is one of the most important Italian varieties and of which exists many clonal expressions, probably like no other grape. Researches about this variety introduced the classification in two distinct families: *Sangiovese Piccolo* (Little Sangiovese) and *Sangiovese Grosso* (Big Sangiovese), defined according the size of berries. Sangiovese is called *Prugnolo* in the area of Montepulciano, *Brunello* in Montalcino, both found in the province of Siena, Tuscany.

Other names with which Sangiovese is known in Italy include: *Morellino* in the Scansano area, province of Grosseto; *Sangiovese* in certain areas of Tuscany; *Nielluccio* in Corsica, France. Wines produced with Sangiovese are pretty variable, because both of the wide spreading in distant and different places, and for the differences existing among the many clones. A characteristic common to all Sangiovese wines is a certain elegance to the nose and mouth, as well as a pleasing crispness, however perceptible in each of them. From vinification in steel tanks to cask, Sangiovese has a unique and interesting versatility, from immediate and direct wines, to complex and robust interpretations. King of red wines of Romagna and Chianti, two of its most famous expressions include Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano.

We will compare Sagrantino and Sangiovese in order to understand the peculiarities of the two varieties by evaluating their differences. In order to make the comparison even more useful, we will evaluate two wines having similar wine making

characteristics - or, at least, as similar as possible - therefore simplifying the tasting. Choosing a Sagrantino is not difficult, as the wine making technique used for its production is common to all of them: aging for at least 33 months, of which 12 in wood. As for Sangiovese, we will need to choose a wine aged in wood for a significant period, for this reason we will choose a Brunello di Montalcino. Production disciplinary for this famous Tuscan wine provides for an aging in wood for at least two years. In both cases, we will choose wines aged in the same type of container, therefore cask or barrique.

We will begin by evaluating the appearance of both wines. The simple observation of transparency let us notice an evident and substantial difference. Sagrantino di Montefalco does not easily allow the passage of light and it will be pretty hard to see an object put behind the glass. Brunello di Montalcino has a higher transparency and, according to wine making and viticultural conditions, the object put behind the glass will be easily recognized. Color shows remarkable differences as well. Deep and intense ruby red in case of Sagrantino di Montefalco, becoming brilliant and bright in Brunello di Montalcino. Nuances of color generally tend to garnet red in the famous wine of Tuscany, whereas in Sagrantino will be observed a strong ruby red nuance.

The nose too will reveal remarkable differences since the very first moments of the olfactory evaluation. Two olfactory profiles characterized by quite different opening although - for certain aspects - we can also perceive strong analogies. Let's evaluate the opening of Sagrantino di Montefalco. By holding the glass in vertical position and without doing any movement, let's proceed with the first smell. We will perceive a strong and evident aroma of blackberry - a primary and identifying characteristic of Sagrantino - as well as plum and black cherry, including the elegant aroma of violet. Let's now evaluate the opening of Brunello di Montalcino. The sensation perceived to the nose offers a quite different olfactory profile. In this case black cherry and cherry will be the main aromas, sensations which will be followed by plum and violet.

According to a general point of view, Sagrantino di Montefalco has a more *full and robust* olfactory profile, whereas Brunello di Montalcino has a *fresher and thinner* olfactory profile. In the great Umbrian red we will mainly perceive aromas of black berried fruits, whereas in Brunello di Montalcino will be red berried fruits to be mainly perceived. Moreover, in Brunello di Montalcino it is not rare to perceive from the glass the aroma of rose, including dried rose, a quality virtually unknown in Sagrantino di Montefalco, except for very rare cases. Likewise, raspberry - pretty frequent in many Brunello di Montalcino wines - is virtually unknown to the profile of Sagrantino. We will not consider tertiary sensations, as they are strongly connected to aging process, therefore variable according to time, keeping and wine making.

