

Brunello di Montalcino

2012 & 2013 Vintages

I tasted this range of Brunello di Montalcino at the annual events staged by the Consorzio in New York in 2017 and 2018. First, I have to say it is disappointing to see the decreasing number of estates participating in this important showcase. Moreover, it appears the most heralded names are the ones dropping out. I can only guess they are selling every bottle they make, in every vintage, and consider participation in the Consorzio event a waste of time. In 2018, the exhibitors included some of the leaders, many unknowns, and a few newcomers. If the number of prominent estates continues to decline, this event is liable to lose its relevance and value for serious tasters.

I have combined my notes for the 2017 and 2018 events to include 2012 Brunello normale and riserva and the initial release of 2013s. The 2012s have substance, flesh and balanced structures; the riserva wines presented in 2018 were the standouts. 2012 is a 5-star vintage according to the Consorzio. As for the 2013s, they showed a fragrant lightness and grace. Few seem to have the concentration of a top year. The Consorzio awards 4 stars to 2013, which may be fair, recognizing that there is inconsistency in this vintage.

Last, it is clear that, allowing for evident vintage variations, there is a distinct evolution in the style of Brunello. I have memories of old-fashioned wines, often unapproachable early in their lives; after cellaring, however, they took on marvelous qualities. Today, Brunello clearly has superior phenolic maturity together with a riper fruit expression. The wines are more polished and finely calibrated, but many seem to lack the authority and power of earlier top vintages. How this new style will age remains to be seen. I was struck by the perfumed, delicate profile of many 2013s I tasted – they hardly resemble the Brunellos of old! Admittedly, some may applaud this trend.

By the way, keep an eye out for the 2016 Rosso di Montalcino. I tasted quite a few over-achieving examples at the 2018 event such as those from Banfi, Il Paradiso di Frassina, La Magia, Corte Pavone, Piancornello and others.

Altesino 2012 *(*)**

Very pale garnet with brick rim. The nose is fine and focused with a mix of tertiary accents and red fruits. The palate is finely calibrated, offering both expression and tension in a medium-weight format. There is a promising if youthful finish, already long and complex with spice and other tertiary highlights. The wine concludes with a ripe, finely defined structure and a degree of youthful grip. Tasted 2017.

Altesino Montosoli 2012 *(*+)**

Nearly moderately dense red brick. Concentrated, focused to the nose. Expressive with dominant tertiary notes, notably wood spice. The taste is concentrated and tightly wound, with notable tension. The conclusion is very firm, dry and defined by elevated acidity. Reticent and backward. Tasted 2017.

Altesino Riserva 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense plus dark red brick. The aroma is ample, possessing depth and mature dark red fruit, with wood in the background. In the mouth, this Riserva combines richness and definition provided by moderate acidity and fine tannins. Full-bodied, it gains in amplitude across the palate. Attractive now, better by 2024-2028. Tasted 2018.

Altesino 2013 **(*)

Pale brick garnet. The nose is rather simple and open, offering dried red fruit and wood accents. The taste has a similar personality and lacks density and substance. There are high-toned aromatic highlights at the end. Tasted 2018.

Banfi 2012 *(*)**

Pale plus red brick. Restrained and youthful, yet has evident concentration and depth, with a core of red fruits and berries. The palate is firm, reserved and medium weight plus. There is tension and budding length along with a backbone of acidity and tannin. Tasted 2017.

Banfi Poggio Alle Mura 2012 *(*+)**

Moderately dense red with brick. Reserved, youthful, discreet nose with subtle red fruits and faint creaminess. In the mouth, this single vineyard is similarly held back. Layered, medium-weight plus at the center. Gains in expression and presence. Dry, well-structured and undeveloped finish. Somewhat difficult to assess. Tasted 2017.

Banfi Poggio Alle Mura Riserva 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense plus very dark garnet with brick rim. The generous aroma of this 2012 Riserva displays richness and breadth together with restrained red fruits and well-matched oak. The wine is mouth-filling, round and ample in its taste with a ripe, integrated structure. Tasted 2018.

Banfi Poggio all'Oro 2012 **(*)**

Moderately dense plus very dark red with brick rim. Generous aroma of mature dark fruit with considerable reserve. There is an attractive creamy quality and roasted aspect. The palate is reserved overall, though endowed with ripe dark fruit. Mouth-coating and round as well as particularly generous and supple. There is a fine frame of acidity and moderate, integrated tannin. Complete and satisfying. Tasted 2018.

