

Fontodi

Chianti Classico

A report on a tasting of their remarkable wines.

*Phenomenal...simply stunning...extraordinary wines
from one of Sangiovese's most privileged spots.*

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate.

On Wednesday 20th January, I met with Giovanni Manetti for a tasting of the current releases from Fontodi, including the new releases of the 2006 single vineyard 'Vigna del Sorbo' and 'Flaccianello', the latter of which is revelling in scores of 96/100 from Parker and 99/100 from Wine Spectator.

The world famous Fontodi estate is situated in the very heart of the Chianti Classico region; precisely in the valley called the "Conca d'Oro" The Golden Shell. This special site, a natural amphitheatre that lies to the south of the picturesque town of Panzano has, perhaps, Tuscany's most genuine and special "terroir", famous for centuries for its tradition of wine cultivation. Why? The Conca d'Oro has a unique combination of high altitude, calcar clayschist soil, lots of light and a sought-after micro-climate – warm and dry with a marked difference in day and night-time temperatures. It is here that many of the greatest Chianti Classic and Super Tusans.

The Manetti family has owned Fontodi since 1969, but has been well-known in Chianti for centuries. Though they have always made wine it is for the production of the world's best terracotta that they are best known. Since the 16th century they have supplied tiles for the museums and grand houses of Italy. This is a family that appreciates permanence and the steady creation of greatness.

The same attention to detail that makes them the best producers of terracotta has been brought to bear on the Fontodi estate. Over

the past 40 years they have transformed a crumbling farmhouse and neglected vineyards into a powerhouse of wine production – now considered to be Italy's finest boutique producer. Giovanni Manetti, who has run the estate since 1980 ensures that



every single aspect of production is meticulous. Today, the Manetti's own 70 hectares of vineyard in the Conca d'Oro of Panzano, producing wines of supreme elegance, intensity and longevity.



Ed Wells with Giovanni Menetti

Giovanni fully converted the estate to Organic viticulture recently (this took 6 years) and now they are focussing on bio-dynamic principles in order to obtain the best possible quality fruit. He told me that their principles in the vineyard are similarly non-interventionist (very low toast on the oak barrels for example) in order to ensure that the quality of the fruit is preserved in the finished wine.

These are remarkable wines that rank alongside the greatest classics of any of the highest echelon of European wines. Hand picked and carefully selected before vinification these are wines of exultant character and elegance. Their cellaring potential is equally impressive. They appeal the wine-lover, collector and the investor in equal amounts. We can ask no more of Giovanni and his team.

Best Regards

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See below for wine report:

The Fontodi Wines

Fontodi Meriggio Blanco 2008

The first wine Giovanni presented was the 100% Sauvignon Blanc white wine called Meriggio. The grapes for Meriggio are grown in a region called La Rota and are on cooler north facing slopes. Everything is hand picked and fermented in stainless steel vats, with no malolactic fermentation. There is no oak maturation.

The wine is, as with most 'pure' Sauvignon Blanc light in colour with crisp, fresh perfumes of lemon/lime and grapefruit. It is a wine classic Italian balance and restraint. It is a wine of subtle nuances – certainly this is no NZ Sauvignon wannabe. In fact it is more reminiscent of the very best Australian Sauvignons (think Shaw & Smith or Grosset in Adelaide) than anything produced in Italy.

£15.99 Per Bottle.

£90 Per Case of 6.

Fontodi Chianti Classico 2007

The 2007 Chianti Classico from Fontodi is beguilingly elegant, and is a superb drink, richer, deeper and darker than the 2005, as befits this outstanding vintage. The wine is made solely from the Sangiovese grape for the quality of fruit obtained from Fontodi's vineyards obviates the need for other varieties like Merlot as a remedial blender.



The south - facing vineyards and their natural amphitheatre shape allows the grapes ripen fully. Soils here are galestro, a classic Tuscan shale, which allows for excellent drainage and encourages the vines to put down deep roots.

2007 was characterised by a hot summer, with occasional rainfall at the right time, encouraging the grapes and tannins to ripen well and slowly.