To the taste, the two wines continue to prove their remarkable differences. Sagrantino di Montefalco will be characterized, from the very moment it enters the mouth, for its remarkable astringency and powerful structure. Full and robust wine, Sagrantino is also characterized by a considerable quantity of alcohol - it is in fact not uncommon to reach 15% - a quality useful for the balance of its robust tannins. To the gustatory evaluation, Brunello di Montalcino is characterized by a very different profile from Sagrantino. Also in this case it is



Contrasts of transparencies: on the left Sagrantino di Montefalco; on the right Brunello di Montalcino

perceived a full and robust structure with an impact of astringency lower and more moderate than the wine of Montefalco. If tannins are less aggressive, the same cannot be said for the crispness caused by acidity, in this case higher than Sagrantino.

An interesting characteristic to be considered is the difference of the concept of structure in these wines. Both have a remarkable robust body, however the expression of this quality is perceptible in different and distinct ways. In Sagrantino di Montefalco polyphenols play, of course, a fundamental role: as it is commonly known, this grape has a very high quantity of these substances. In Brunello di Montalcino the impact of polyphenols is weaker than Sagrantino, however it has a full and robust body. Wood plays a complementary and very important role in both wines, as well as contributing to the enhancement of overall roundness. In Sagrantino di Montefalco wood in fact contributes to the balance of tannins' harshness; in Brunello di Montalcino it smooths any possible excess of crispness determined by acidity.



Wines of the Month

Score legend

- ❖ Fair – ❖❖ Pretty Good – ❖❖❖ Good
- ❖❖❖❖ Very Good – ❖❖❖❖❖ Excellent
- ★ Wine that excels in its category
- 🍷 Good value wine

Prices are to be considered as indicative. Prices may vary according to the country or the shop where wines are bought



Donna Francesca 2011
Giovanni Ederle (Veneto, Italy)

🍷 Chardonnay, Garganega

Price: € 17.50

Score ❖❖❖❖★

👁 Intense golden yellow and nuances of golden yellow, very transparent.

👂 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of mature apple, plum and honey followed by aromas of mature peach, banana, pear and citrus fruits.

👄 Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of mature apple, plum and honey.

🍷 Aged in cask.

🍴 Pasta with fish, Roasted fish, Roasted white meat, Stewed fish



Rubro del Forte 2011
Giovanni Ederle (Veneto, Italy)

🍷 Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella, Croatina

Price: € 17.50

Score ❖❖❖❖★

👁 Brilliant ruby red and nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency.

👂 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of blackberry, plum and dried violet followed by aromas of black cherry, tobacco, vanilla, walnut husk and chocolate.

👄 Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of blackberry, plum and black cherry.

🍷 12 months in cask, 12 months in bottle.

🍴 Roasted meat, Stewed meat, Braised meat, Hard cheese



Collio Malvasia 2011
Borgo del Tiglio (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy)

🍷 Malvasia Istriana

Price: € 22.00

Score ❖❖❖❖★

👁 Intense greenish yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent.

👂 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of apple, plum and hawthorn followed by aromas of pear, ripe peach, vanilla, almond, caper, honey, grapefruit and mineral.

-  Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
-  Persistent finish with flavors of apple, plum and almond.
-  Ferments in cask.
-  *Sauteed fish, Broiled crustaceans, Stuffed pasta with mushrooms*



Collio Rosso 2009
Borgo del Tiglio (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy)

-  Merlot, Cabrenet Sauvignon

Price: € 22.00 Score 

-  Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.
-  Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black currant, black cherry and plum followed by aromas of blueberry, dried violet, vanilla, chocolate, tobacco, licorice, mace, leather and eucalyptus.
-  Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, agreeable.
-  Persistent finish with flavors of black currant, black cherry and plum.
-  2 years in barrique, 18 months in bottle.
-  *Game, Stewed and braised meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese*



Amaranto 72 Riserva 2010
Italo Cescon (Veneto, Italy)

-  Cabernet Sauvignon (40%), Merlot (35%), Cabernet Franc (15%), Marzemino (10%)

