



Chianti Classico, a Taste of Tuscany

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

Reception Wine: 6:00 PM, Formal Tasting: 6:20 PM

Toronto Board of Trade (4th Floor), 1st Cdn Place,
(Entrance off Adelaide St. between Bay & York)

Members' Fee: \$59 Guests'/Non-Members' Fee: \$74

The name "Chianti" has been in common usage since the 13th Century when it was associated with the hills around Radda, Gaiole and Castellina of Italy, and was referred to as a white wine. It was also historically associated with a squat bottle enclosed in a straw basket, called a *fiasco* ("flask"; *pl. fiaschi*); however, the *fiasco* is only used by a few makers of the wine now. It is only since the 1930's that the region has undergone continuous expansion and now covers a large part of Tuscany. Even the characteristic mixture of varieties that make up Chianti is comparatively recent. Prior to the 19th Century, by then meaning a red wine, Chianti was made mainly from Canaiolo grapes to which a Sangiovese or Malvasia grape component was added.

Bettino Ricasoli, Prime Minister of a newly united Italy from 1861 developed the traditional Chianti recipe of 70% Sangiovese, 15% Canaiolo Nero and 10% white varieties. The addition of white wine was intended to take the edge of the harshness of the young, inaccessible Sangiovese and enable it to be consumed at an earlier date. This blend became the standard for regulation in the DOCG. The wines produced developed into rural table wines but in the latter part of the 20th century, the region underwent a revolution. In the 1970's and 80's ambitious estate owners had but one goal: to produce great, complex red wines which would improve on aging. Experimentation with differing blends and the perfection of the native Sangiovese grape produced top-quality wines.

Our tasting showcases four of the best producers of Chianti Classico in the Region. Chianti Classico wines tend to be medium-bodied with firm tannins and medium-high to high acidity. Floral, cherry and light nutty notes are characteristic aromas with the wines expressing more notes on the mid-palate and finish than at the front of the mouth. As with Bordeaux, the different regions of Chianti Classico have unique characteristics that can be exemplified and perceived in some wines from those areas. According to Master of Wine Mary Ewing-Mulligan, Chianti Classico wines from the Castellina region tend to have a very delicate aroma and flavor, Castelnuovo Berardenga region wines tend to be the most ripe and richest tasting, wines from Gaiole tend to have be characterized by their structure and firm tannins while wines from the Greve area tend to have very concentrated flavors.

From one of the oldest wineries in the region, Antinori, dating back to the 12th century, with 26 generations producing Chianti, we can compare their Riserva with the 2005 Badia a Passignano to their non-riserva Peppoli. The wine-makers of Antinori have been innovators in the development of Super-Tuscan blends, keen experimenters in the vineyard, and their considerable success has led to expansion in ownership of real estate and vineyards. From the eastern edge of the Classico region, in what was originally an 11th Century monastery, we'll compare the 2006 Badia a Coltibuono Riserva against their 2007 non-riserva. The wines are made from entirely estate-grown fruit with the classic Chianti recipe of predominantly Sangiovese with Canaiolo. The 2006 and 2007 vintages of Isole e Olena Classico are the standard bearers for this winery, produced by rigorous selection of Sangiovese grapes from the most outstanding vineyard parcels. Finally, the 2003 versus the 2005 vintage Castello di Ama, the truest expression of Chianti Classico, a blend of 80% Sangiovese grown in chalky clay soils, 8% Canaiolo and 12% Malvasia.

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Buy tickets online at <https://www.onlineregistrations.ca/tvcevent3/> **ALL ticket sales/reservations are final whether paid by credit card or cheque.** Cheques must be received by Friday, March 19. The cheque-payment option will be disabled at midnight Tues, March 16th after which only credit card sales will be accepted until midnight Sunday March 21st or earlier if the event sells out. You will be sent an email confirmation once your registration is completed. If you did not receive an electronic confirmation, please contact torontovintners@onlineregistrations.ca or wine@torontovintners.org

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2003 Castello Di Ama Chianti Classico \$55

Powerful, super-ripe effort. A dark ruby, it presents sweet dark cherry and tobacco notes on an ample frame, with excellent concentration on the palate although the finish is marked by the hard tannins of the vintage. The wine did soften somewhat with air, yet my impression is that it will provide its best drinking relatively early. In 2003 Ama did not produce its single-vineyard wines and the estate's best fruit ended up in the normal bottling. Anticipated maturity: 2008-2015. 89/100 *Wine Advocate* # 171 June 2007.