Fermentation took place in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks for 2 weeks during which time the cap was punched

down twice a day. The wine was then racked into 225 litre French oak barriques (Tronçais and Allier) where it remained for 12 months before bottling. The wine was matured in bottle for 6 months before release

Youthful, deep-ruby in colour with lovely perfumes of ripe, lightly spiced strawberries and dark cherries on the nose. On the palate, the wine has the lovely rounded structure characteristic of Fontodi, with fine savory tannins, supple ripe berry fruit and a long spicy finish. In many ways this wine was the star of tasting and Giovanni calls it the “Fontodi Business Card”– the charm of the 2007 vintage means that the wine is already charming, despite its potential to age. Drink from 2010 until 2016.

91 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator

Blackberry and dark plum aromas follow through to a full body, with silky tannins and a bright, fruity finish. There's nice a combination of bright fruit and clean acidity.

£17.95 Per Bottle

£102 Per Case of 6

Fontodi Syrah ‘Case Via’ 2004

Fontodi's Syrah, now ranked as one Italy's top examples of this variety is a stunning northern Rhone lookalike. Indeed Wine Spectator called it the ‘La Turque’ of Italy in homage to Guigals £200 a bottle Cote Rotie ‘classique’. It is clearly a wine of similar elegance and poise.

Grapes for the Syrah are grown on the south facing Case Via and Pecille vineyards. And fermentation takes place in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks. After malolactic fermentation the wine is racked into Allier and Tronçais barrels.

The wine remains in oak, of which 50% is new, for approximately 12 months before bottling, followed by 6 months in bottle before release. Very deep purple in colour, with crimson highlights this has clear Syrah style. On the nose, this excellent vintage displays perfumes of black cherries and fresh red fruit which are accentuated by spicy, peppery notes. Supple, fleshy tannins emphasise the intense, tarry fruit and long, spicy finish.



Just 10,000 bottles are produced. Drink from 2010 until 2018.

'Always one of the best Syrah's in Italy' **James Suckling.**

92 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator.

"Intense aromas of blackberry and plum, with hints of meat. Full-bodied, with intense berry character and ripe tannins. Long and very stylish. Always one of the best Syrahs in Italy.

£31.49 Per bottle

£180 Per case of 6

Fontodi Vigna del Sorbo Chianti Classico Reserva 2006*

The 'Vigna del Sorbo' a single vineyard wine made from 90% Sangiovese and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon is as seamless and elegant as the best of Fontodi's wines. The Cabernet is barely perceptible, yet its gentle cassis character gives the wine an added dimension of spiciness rather than swamping its delicacy. Giovanni only makes this in the best vintages and so no 2005 was produced.

Soils here are, if not unique, are very special: galestro, a classic Tuscan shale, which has excellent drainage and encourages the vines to put down deep roots. The grapes from which this wine is made are grown in the Vigna del Sorbo vineyard. The vines were planted in 1981, and the vineyard is situated at an altitude of 400 metres above sea level, facing south/south-west. 2006 was an outstanding vintage in Tuscany with perfect autumn weather conditions. The long, sunny days and cool nights allowed near perfect tannins to develop as well as allowing the creation of ideal aromatic qualities. Not surprisingly this wine is superb.



The two varieties are fermented separately in stainless steel tanks for 18 days. During fermentation and maceration the cap is punched down twice daily to aid extraction.

After fermentation the wine was aged in French oak (Alliers region) barriques for 24 months.

I noted tremendous depth of colour, with all the fleshy elegance of the vintage as “utterly evident”. Intensely perfumed but restrained with aromas of dark cherry and a touch of cassis from the Cabernet this wine has ripe and powerful tannins and a smoky, blackberry fruit character. Just 20,000 bottles were produced. It will age in bottle for two decades.

95 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker’s Wine Advocate

The 2006 Chianti Classico Riserva Vigna del Sorbo is seriously dark, rich and intense. Dark cherries, tobacco, herbs and minerals come together in this brooding, weighty Vigna del Sorbo. Today the wine comes across as completely closed and folded in on itself, but with time it should emerge as a beauty.