Price: € 15.40 Score 

-  Deep ruby red and nuances of ruby red, little transparency.
-  Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, black currant and plum followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, chocolate, vanilla, mace, tobacco and eucalyptus.
-  Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, agreeable.
-  Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, black currant and plum.
-  12 months in barrique, 12 months in cask, 12 months in bottle.
-  *Game, Roasted meat, Braised and stewed meat, Hard cheese*



Piave Raboso Riserva Rabià 2009
Italo Cescon (Veneto, Italy)

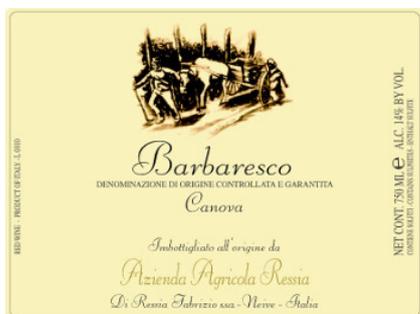
-  Raboso

Price: € 19.00 Score 

-  Deep ruby red and nuances of ruby red, little transparency.
-  Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, blackberry and plum followed by aromas of dried violet, blueberry, vanilla, chocolate, mace and menthol.
-  Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.
-  Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, blackberry and plum.

 36 months in cask, 12 months in barrique, 12 months in bottle.

 *Game, Roasted meat, Braised and stewed meat, Hard cheese*



Barbaresco Canova 2010
Russia (Piedmont, Italy)

 Nebbiolo

Price: € 22.00

Score 

 Brilliant ruby red and nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency.

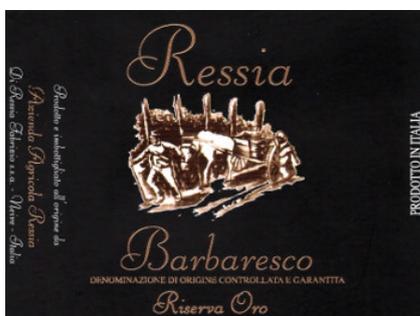
 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of cherry, plum and violet followed by aromas of raspberry, rose, vanilla, tobacco, chocolate, cinnamon and menthol.

 Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.

 Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, plum and raspberry.

 26 months in cask, 6 months in bottle.

 *Game, Roasted meat, Braised and stewed meat, Hard cheese*



Barbaresco Riserva Oro 2009
Russia (Piedmont, Italy)

 Nebbiolo

Price: € 31.00

Score 

 Brilliant ruby red color and nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency.

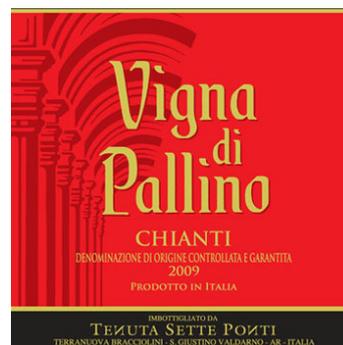
 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of cherry, plum and dried violet followed by aromas of raspberry, dried rose, vanilla, tobacco, cocoa, cinnamon, licorice, leather, mace and menthol.

 Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.

 Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, plum and raspberry.

 5 years in cask.

 *Game, Stewed and braised meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese*



Chianti Vigna di Pallino 2013
Tenuta Sette Ponti (Tuscany, Italy)

 Sangiovese

Price: € 11.00

Score 

 Intense ruby red and nuances of ruby red, moderate transparency.

 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and violet followed by aromas of blueberry, raspberry, blackberry and geranium.

 Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.

 Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, plum and raspberry.

 Aged in steel tanks.

 *Stewed meat with mushrooms, Broiled meat and barbecue, Cheese*



Crognolo 2012
Tenuta Sette Ponti (Tuscany, Italy)

Sangiovese (90%), Merlot (10%)

Price: € 23.00

Score

Intense ruby red color and nuances of ruby red, little transparency.

