

Tuscan IGT

Given the range of vintages on display, our judges were delighted with the quality they found across the board in wines based on both Sangiovese and international varieties, praising their character and good balance

REPORT SUSAN HULME MW

There is a great heritage to live up to for Tuscany's IGT wines. The classification (Indicazione Geografica Tipica) was established in 1992 as a solution to a particular problem: in the early 1980s, the rules for Chianti Classico enshrined some of the worst aspects of post-war traditions. White grapes were compulsory in the blend, diluting the quality, while international grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot were not permitted.

Those who wanted to create wines outside these restrictions had to label their wines as 'vino da tavola', leading to a situation in which Tuscany's most famous wines, such as Sassicaia and Tignanello, were under Italy's lowest wine designation. The creation of the IGT Toscana denomination was an attempt to rectify this situation and allowed winemakers more scope to experiment. Nowadays the denomination can encompass anything from a 100% Sangiovese to a classic Bordeaux blend, or even a 100% Syrah or Montepulciano. The wines can come from anywhere in Tuscany.

Of 74 IGT Toscana reds in this tasting, we rated six Outstanding ('gold') and 52 Highly recommended ('silver'). Andrea Briccarello commented: 'The overall quality of the tasting was stunning, with some amazing wines.'

Almost half (46%) of the wines tasted featured international varieties as the single or predominant variety and they comprised 45% of the wines scoring 90pts or above – including four of the Outstandings. More than half of the wines had Sangiovese as the main or only variety, yet by comparison they made up only 34% of the 90pt-plus wines. Of the 16 single-varietal Sangiovese wines, none was rated Outstanding – however, two of the

Outstandings were Sangiovese/Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blends.

Annette Scarfe MW remarked: 'Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant blends were the stars. Compared to the Sangiovese-led wines they showed greater purity of fruit, complexity and consistency. They also seemed most likely to age well.' Syrah- and Cabernet Franc-based wines were also extremely successful (see top-scorers *Fabbrica Pienza* and *Tenuta di Arceno Arcanum*, right).

The vintages tasted mostly reflected their characters very well: 2017 (15 wines) was hot and dry with some wines exhibiting firmer, drier tannins but still with plenty of fruit; 2018 (20) produced fresher, greener wines from a cooler vintage; 2019 (12) looks as if it will be a great vintage, with the wines expressing more harmony. There were also individual surprises, such as the 2014 vintage (generally cooler with lots of rain in places) – all three examples from this less-than-stellar year scored well. Scarfe declared these to be 'delicious, aromatic and elegant wines that were surprisingly youthful'.

In general, oak was very well handled, even when more evident in the wine. Some alcohol levels were naturally high, but in harmony with the wine, rather than being obtrusive. Briccarello noted: 'There are no blockbuster wines, just lots of varietal typicity, and no sign of over-extraction. Even the hot vintages showed some restraint and poise.'

In terms of value for money, prices varied dramatically among similar-scoring wines. For those at 90pts or more, prices varied between £9-£80 a bottle, showing that there are some fantastic-value wines to be found under the IGT Toscana denomination.

THE JUDGES



Susan Hulme MW is a wine writer specialising in Italian wines. A DWWA judge, she travels regularly to Italian wine regions and runs her own wine education and consultancy company, **Vintuition**, providing training and courses for both wine trade and public



Andrea Briccarello is business development manager at **Jascots**, the specialist on-trade wine merchant. Formerly head sommelier and wine buyer at **Galvin** restaurant group, he also worked previously as a brand manager for **Bisol Prosecco**, and judges regularly for the DWWA



Annette Scarfe MW is a wine consultant with a focus on the on-trade, and a WSET and Bordeaux educator. Based in Singapore, she is part of **Moët Hennessy Wine Division's Estates & Wines** team, and also judges for numerous publications and competitions around the world, including the DWWA

THE SCORES 74 wines tasted

Exceptional 0 Outstanding 6 Highly recommended 52 Recommended 15
Commended 0 Fair 1 Poor 0 Faulty 0

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their Tuscan red IGT wines, from the latest vintage release and priced at £8 or above in the UK.

(...)



Trinoro, Le Cupole, Siena 2016

SH 92 AB 93 AS 91

£33.25-£36 Astrum Wine Cellars, Corney

& Barrow, Huntsworth Wine, Nemo Wine Cellars,

Noble Green, Sociovino

Charming nose of cherry pie, violets, plums and cedary notes. Fresh on the mid-palate with round tannins and creamy texture.

Drink 2021-2030 Alc 14.5%

(...)



Our buying guide provides you with trusted, independent, expert recommendations on what to buy, drink and cellar.

Each panel tasting is judged by three experienced tasters chosen for their authority in the category of wine being rated. All wines are tasted blind and are pre-poured for judges in flights of 8-10 wines. Our experts taste and score wines individually but then discuss their scores together at the end of each flight. Any wines on which scores are markedly different are retasted; however, judges are under no obligation to amend their scores.

Judges are encouraged to look for typicity in wines, rewarding those that are true to their region. When judging, experts are aware of wine price bands - under £15, £15-£30 and over £30 - with the aim of recognising and rewarding quality and value.

The tastings are held in the controlled environment of Decanter's tasting suite: a quiet, purposely designed room, with natural light. We limit the number of wines tasted to a manageable level - a maximum of 85 per day - allowing judges to taste more thoroughly and avoid palate fatigue.

Drink-by dates indicated are based on how long it is prudent to keep the wine in question. However, some wines will have a longer ageing capacity if stored in pristine conditions throughout their lifespan.

SCORING SYSTEM

Tasters rate the wines using the 100-point scoring system. The overall Decanter rating is the average of all three judges' scores. The ratings are as follows:

98-100 **Exceptional** A great, exceptional and profound wine

95-97 **Outstanding** An excellent wine of great complexity and character

90-94 **Highly Recommended**

A very accomplished wine, with impressive complexity

86-89 **Recommended** A well-made, straightforward and enjoyable wine

83-85 **Commended** An acceptable, simple wine with limited personality

76-82 **Fair** Correctly made, if unexciting

70-75 **Poor** Unbalanced and/or bland with no character

50-69 **Faulty** Displays winemaking faults

For the Exceptional and Outstanding Decanter ratings, judges' individual scores and tasting notes are listed in addition to the average score.

For the Highly Recommended and Recommended wines, individual and average scores are also listed but tasting notes are a combination of the three judges' notes.

