



**BON COEUR
FINE WINES**

Your unique wine experience...

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO 2017: “AGAINST ALL ODDS”



Brunello di Montalcino 2017 En Primeur – “Against all odds”

In recent years Italy’s presence within the global Fine Market has gone from strength to strength as customers continue to diversify their portfolios, and look to Italy as a source of new, and attractive opportunities for both drinking, and investment.

In September 2021, the Fine Wine trading platform, Liv-ex, produced a report declaring Italy plays “an important role in the development of the secondary market for fine wine... Its market is more buoyant than ever, the Italy 100 index reached an all-time high last month (August 2021), and the country’s share of total trade by value stands at a record 16% year-to-date.”

Liv-ex further stated “the diversity the country has to offer combined with the quality of its wines has attracted more active market participants from the US, UK, Asia, and Europe. As a result, more Italian fine wines have begun trading. The number of Italian wines that made it into in the 2021 Liv-ex Classification, which ranks the wines of the world by price, rose 112% from 2019.”

They concluded firmly that “increased diversity of Italian wines trading on the secondary market would have hardly been possible without Italy’s strengthened image as a competitive fine wine force on the international stage.”

At Bon Coeur, we agree with the market sentiment as we are experiencing first-hand our customers increasing appetite for Italian Fine Wines. It is therefore our belief that campaigns such as Brunello di Montalcino 2017, provide a great opportunity to dip your toe into the wonderful world of Italian Fine Wine.

Montalcino: a single township

Located in the province of Siena, 30 miles south of the city of the same name, the medieval village of Montalcino sits atop a jigsaw puzzle of vineyards and cypress trees that encircle the town. It can be said it is the most famous DOCG in Tuscany (perhaps except for Chianti), and without a shadow of a doubt, is the prize jewel in Tuscany’s crown.

Despite its modern-day fame, Brunello di Montalcino is a relatively young appellation, as it was in 1888 when Clemente Santi (founder of Biondi-Santi), first bottled Brunello di Montalcino, as we know it. Interest in the area and its wines waned over the next century because of war, depression, and migration to the larger Italian cities. However, this changed when DOC status was achieved in 1966, followed by an upgrade to DOCG status in 1980, awakening a movement that saw the number of new estates grow from 11 in 1960, to a staggering 250+ by 2010.

Brunello di Montalcino is produced from Sangiovese Grosso, known locally as ‘Brunello’, and must be made *in purezza* (meaning 100% Sangiovese). By law, it cannot be released onto the market and sold until five years after the harvest (six years if it is a Brunello di Montalcino Riserva) and needs to be aged for a minimum of two years in oak, followed by four months in bottle (six months for a Riserva).

Zones and Crus

In its simplest form, Montalcino can be best divided into two main sectors: north, and south. The north is found at high altitude where the cool microclimates and stony-galestro soils combine to produce elegant, pure, and refined wines. The south, on the other hand, is lower in altitude and the soils are more clay-iron rich and in turn, create fuller, complex, and more powerful wines.

However, upon closer inspection, Montalcino boasts a highly complex patchwork of zones, microclimates and vineyards producing many styles of wine. The topic of introducing an official zoning system has been hotly debated with some stating it will result in greater clarity of regional style and making Brunello di Montalcino more accessible, as well as appealing to the consumer. In theory, the zoning system could be based on the surrounding small villages and hamlets that encircle Montalcino: Bosco (northwest), Torrenieri (northeast), Castelnuovo dell'Abate (southeast), Sant'Angelo [in Colle and Scalo], Tavernelle and Camigliano (southwest).



Image credit: decanter.com

This approach would be akin to the already established communes of Burgundy, such as Gevrey-Chambertin, Vosne-Romanée, and Nuits-Saint-Georges as well as the appellations of Pauillac, Margaux, and Pomerol in Bordeaux. However, there is reluctance from some estates who claim that lesser regarded areas in the region would be unfairly criticised by wine critics and in turn, be undervalued and neglected by consumers. In addition to this, most producers own their vines throughout the appellation and make their Brunello di Montalcino from several plots or vineyards, and therefore see the introduction of designated zoning as counterproductive.