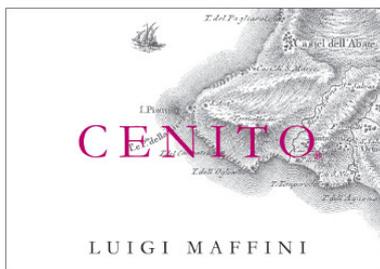
Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and black currant followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, vanilla, tobacco, chocolate, mace and eucalyptus.

Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.

Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, plum and black currant.

14 months in barrique.

Roasted meat, Stewed meat, Braised meat, Hard cheese



Cilenito Aglianico Cenito 2010
Luigi Maffini (Campania, Italy)

Aglianico

Price: € 28.00

Score

Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

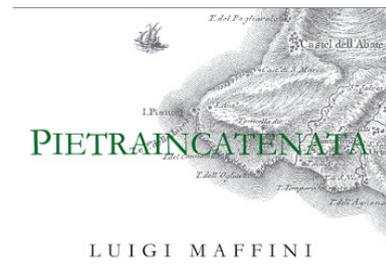
Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of plum, black cherry and blackberry followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, black currant, vanilla, chocolate, tobacco, licorice and menthol.

Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.

Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, plum and blackberry.

18 months in barrique.

Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese



Cilenito Fiano Pietraincatenata 2012
Luigi Maffini (Campania, Italy)

Fiano

Price: € 20.00

Score

Brilliant straw yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of apple, plum and hazelnut followed by aromas of citrus fruits, dried apricot, almond, pear, vanilla, candied fruits, hawthorn, butter, honey, flint and mineral.

Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Very persistent finish with long flavors of apple, plum and almond.

8 months in barrique.

Roasted white meat, Roasted fish, Stuffed pasta, Fish soups

EVENTS

News

In this column are published news and information about events concerning the world of wine and food. Whoever is interested in publishing this kind of information can send us a mail to the address Events@DiWineTaste.com.



NOT JUST WINE

Aquavitae

Review of Grappa, Distillates and Brandy

Distillates are rated according to DiWineTaste's evaluation method. Please see score legend in the "Wines of the Month" section.



Grappa Riserva di Sagrantino di Montefalco

Lungarotti (Umbria, Italy)

(Distiller: Distilleria Bonollo)

 Pomace of Sagrantino

Price: € 22.00 - 50cl

Score 

 Pale amber yellow, limpid and crystalline.

 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined with aromas of plum, blackberry, vanilla, chocolate, date, honey and hazelnut, with almost imperceptible alcohol pungency.

 Intense flavors and perceptible alcohol pungency which tends to dissolve rapidly, good correspondence to the nose, pleasing roundness, balanced sweetness.

 Persistent finish with flavors of plum, blackberry, chocolate and hazelnut.

 Distilled in steam batch distiller, 18 months in wood.



Wine Parade

The best 15 wines according to DiWineTaste's readers. To express your best three wines send us an E-mail at WineParade@DiWineTaste.com or fill in the form available at our WEB site.

Rank		Wine, Producer
1	↔	Sagrantino di Montefalco Collepiano 2007, Arnaldo Caprai
2	↗	Pelago 2009, Umani Ronchi
3	↘	Villa Gresti 2006, Tenuta San Leonardo
4	↔	Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Capitel Monte Olmi 2007, Tedeschi
5	↗	Collio Ribolla Gialla L'Adelchi 2012, Venica
6	↗	I Sodi di San Niccolò 2008, Castellare di Castellina
7	↘	Brunello di Montalcino Vigna Loreto 2007, Mastrojanni
8	↗	Adarmando 2011, Tabarrini
9	↘	Maximo 2010, Umani Ronchi
10	↗	Montiano 2011, Falesco
11	↘	Langhe Riesling Herzu 2011, Ettore Germano
12	↗	Brunello di Montalcino Montosoli 2009, Altesino
13	↗	Torgiano Rosso Riserva Rubesco Vigna Monticchio 2007, Lungarotti
14	↘	Brunello di Montalcino 2007, Donatella Cinelli Colombini
15	↘	Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore Podium 2010, Garofoli

Legend: ↗ up ↘ down ↔ stable ☆ new entry