2005 Castello Di Ama Chianti Classico \$45

Intensely fruity nose with crushed raspberries and plums. Full-bodied, with loads of fruit and velvety tannins. This is exceptional for the vintage. Ama sets the high water mark for quality Chianti Classico. Best after 2005. 12,000 cases made. -JS Purely fruited, delicate aromas of ripe cherries with wafts of black olive and forest floor. Medium+ level of very finely grained tannins and medium to high acidity. Good concentration, very refined. Long finish. Drink now to 2014. 90/100 *In Asia* # 0709 July 2009.

2006 Isole E Olena Chianti Classico \$36

Proprietor Paolo De Marchi is one of Tuscany's most inspired growers. As is often the case, the wines are very strong across the board. The 2006 Chianti Classico is especially round in this vintage. The wine shows gorgeous transparency in its perfumed fruit, sweet herbs and flowers, with excellent persistence and a long, refined finish. As always, this is a fresh Chianti with plenty of verve, and it will offer its most enjoyable drinking at the dinner table. Anticipated maturity: 2009-2014. 89/100 *Wine Advocate* # 184 Aug 2009

2007 Isole E Olena Chianti Classico \$35

The name "Isole e Olena" was conceived in the 1950's when two adjoining estates, "Isole" and "Olena" were purchased by the De Marchi family and were combined to form one. The history of both estates dates back many hundreds of years, and the earliest documentation of the village of Olena as far back as the 12th Century. This 85% Sangiovese, 12% Canaiolo and 3% Syrah wine is a brilliant ruby colour with an alluring, Pinot-like nose and soft, accessible fruit on the palate.

2005 Antinori Chianti Classico Badia a Passignano Riserva, \$50

A rich, dense wine loaded with dark fruit, new leather, tobacco, earthiness, smoke and sweet spices. This juicy, plump red reveals excellent persistence and a long finish in a surprisingly concentrated style for this vintage. The wine can be enjoyed today or cellared for a few years for readers who prefer more tertiary complexity. The Chianti Classico Badia a Passignano is Sangiovese that spends 14 months in French oak. Anticipated maturity: 2009-2015. From top to bottom this is a beautiful set of wines from Antinori. The estate's 2006 Guado al Tasso, Tignanello and Solaia are all beautiful, even if they don't appear to possess the elegance of the superb 2004s. 89/100 *Wine Advocate*, Antonio Galloni, Aug 200)

2006 Antinori Chianti Classico Peppoli \$23

Delivers ripe blackberry and raspberry, with pronounced floral and mineral notes. Almost meaty in character. Medium- to full-bodied, with a silky texture and lots of flavor. Finishes long, with an almost exotic twist in the end. Lots to enjoy. Drink now. 50,000 cases made 90/100 *Wine Spectator*, September 30, 2008.

2006 Badia a Coltibuono Chianti Classico Riserva \$62

The 2006 is a good deal firmer and fresher than the 2007 Chianti Classico, as one might reasonably expect. The fruit moves towards the darker end of the spectrum and a dash of French oak contributes structure. Licorice and new leather nuances add complexity on the finish. As delicious as this is, it isn't significantly better than the straight 2007 Chianti Classico. Anticipated maturity: 2009-2016. In recent years the wines of Badia a Coltibuono have gained transparency, elegance and a level of finesse that was sometimes missing in the past. I am not sure to what extent the conversion to biodynamic farming has contributed to the greater quality here, but the simple fact is that these gorgeous wines are well worth seeking out. 90/100 *Wine Spectator*, Antonio Galloni, August 2009)

2007 Badia a Coltibuono Chianti Classico \$35

The red fruit is ripe and expansive, but the wine has retained excellent freshness, all of which adds up to a very appealing bottle of Chianti Classico. The long, polished finish makes it hard to resist a second taste. Anticipated maturity: 2009-2014. In recent years the wines of Badia a Coltibuono have gained transparency, elegance and a level of finesse that was sometimes missing in the past. I am not sure to what extent the conversion to biodynamic farming has contributed to the greater quality here, but the simple fact is that these gorgeous wines are well worth seeking out. 89/100. *Wine Advocate*, Antonio Galloni, August 2009.