Nevertheless, there is a small group who would like to go (and in some cases) have gone one step further, by highlighting and promoting specific plots and single vineyards that have distinct characteristics thanks to unique terroir. Of course, this is not a new concept as properties have been making single-vineyard wines for many years such as Altesino's 'Montsoli', Il Poggione's 'Vigna Paganelli', as well as Gianni Brunelli's 'Le Chiuse di Sotto'. So, for now, the heated debate continues to rage on...

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Vintage and growing conditions

The 2017 vintage started with a mild, dry, and relatively normal winter with lower-than-average rainfall. The conditions remained much the same through to Spring, prompting an early bud-break (roughly one week in advance than the yearly average).

When April arrived it first brought much needed rain, however, a devastating bout of frost followed that saw several producers, such as Argiano, record temperatures that plummeted as low as -5.8°C on the morning of April 7th. Of course, this had a catastrophic effect on the vines, and in turn many estates lost between 30% and 70% of their crop.

The vines showed resilience in the face of adversity to recover from the frost, and despite some precipitation and temperature fluctuation throughout May, June and July, everything appeared to be back on track.

During the height of summer (August) it was extremely hot and dry with heat spikes reaching 41-42°C. As a result, disease pressure was clearly not going to be an issue; however, the effects of drought, and hydric stress, certainly were. The reality facing producers was a reduced crop of small berries with thick skins and high alcohol levels, therefore, skill in the vineyard (canopy management, discarding lesser grapes and choosing when to harvest etc.), as well as experience in the winery (cooler fermentation temperatures, reduced maceration times and shorter ageing period in oak) would be essential in creating balanced, fresh and not overtly concentrated wines.

Early September welcomed much needed rain and cooler temperatures, which for producers who decided to wait and pick later, regarded as having saved the vintage from complete catastrophe. Of course, the decision to pick is dependent on vineyard management, location, altitude, and microclimate; as well as the producer preferences and style. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in 2017 several producers such as Argiano (with Vigna del Suolo) and Casanova di Neri (with Cerretalto), have decided to utilise their top plots and vineyards usually reserved for single vineyard bottlings, to elevate their mid-tier offering.

What the critics say

Following on from the legendary 2016 vintage was never going to be an easy task, and the hand that mother nature dealt producers undoubtedly made things more challenging. So, what are the leading critics thoughts on the 2017 vintage?

Wine Enthusiast's Kerin O'Keefe remarked in her article ***Brunello 2017 Report: Concentration, High Alcohol and Some Shining Stars*** "despite the difficult conditions, some producers still managed to make stellar wines with the freshness and elegance that wine lovers expect from Brunello... skilled efforts pulled off nothing short of a miracle in 2017."

James Suckling agreed, commenting in his publication ***Weekly Tasting Report: Squeezing Greatness from 2017 Brunellos*** "the hot and dry vintage produced some extremely big and tannic wines... although all of this is worrying to Brunello lovers, there are a number of outstanding Brunellos from 2017 out there. They have freshness and balance and are not overdone. They are the result of careful work in the vineyards as well as precise winemaking in the cellar."

Vinous' Eric Guido, went further stating in his report ***Jekyll and Hyde: 2017 Brunello di Montalcino and 2016 Riservas*** "the reality is that the 2017 vintage in Montalcino was torridly hot and dry throughout the entire summer... in order to create a good, to possibly great, wine, producers needed to dig deeply into their bag of tricks... while one can say that 2017 was a tough vintage, skipping it entirely because the wines are not 'classic' Brunello would be a mistake."

Decanters' Michaela Morris concurred in her article ***Brunello di Montalcino 2017 vintage report and top-scoring wines*** "overall, heroic efforts in the vineyard and cellar are evident as numerous wines demonstrate greater freshness than anticipated... While the wines may lack the precision and intricate details of the best vintages, they are exuberant, immediate and upfront in their charms."

Ultimately, we feel O'Keefe is decisive by stressing "while producer reputation and consistency has always been the best guarantee for Brunello, it is absolutely essential for navigating the 2017s." Therefore, whilst our offer may be reduced, we believe we have once again (rightly) focused on offering you the best quality wines available from the vintage that against all odds, will provide much pleasure in the short-to-midterm drinking. My advice would be if you have some of the sublime 2016s then leave them in the cellar for another 4 to 5 years and drink the 2017s in the interim.

