Winemaker: Luca Brunelli
Generation: 1st

BRUNELLI

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva DOCG

Exacting and sophisticated, Luca Brunelli is a master at his craft. Serving as a prime example, his rare bird Brunello Riserva is exceptionally powerful, yet elegant, and made only in the best of years. Built to stand decades in the cellar, yet decadent on the palate, the Riserva is neo-classical in style and pleasing from the very first sip. Dried morello cherry, black tea, rosemary and plum intermingle on a palate layered with delicious, smooth tannins and refined cooperage.

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

From his high-altitude estate in Montalcino, Luca Brunelli has quietly ascended the ranks of the Brunello community. With some of the loftiest wines - and lowest yields - in our portfolio, we've always known he was destined for artisanal greatness!

ENOLOGIST

Luca Brunelli

TASTING NOTES

Color	Deep ruby red
Nose	Complex layers of dark cherry, raspberry, licorice, and balsamic
Palate	Full-bodied, with dark fruit and fine tannins that integrate over time
Finish	Long and layered (increases with age)

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

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Vineyard Location	Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Tuscany
Vineyard Size	6 ha
Varietals List	100% Sangiovese Grosso
Farming Practices	Organically farmed (non certified) with grapes picked by hand
Elevation	250 m
Soils	Medium clay mixture with remarkable fossil presence
Maturation Summary	Bottled for 12 months
Alcohol	14.5 %
Acidity	5.8 g/liter
Residual Sugar	0.5 g/liter
Annual Production	3,800 bottles

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MARTOCCIA DI LUCA BRUNELLI

With one of the highest cellars in Montalcino, not only is the view from Luca Brunelli's hillside estate breathtaking, but you could catapult a stone from the town's famous fortress (one of the last to fall in Siena's wars against Firenze) and be assured a hit. In a bit of sweet irony, along with the altitude come some of the lowest yields in the entire Brunello DOCG. Taking the bonsai approach to his craft, Luca is a master when it comes to sculpting small plants with excruciatingly low yields. His Sangiovese Grosso vines only grow 20 inches high, for example, with the lowest grapes often a mere 6 inches off the ground! Permitting only 4 clusters per plant for his Brunello, it is physically impossible for him to get even 1 bottle from each vine. Just to put things in perspective, this means his Brunello has lower yields than some of the most expensive Right Bank Bordeaux.

Like the lion's share of Small Vineyards estates, Martoccia di Luca Brunelli is a dedicated organic farm in practice, but not certified. Dry-farming, sustainability, and picking by hand are all simply a way of life. While all of the fruit is estate-grown, Luca's vines themselves are non-contiguous (half belonging to the Brunello DOCG, with the other half situated in the nearby Montecucco district). For the steep sites devoted to his coveted Brunello (250-500 m) Brunelli's soil type is both typical and atypical at once. At its baseline, there is the usual clay-and-fossil mixture we tend see in this region (Sangiovese loves clay, in part because calcium carbonates lend it good acidity). In addition, however, many of Luca's vines benefit from an added feature: large pieces of quartz litter the topsoil on his SW-facing slope. Luca takes full advantage—we already know he trains his vines extra low to the ground to assure concentration. But at that altitude, he is also positioning his low-hanging fruit to receive a little extra ripeness as the sun is refracted off the quartz! It's one way he manages to get 14% alcohol and yet maintain such tautness and freshness in his wines.

As a quick aside, the name featured on Luca's stunning labels, 'Martoccia', is that of the original farm Luca's parents worked so hard to purchase, and the property, while small, has written records going all the way back to the Middle Ages.

REGION

TUSCANY

One of the most recognizable regions in the world, Tuscany has an enological history dating back to the era of the Etruscans. Like Piedmont, Tuscany's daily life is interwoven with its food and wine... In sum, vino is a daily facet of the Tuscan lifestyle. With winding roads, sculpted cypresses, and romantic hilltop towns, Tuscany's beauty is legendary, and for many, Florence - once the epicenter of the Renaissance - provides a cultural heartbeat. That said, while the rolling hills of Colli Fiorentini help form a baseline in the minds of many Americans, the region is also home to Italy's Apennine mountain range (stretching from north to south), the wild, southern Maremma district, and a gorgeous, rugged coastline. In the end, Tuscany is topographically quite diverse, and wine zones range from warm and coastal to surprisingly high, continental, and cool.

As one of Italy's most prolific and historic wine regions, it's no wonder Tuscany has so many dedicated and regulated wines. There are currently 42 DOC's and 11 DOCG's. The latter include, of course, Chianti, Chianti Classico, Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile, all predicated on the single red grape that dominates Tuscan production: Sangiovese. Roughly two-thirds of the vines in Tuscany are devoted to this noble varietal, which also happens to be Italy's most planted grape overall. Beyond this, winemakers have been increasingly supplementing vineyards with Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon (both with a 300+ year history in the region). For better or worse, white varieties generally take a distant back seat to the reds, with Trebbiano Toscano being the most widely planted and Vernaccia and Vermentino enjoying more prestige.

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO DOCG

One of Italy's most famous appellations today, Montalcino was all but unknown until the 1950s. A decade after the historic 1955 vintage (championed by Biondi Santi and their enologist, Giulio Gambelli), it became a DOC in 1966. Then, thanks to the international spotlight which followed, Brunello was promoted to DOCG status in 1980. Now, as then, all wines for this iconic DOCG come from the sloped vineyards surrounding the idyllic town of Montalcino and its hamlets... however, the number of producers has skyrocketed in recent decades, going from less than 20 in the mid-twentieth century to well over 200 today!

All DOCG Brunello is crafted exclusively from the local clone of Sangiovese, Sangiovese Grosso. This strain yields wine with more richness, extract, acidic muscle and tannin than Sangiovese grown anywhere else in the world. In part, this is due to Montalinco's low annual rainfall (just 20 inches per year, making it Tuscany's most arid zone) and also its sandier soils (compared to say, Chianti Classico, with its cooler, denser clays). While the hill has three distinct climates - north, central, and south, it overall enjoys dry, warm summers which further promote Sangiovese Grosso's deep hue and stalwart character.

In addition, Brunello di Montalcino is fortified through aging for a minimum of 4 years, with at least 2 of these in oak; the Riserva designation indicates at least 5 years of aging. In its youth, Brunello tends to be filled with vibrant cherry and earthy notes on the palate; the combination of high acidity and big tannins can also render the wines a bit astringent upon release. After 10+ years, however, a Brunello's character tends to soften and evolve, leaving candied cherries, chocolatey tannins, and smooth integration in its wake.