Please note that with the exception of Robert Parker no samples have been shown to the world press as yet, but will be presented later this Spring. With the Flaccianello picking up scores of 96 & 99 from the two most significant international journals we have to assume equal enthusiasm for the tremendous Sorbo 06. Now will probably be the final chance to snap up this wine in any quantity.

£33.99 per bottle

£198 per case of 6

Fontodi Flaccianello Della Pieve 2006*

One of the original **Super Tuscans** and part of a special group that use just Sangiovese (no international varieties) from a selection of the estate’s very best fruit, almost always from the special ‘galestro’ or schistous clay that always produces the best Sangiovese. Put simply 2006 is considered to be the best Flaccianello ever produced. David Gleave MW, importer of the wine for 20 years rates it as the best he has tasted in 20 years.

Fermentation and maceration lasted more than three weeks in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks. The cap was punched down twice a day during fermentation. The wine was then raked into new French oak barriques (Allier and Tronçais) where it remained for almost 18 months before bottling. The wine was matured in bottle for another year before being released to universal acclaim.



A very special wine that will cellar for decades. The 2006 has great depth of colour with all the perfumes and fleshiness of this outstanding vintage. Tremendously intense ripe cherry and berry fruit on the palate is balanced by the immensely powerful but supple and rounded tannins characteristic of the best of Fontodi wines. Long, intense and spicy on the finish.

99 points, James Suckling, Wine Spectator

Shows excellent colour and richness for a Sangiovese, with aromas of sultana, coffee, toasty oak and vanilla bean. Full-bodied, with masses of fruit and chewy tannins. The concentration and depth of fruit and layers of tannins are breathtaking. A blockbuster.

96 points, Antonio Galloni, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

The 2006 Flaccianello della Pieve (Sangiovese) is just as phenomenal as it was when I tasted it from barrel. This spectacularly ripe and concentrated wine reveals masses of dark cherries, plums, licorice, smoke, violets, French oak and minerals that coat the palate with extraordinary richness. The wine possesses plenty of structure, but the sheer density of the fruit provides stunning balance. The 2006 Flaccianello is one of the more primary wines of the vintage, and it will require considerable patience. Flaccianello continues to prove that Panzano's Conca d'Oro is one of the most privileged spots for Sangiovese in Tuscany. Anticipated maturity: 2016-2026.

£43.99 Per bottle

£258 Per case of 6

Fontodi Vin Santo del Chianti Classico 2001

Half Bottle

Few if any Italian estate can lay claim to a Vin Santo even approaching Fontodi. Their production is tiny and almost all of this wine is kept back for the Manetti family and for serving at the estate. Made in only the best years this is a sweet white wine of unique brilliance.

After the harvest the grapes are naturally dried for 5 months. After pressing the must (unfermented juice) is racked into chestnut wood and oak barrels of 50 and 110 litres

where a natural fermentation takes place. The temperatures increase and decrease over 5 to 6 years reintroducing aspects of fermentation throughout that period.

Fontodi's 2001 Vin Santo has notes of dried fruit, burnt sugar and a hint of spice on the nose. On the palate it is fresh, well balanced, with perfect weight and a long, creamy finish.

As fine and exciting as the best Sauternes.

£34.99 per half bottle

Extra Virgin Olive Oil 2009 50cl

Fans of great gastronomy know how crucial great olive oil is to the production and presentation of fine food. In addition to the 67 hectares of vineyard on the Fontodi estate, there are a further 5,000 olive trees. Situated in different plots they are almost always 400-500 metres above sea level on soils less suited to vines. Their olives are hand picked and carefully pressed within a matter of hours. The result is a brightly coloured oil of dizzying freshness and fragrance.

This delicate balance of component attributes produces an oil which is perfect for drizzling over spicy and pungent salad leaves or meaty pastas and robust soups. It is also great for dunking freshly baked breads into.

£16.99 per bottle

*Buying Fontodi Wines

Please note that because of huge international demand quantities available are limited and preferential treatment for orders of Vigna del Sorbo and Flacionello that are backed up with support for other wines in the range.

If you wish to discuss these wines and/or place an order please call us on 01508 489000 or email wells@harperwells.com or harper@harperwells.com Due to the limited quantity available we will not be able provide on-line ordering facilities on our website.