I do hope you enjoy reading this report. If you have not purchased Italian Fine wines before, or you require further information on the Brunello di Montalcino 2017 release; please do not hesitate to contact me, where I would be more than happy to help.

Best wishes,
Andrew Ray
Wine Buyer & Private Client Manager
Bon Coeur Fine Wines

Key

IB:	Prices quoted In Bond (excluding Duty, VAT, and logistics charges)
Recommended:	Our favourites
Allocation:	Wines are sold on an allocation basis, please contact the office if interested

Please note that all En Primeur wines are sold In Bond (excluding UK VAT and Duty) by the case as stated. They do, however, include shipping costs and insurance into our UK bonded warehouse at Moor Park.

The wines are due to arrive in Spring 2022. Once they have physically arrived, if you wish to transfer your wines to another UK bonded warehouse or have them released from Bond to a UK mainland address, please be aware that UK Duty, VAT, and/or delivery and logistic charges will be applicable.

For further information, please contact a member of the Private Client Team. E & OE.

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ARGIANO



ARGIANO
CANTINA DAL 1580

Established in 1580, Argiano boasts a rich and illustrious history as one of the oldest estates in the region, a founding member of the Consorzio del Brunello di Montalcino, as well as producing one of the first “Super-Tuscans”; Solengo with legendary oenologist Giacomo Taschis. The Brazilian financier, André Esteves, purchased the property in 2013. Extensive investment and development in both the vineyards and cellar (over the last few years) have been undertaken in the quest for further greatness, under the watchful eye of Head Winemaker and CEO: Bernardino Sani (pictured).

Located 13km to the south-southwest of Montalcino in the village of Sant’Angelo in Colle, known for its hot and dry climate, which as a result produces muscular, powerful, and complex wines. Argiano own 50-hectares of prime south-facing vineyards making them a formidable producer in the appellation. Nevertheless, there is no compromise on quality. The mapping of their vineyards into six separate zones, the introduction of organic viticulture in addition to ultra-modern facilities in a new, custom built winery allows Bernardino to produce multi-layered, yet balanced, and elegant wines with a true sense of place.

We have been buying from Argiano for over a decade now, and we believe they seriously over deliver in terms of value for money, and quality.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2017

RECOMMENDED	£180 IB (6x75cl)
MAG	£65 IB (1x150cl)
D.MAG	£135 IB (1x300cl)

A selection of vineyard plots aged between 15-60 years old on clay-limestone dominant soils. In 2017, there will be no single vineyard ‘Vigna del Suolo’ bottling, and as a result, all grapes were used in this straight Brunello di Montalcino. Aged in traditional Slavonian barrels for 30 months, followed by further bottle ageing before release.

“Very attractive floral and fresh aromas to the plums and cherries, following through to the palate. Flavorful and gorgeous, yet lively and focused. Lovely 2017. Drink now or hold.”

94/100 points. James Suckling - December 2021.

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“The 2017 Brunello di Montalcino is incredibly exotic in both spice and floral tones, and an intense wave of cherry and raspberry preserves mixes with hints of tangerine and cocoa that pull you close. This is so deep and fleshy yet energetic in feel, boasting a core of bright acidity that enlivens the experience and motivates the tart wild berries, zesty citrus and inner rose tones. Light tannins linger, yet the 2017 remains juicy and fun, delivering gobs of immediate pleasure though lasting notes of red currant, licorice and clove. Sadly, there will be no Vigna del Suolo from 2017, as all of that juice was added to bolster the Brunello. Even so, production was down by 35%.”

92/100 points. Drink 2023-2027. Eric Guido (Vinous) - December 2021.

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BANFI



Created in 1978 by the Italian American brothers, John, and Harry Mariani, when they acquired the Il Borgo castle and surrounding vineyards to the southwest of Montalcino in Sant'Angelo in Colle (a stone's throw from Argiano).