Banfi 2013 *(*)**

Moderately dense dark red with thin purple rim. The aroma offers youthful, ripe dark red fruits. In the mouth, there is generosity, flesh and suppleness. Full-bodied, with defining acidity holding it together. This is a successful 2013 with above average substance. Tasted 2018.

Barbi 2012 *(*+)**

Moderately dense red brick. This 2012 is distinctive, exhibiting a high-toned aroma of pepper, balsamic notes, vanilla and toast. The palate reveals concentration, depth and an appealing layering. Medium weight plus. The expressive aftertaste offers tertiary highlights, a measure of roast and is well-balanced and defined by a ripe structure. Classic and complete, an excellent normale. Tasted 2017.

Barbi Riserva 2012 **(*)**

Pale plus dark garnet. Concentrated and complex aromatics showing wood maturation, spice and a balsamic aspect. On the palate, the fruit ripeness is revealed and there is a sweet undercurrent. Multidimensional and poised with a fine, complementary structure. Tasted 2018.

Barbi 2013 *(*)**

Pale brick. Fine, nuanced aroma of very attractive red fruit and seasoned oak. The palate is delicate and inflected. Medium weight and graceful, already long and harmonious. Very fine embedded acidity and tannic support. A wine of finesse. Tasted 2018.

Barbi Vigna del Fiore 2013 *(*+)**

Pale plus dark garnet brick. There is noteworthy concentration and intensity in the aroma along with spice and wood. Focused and reserved in its attack, then shows a beautiful layered quality. Medium weight, this single vineyard shows noteworthy harmony and integration. The undeveloped finish reveals itself slowly. Tasted 2018.

Belpoggio 2012 *(*)**

Moderately dense red with brick. The aroma is lovely and inviting, offering multifaceted red fruits and berries with matching oak and spice notes. The taste shows off mature, scented fruit. Highly expressive. The wine's flattering side is offset by marked structure and tension. Persistent and well-balanced. Tasted 2017, did not taste in 2018.

Camigliano 2012 *(*)**

Pale plus crimson with clear brick rim. The enticing nose exhibits nuanced, expressive red fruits and berries along with skillful use of oak. The medium-bodied palate is elusive and highly aromatic in its expression, ending with a fine, elegant structure. Promises more with medium-term aging. Tasted 2017, not presented in 2018.

Capanna 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense crimson. Concentrated aroma with considerable complexity exhibiting notes of oak, balsamic accents and licorice. The taste is youthfully reserved. There is flesh and dimension. Flattering, sensual, warm and mouth-filling. Well-balanced, with a conclusion set off by elevated acidity. Should keep well. Tasted 2017, did not taste in 2018.

Caparzo 2012 *(*)**

Moderately dense plus red with clear brick rim. Youthful, restrained nose. Possesses depth and mature red fruit along with oak conveyed by flattering creaminess and vanilla. In the mouth, the wine is again creamy and subtly sweet in its pronounced fruitiness. Warmth, sensuality and suppleness. Ends with a fine, ripe, embedded structure. Tasted 2017, did not taste in 2018.

Caparzo La Casa 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense crimson. Distinctly creamy nose with flattering oak and ripe red fruits. This 2012's taste is fruit-dominated, medium weight, and the wine is expansive, long and sensual with fine acidity and fine-grained tannin. Tasted 2017, did not taste in 2018.

Castello Romitorio 2012 *(+)**

Moderately dense red with clear purple rim. Very clean nose, reserved at first, then hints of dried spice, tar and youthful red fruits. The wine is muted, seeming to lack center and intensity. Well-managed oak integration. Defining acidity and soft tannins. Tasted 2017.

Castello Romitorio Filo di Seta 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense dark red with clear purple rim. Muted aroma suggesting healthy dark red fruit with subtle oak and a note of vanilla. Youthful but not aggressive. Very attractive on the palate, layered and persistent, with a skillful marriage of fruit and oak. Well-balanced and generous. A youthful finish, still to develop. Tasted 2017.

Castello Romitorio Riserva 2012 *(*?)**

Moderately dense very dark red with thin purple rim. At first, an impression of damp earth followed by an oak imprint and masked dark fruit. Reserved taste. Soft, even tender with hidden acidity and very fine tannins. Balanced. Lacks a measure of purity, or is it an off bottle? Tasted 2018.

