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The 2013 Brunello Vintage Showcases Stunning, Radiant Wines

Energy and elegance are hallmarks of the 2013 Brunello vintage. These wines boast remarkable aging potential, and will greatly reward your patience.

By Kerin O'Keefe



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If you want to experience the energy, elegance and ageworthy structure that first drew wine lovers and collectors to [Brunello di Montalcino](#) decades ago, then 2013 is your vintage.

A classic vintage, the best 2013s boast remarkable aging potential not seen in years. In a tasting of 181 of the just-released Brunellos, 112 wines were rated 90 points or higher, while 21 received 95 points or more. One even earned a perfect score of 100.

The top wines are stunning, with a radiance missed in many of the muscular, more approachable and higher alcohol Brunellos from recent vintages. The 2013s will require patience to reach their maximum potential.

Unlike the extremely warm, dry years that have become the norm in Montalcino since the mid-1990s (exceptions include 1998, 2002 and 2005), the 2013 vintage was a blast from the past. It was a cool year, with abundant rainfall in spring and the first part of the summer. Careful vineyard management was needed to keep the grapes free of disease.

The 2013 growing season proved incredibly long and slow. Cooler temperatures prevailed in September and the first half of October, and the grapes benefitted from ample sunshine and breezy conditions. It produced fragrant, medium-bodied wines loaded with finesse.

The best are impeccably balanced, with vibrant acidity and firm but noble tannins. Overall, alcohol levels also ring of the past, as many wines declare 13.5% and 14% abv. That's a stark contrast to 14.5% and 15% levels that have become increasingly common since the start of the 2000s.

Lorenzo Magnelli, winemaker at his family's Le Chiuse estate says that, "2013 is a classic vintage in every sense, and produced wines with intensity, elegance, energy and firm but well-integrated tannins."

"Unlike other cooler vintages in recent memory, like 2005 and 2008 that had more rain, especially toward the end of the growing season," he says. "In 2013, sunny weather in September and the first part of October significantly pushed back the harvest. We started picking our Sangiovese for Brunello on Oct. 18, about 20 days later than usual. Picking this late hasn't happened since the 1980s."

Located just north of Montalcino, the small estate of Le Chiuse has an impressive pedigree. Simonetta Valiani, Lorenzo's mother, inherited the property from her mother, daughter to the legendary Tancredi Biondi Santi.

Le Chiuse used to supply grapes for Biondi Santi's lauded Riservas before Lorenzo, along with his father and his mother, began to bottle their own wines in the early 1990s. The firm's radiant 2013 is breathtakingly gorgeous.

Francesco Buffi, who runs the boutique Baricci winery along with his brother Federico and his parents, is also enthusiastic about the 2013 vintage.

"It's a textbook Brunello, the kind of vintage we greet with open arms here at Baricci," he says.

Founded in 1955 by Francesco's grandfather, Nello Baricci, the tiny estate is located on the Montosoli hill, one of the most famous vineyard sites in Montalcino.

"When compared to warmer vintages, 2013 shows another side of Sangiovese that's all about finesse, freshness and vibrancy, characteristics [seen less] due to climate change," says Buffi.

While the vintage is superb, there were some underperformers. Some growers may have harvested before the grapes were fully ripened, which produced lean wines that showed raw fruit. Others apparently left the grapes on vine too long, which resulted in wines with sensations of stewed fruit and evident alcohol.

"[The 2013 vintage] was challenging and tested our nerves, especially when unsettled weather threatened toward the end of September," Buffi says. "But those who didn't panic and waited until the first week of October were rewarded."

2013 Brunello di Montalcino: 10 Top-Rated Wines

Le Chiuse (Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.); \$79, 100 points. *Cellar Selection*

Altesino Montosoli (Leonardo LoCascio Selections–The Winebow Group); \$125, 99 points. *Cellar Selection*

Baricci (K&L Wine Merchants); \$57, 97 points. *Cellar Selection*

Conti Costanti (Empson USA Ltd); \$95, 97 points. *Cellar Selection*

Salvioni (Vias Imports); \$208, 97 points. *Cellar Selection*

L'Aietta (Indie Wineries); \$145, 96 points. *Cellar Selection*

Pieve Santa Restituta Sugarille (Terlato Wines International); \$185, 96 points. *Cellar Selection*

San Polo (Leonardo LoCascio Selections–The Winebow Group); \$80, 96 points. *Cellar Selection*

Salicutti Piaggione (Polaner Selections); \$82, 96 points.

Castelgiocondo (Shaw-Ross International Importers); \$79, 96 points.