The Mariani's aim was to simply produce the best Brunello di Montalcino possible from the carefully nurtured vineyards and state of the art winery. As a result, they hired one of the greatest Italian winemakers of the time, Ezio Rivella, to turn their dream into reality. The estate is still family owned, now in the capable hands of the third generation with Cristina Mariani-May (pictured), as well as her cousin; James Mariani. Cristina has been involved with the winery since the early 1990s, where her mantra has always been "in the pursuit of excellence", which has driven Banfi to become one of the most prolific producers in Brunello di Montalcino.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2017

	£165 IB (6x75cl)
HALVES	£175 IB (12x375.cl)
D.MAG	£140 IB (1x300cl)
IMPERIAL	£280 IB (1x600cl)
BALTHAZAR	£560 IB (1x1200cl)

Vineyards are nestled between the Orcia and Ombrone rivers, to the south of Montalcino on stony, calcareous soil. Aged for a minimum of 4 years, of which 2 are in a combination of French barriques and Slavonian casks.

"Really fresh and vivid with sliced lemon and apple heading into cherry and floral undertones. It's medium-to full-bodied with fine tannins and a vivid and bright finish. This is so drinkable and pretty for the hot and dry 2017 vintage, which produced many heavy Brunellos. Drink now or hold."

93/100 points. James Suckling – November 2021.

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“The 2017 Brunello di Montalcino Castello Banfi wafts up unexpectedly fresh and vibrant, offering dusty rose, bright cherries and a hint of white smoke. It’s soft-textured and pure, with mineral-tinged red currents complemented by a subtle hint of sweet spice. This leaves a coating of rounded tannins, as residual acids maintain the energetic persona, and pretty inner florals slowly fade. The 2017 is a nicely balanced effort for the vintage.”

89/100 points. Drink 2023-2026. Eric Guido (Vinous) – December 2021.

Brunello di Montalcino ‘Vigna Marrucheto’ DOCG 2017

£295 IB (6x75cl)

A single-vineyard bottling combining 3 separate plots of the Marrucheto vineyard totalling 10-hectares. First planted in 2009. Aged in both 60hl and 90hl French oak barrels for 30 months, followed by further bottle ageing before release.

“Very pretty blue fruits with crushed stone and bark as well as pine needle undertones. It’s medium- to full-bodied with firm and velvety tannins with a dusty texture. Very long and fresh with brightness and focus. Better after 2023 but already attractive and fresh for the vintage.”

94/100 points. James Suckling – November 2021.

“The 2017 Brunello di Montalcino Vigna Marrucheto is remarkably pretty, featuring raspberry and strawberry fruits complemented by sweet herbs and hints of smoke. This is a silky, polished expression, with cool-toned red berries coasting along a core of brisk acids, as rosy inner florals and hints of licorice form toward the close. While it’s structured, the energy remains high as the Vigna Marrucheto tapers off savory, spicy and long.”

92/100 points. Drink 2024-2029. Eric Guido (Vinous) – December 2021.

CASANOVA DI NERI



Casanova di Neri

Casanova di Neri was founded by Giovanni Neri in 1971 and is without a doubt one of the leading properties in the appellation, and more importantly, the pioneer behind the concept of single-vineyard Brunello di Montalcino. The estate has been in the capable hands of his son Giacomo since 1991, who now works alongside the third generation with his two sons: Giovanni, and Gianlorenzo (pictured).

Giacomo has expanded holdings organically over the last two decades through acquiring some of the best vineyards in the region, and now owns 63-hectares of vines with plots located to the north, east and southeast of Montalcino. This allows him to create a balanced expression of Brunello di Montalcino by utilising the specific terroirs and microclimates of each sub-region. The estate produces the famous single vineyard bottlings *Cerretalto* (released in 1981), as well as *Tenuta Nuova* (released in 1993).

The philosophy of Casanova di Neri is to produce Brunello di Montalcino that are approachable and drink well in their youth, yet also have the complexity, concentration, and structure to age impeccably. We have worked with Casanova di Neri for over 10 years now and feel they are without a doubt, one of the superstar producers in Montalcino.

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG 2017

£220 IB (6x75cl)

Referred to simply as 'etichetta bianca' (white label) and has been produced since 1978. In 2017, the wine has benefitted from having received grapes from the famed Cerretalto vineyard, contributing to a "seal of quality". Aged for 42 months in oak barrels, followed by a further 6 months in bottle.