Castello Romitorio 2013 *(*)**

Moderately dense dark red with clear purple at rim. High-toned, floral, youthful aromatic expression. Very attractive and scented dark red fruit. In the mouth, this 2013 is polished and sensual, medium weight plus, with a long line. Concludes with very fine embedded acidity and a note of vanilla. Tasted 2018.

Castello Romitorio Filo di Seta 2013 *(+)**

Nearly moderately dense dark red with purple tint. Clean, reserved nose showing muted dark red fruit. Relatively open in the mouth and soft with ripe fruit. Delicate, complementary oak (500 L French casks). Does this lack center? Very fine structure. Tasted 2018.

Col di Lamo 2012 *(*+)**

Nearly moderately dense red with brick at rim. Engaging, scented nose of red fruits and red berries complemented by oak. Flattering, mouth-filling. Warm, textured and notably long perfumed finish. Ripe, balanced structure. Tasted 2017, did not taste in 2018.

Col d'Orcia 2012 *(+)**

Pale plus red with clear brick rim. Open, high-toned aroma characterized by oak maturation and a background of red fruit. The palate has the same expression and is flattering and expressive for this early stage. Warm aftertaste. Misses the energy to be more impressive. Drinkable in the near term. Tasted 2017, did not taste in 2018.

Collosorbo 2012 **(+)**

Pale red with clear, thin purple rim. Enticing, healthy red fruits in the aroma blended with attractive creamy oak and a note of vanilla. Very fine, polished taste with exceptional equilibrium. Carefully calibrated, integrated structure. Harmonious and complete, an outstanding normale. Tasted 2017, not presented in 2018.

Il Paradiso di Frassina 2013 *(*)**

Pale plus red brick. Very fragrant aroma of red fruit and cherry preserves with spice and tar notes. Open, loose-knit palate, medium weight. Delivers surprising length and intensity in the aftertaste, indicating it will develop over the near term. Organic. Tasted 2018, not presented in 2017.

Il Paradiso di Frassina Riserva 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense garnet with brick rim. Expressive, nuanced aroma of red fruit, oak, roasted highlights and a note of dried cherries. Accessible palate, medium-bodied plus with a fine, ripe structure. Builds in intensity in the lasting finish, leaving a note of caramel. Distinctive and appealing. Organic. Tasted 2018, not presented in 2017.

Il Poggione 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense plus dark red. Ample nose offering dark red fruit and evident oak, with spice and tar nuances. The palate is more reserved, opening slowly. Generous and mouth-filling. Boasts notable early complexity. Fresh, defining acidity and moderate tannins. An outstanding normale. Tasted 2017.

Il Poggione Vigna Paganelli Riserva 2012 **(*)**

Moderately dense plus dark garnet with clear purple rim. Restrained, multidimensional nose marked by red fruits, creaminess and roasted highlights. In the mouth, this 2012 Riserva exhibits noteworthy polish and integration. Medium weight plus, the wine shows energy and complexity. Tasted 2018.

Il Poggione 2013 **(+)**

Pale plus garnet with brick tint. Nose of dark fruits and creamy, complementary oak. The wine is fine and intricate in its taste, medium weight plus. Long, liting, harmonious with a finely calibrated structure. This is a terrific normale in this vintage. Tasted 2018.

La Magia 2013 *(*)**

Moderately dense dark red with purple rim. Aromatically, this 2013 reveals spice, dark fruit, wild fruit and well-married oak. The taste shows appealing, mature fruit qualities and is medium-bodied, with a soft, caressing mouth-feel. Tender finish with fine acidity. A lovely normale. Tasted 2018, did not taste in 2017.

La Magia Ciliegio 2013 *(*+)**

Moderately dense very dark red with purple rim. An enticing nose showing dark fruit enhanced by oak maturation, spice, and a note of charcoal. In its taste, this 2013 delivers ripe dark fruits and is medium weight plus. Soft, supple. The wine's expressiveness is heightened through the finish, which reveals a fine frame of acidity. Tasted 2018, did not taste in 2017.

La Magia Riserva 2012 **(*)**

Moderately dense very dark red with purple rim. The aroma expresses beautiful, ripe dark fruits and berries along with accents of spice and tar. The palate is ample with a mouth-filling quality and notable balance. Ripe, nuanced aftertaste of elegant acidity and fine-grained tannins. Tasted 2018, did not taste in 2017.

Loacker (Tenuta) Corte Pavone 2013 **(+)**

Moderately dense plus dark red with purple rim. Ripe, generous aroma of dark fruit with a subtle tarry accent. Generous, full-bodied and harmonious. Round and supple with a ripe structure. A terrific 2013 normale. Biodymanic. Tasted 2018, did not taste in 2017.

Loacker (Tenuta) Corte Pavone Selezione Vigna 2013 **(*)**

Dense very dark red with purple at rim. Noteworthy concentration and depth in the aroma. Youthful, ripe dark fruit. The taste is dominated by mature fruit and is generous and fleshy. In the aftertaste, there is warmth, ripeness and spice. Comes from the Fiore del Venta vineyard. A large-scaled, outstanding 2013. Biodynamic. Tasted 2018, did not taste in 2017.

Loacker (Tenuta) Corte Pavone 2012 **(*)**

Moderately dense plus very dark red. Profound, ample nose of dark fruit, wild fruit and spice. The palate reveals the same mature, expressive fruit characteristics. Mouth-coating and full-bodied. Long, highly expressive and ample finish. Biodynamic. Tasted 2018, did not taste in 2017. [This might be a Riserva; it is of this stature.]

Paradisone Colle Degli Angeli 2013 *(*)**

Moderately dense dark garnet. Expressive nose with depth and nascent complexity combining red fruits, spice and balsamic notes. The youthful palate is muted initially and builds in volume. Harmonious, medium weight plus. Persistent and well-integrated with pointed acidity and fine tannins. Very attractive. Tasted 2018.

Paradisone Colle Degli Angeli 2012 **(+)**

Moderately dense plus red with brick at rim. Warm and slightly volatile. Complex medley of red fruit, balsamic, caramelized and tar accents. In the mouth, the wine exhibits freshness at first, giving way to tertiary flavors. Mouth-filling, long, and inflected. Etched acidity and moderate tannins. An impressive normale with the potential to keep to 2025-2030. Tasted 2017.

Pian Delle Vigne 2012 *(*)**

Pale plus red with brick. High-toned, warm nose displaying creamy oak, vanilla, toast and a volatile lift. The taste again evidences a marked tertiary profile. Long aftertaste combining red fruit and oak aspects. Embedded acidity and tannin in the final taste. A distinctive style that leads with oak maturation. Tasted 2017, not presented in 2018.

Piancornello e Podere Del Visciolo 2013 **(+)**

Pale plus red with purple. Finely nuanced aroma of red fruit, balsamic notes, and nutty oak. The taste delivers noteworthy harmony and is medium weight plus. Fine pointed acidity and integrated tannin are present in the persistent finish. A superior 2013 normale. Tasted 2018, not presented in 2017.

Piancornello e Podere Del Visciolo Riserva 2012 **(*)**

Moderately dense dark red with purple rim. Distinctive and inviting aroma of wild red fruits, spice, pepper and toasted highlights. The attractive taste reveals layered ripe fruit and deftly combines richness with tension and structural definition. Has real personality and flavor interest. Tasted 2018, not presented in 2017.

Podere Giodo 2013 *(*)**

Nearly moderately dense garnet with clear purple rim. The nose is open and expresses red fruit together with leafy highlights. The palate is similarly accessible and has a long line. Medium-bodied with a touch of sweetness. Tender. Shows very fine acidity in the conclusion, which is sensual and perfumed. A wine for early drinking. Tasted 2018, not presented in 2017.

Talenti 2013 *(+)**

Moderately dense dark red with clear purple rim. The nose shows small red fruits, spice and subtle oak. The palate is open and nuanced, with spice and wood accents. Has definition but not density or substance. Tasted 2018, did not taste in 2017.

Uccelliera 2013 *(+)**

Pale brick red. The low-intensity aroma is dominated by tertiary notes: vanilla, nut, toast. There is more dimension in the taste, but the wine misses the concentration of the best 2013s. Tasted 2018.

Uccelliera 2012 *(*)**

Just moderately dense red with a brick rim. High-toned aromatic profile offering youthful red fruit, wood and balsamic overtones. In its taste, this Brunello is focused and well-defined. Medium-bodied plus, the wine has moderate acidity and soft tannins. A flattering example overall, but with intensity as well. Tasted 2017.

Uccelliera Riserva 2012 *(*?)**

Moderately dense dark red brick. The aroma is defined by barrel maturation, with toast and oak. On the palate, while wood influence is prominent, the wine has intensity, backbone and length. May become more integrated in time. Tasted 2018.