"Dusty florals, musky cherry and raspberry with hints of mentholated herbs waft up from the 2017 Brunello di Montalcino. This is enveloping and soft, with sweet exotic spices and juicy, vibrant acidity giving way to tart wild berries and rosy inner florals. There's amazing length, hard red candies and violets, and sweet tannin that goes on and on, creating a somewhat chewy yet also fresh expression. The 2017 benefits from all of the fruit that would usually go into the single-vineyard Cerretalto Brunello, though even with it, production is down by 35%. That said, this is stunning juice."

92/100 points. Drink 2024-2029. Eric Guido (Vinous) – December 2021.

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Brunello di Montalcino 'Tenuta Nuova' DOCG 2017

£450 IB (6x75cl)

First produced in 1993. Grapes are source from the Cetine vineyard situated in Sesta Bassa (between Sant'Angelo in Colle and Castelnuovo dell'Abate), where the south-facing vineyard produces rich, opulent, and intense wines. A sacrifice in yield reduction of ca. 30% in 2017 has produced an excellent Tenuta Nuova, which is aged for 30 months in oak, followed by a further 18 months in bottle.

"Lots of red plums and cherries on the nose with a palate that has a full body, thick silky tannins and a fresh and flavorful finish. The tannins are in good balance against the ripe fruit. Fresh and transparent at the end. Drink or hold."

94/100 points. James Suckling - December 2021.

"The 2017 Brunello di Montalcino Cascina Nuova lifts up with a layered display of peppery herbs, musky plums, black raspberry, crushed stone, tobacco and smoke. It's silky yet juicy, pliant and staining to the senses, offering violet and lavender tones balanced by cooling acids and hints of candied citrus. The 2017 really plays with the palate; it's spicy, long and intense, and lightly structured yet classically dry. Balsamic herbs, salted licorice – it goes on and on like a spice box menagerie. An elegant pleasure bomb."

94/100 points. Drink 2024-2029. Eric Guido (Vinous) - November 2021.

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CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO



Castiglione del Bosco is another historic estate with records dating back to the 11th century, as well as being another key participant in the creation of the Consorzio del Brunello di Montalcino. After many years laying in ruin, the winery was purchased in 2003 by fashion guru Massimo Ferragamo, who immediately began an extremely ambitious restoration project to return the estate to its former glory.

Only the very best will do at Castiglione del Bosco, from the immaculate 62-hectares of vines to the purpose-built state-of-the-art winery, as well as the superstar winemaking team of Cecilia Leoneschi (pictured), and the enigmatic consultant oenologist Nicolò D’Afflitto. There is no expense spared in their quest to produce world-class Brunello di Montalcino, from their straight Brunello to their two single vineyards, Capanna and Gauggiolo.

Castiglione del Bosco is without a doubt an estate that has emerged from the shadows and rightfully taken its place on the world stage.

Brunello di Montalcino DCG 2017

RECOMMENDED	£198 IB (6x75cl)
MAG	£225 IB (3x150cl)
D.MAG	£145 IB (1x300cl)

Grapes come only from the Capanna vineyard, located in the cooler climes of the Bosco sub-region to north-west of Montalcino. A single 42-hectare site where the combination of altitude (350-400m), clay-shale and ‘Galestro’ marl rock, in addition to low yields produce a refined and elegant expression of Brunello.

“Aromas of ripe berries and plums with some flowers and nutmeg follow through to a full body with round tannins and a juicy finish. Slightly chewy, but friendly and succulent. Excellent 2017, despite the dry growing season. Better in a year or two.”

94/100 points. James Suckling - November 2021.

“The 2017 Brunello di Montalcino pulls you close with a bouquet of crushed ashen stone and dusty dried roses giving way to bright cherries complemented by a flourish of sour citrus. It floods the palate with silken waves of ripe red and black fruits over a savory, salty core of minerals and brisk acids that keeps the expression surprisingly fresh. It’s persistent and concentrated, yet the harmonious structural build should carry the 2017 over medium-term cellaring. Castiglione del Bosco did a fantastic job finding balance in this difficult vintage. Of note is that this was tasted from the same bottle a full 48 hours later, and only improved.”

93/100 points. Drink 2023-2031. Eric Guido (Vinous) - December 2021.

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