

# Kyle Phillips

Italian wine review | Cosa Bolle in Pentola

Saturday, July 29, 2006

## Grattamacco: A Rundown of Tuscan Coastal wines.

### A few words about the wines.

The Strada del Vino Costa degli Etruschi oversees four DOCs: Montescudaio, Bolgheri, Val di Cornia, and Elba, and also Terratico di Bibbona, which is slated to become a DOC. All of the appellations offer many different wines.

**Bolgheri is where it all began on the Tuscan Coast**, and even though Sassicaia was already attracting international acclaim by the time the first Bolgheri DOC was established in 1983, the authorities chose to regulate the production of whites and rosés, leaving vintners to follow their whims when it came to reds, which were all classified as table wine. Though this was obviously a slight to the red wines, it wasn't as negative as it may seem, because it gave the vintners tremendous freedom to experiment. Some chose to use exclusively French varietals, and others various mixtures of Italian and French. The DOCG established in 1994 recognizes the reds, while maintaining the freedom:

- **Bolgheri Bianco** can be made from: 20-70% Trebbiano Toscano 20-70% Vermentino 20-70% Sauvignon Blanc Up to 30% other varietals authorized by the province of Livorno (e.g. Malvasia Bianca)
- **Bolgheri Vermentino** must contain at least 85% Vermentino
- **Bolgheri Sauvignon** must contain at least 85% Sauvignon
- **Bolgheri Rosato** is made from Sangiovese, Cabernet and Merlot, plus other red varietals authorized by the Province of Livorno
- **Bolgheri Rosso** and **Bolgheri Rosso Superiore** can be made from: 10-80% Cabernet Sauvignon Up to 70% Merlot Up to 70% Sangiovese Up to 30 % other grapes authorized by the Province of Livorno (e.g. Syrah)
- **Bolgheri Sassicaia** must be made in the Sassicaia subzone (Marchese Niccolò Incisa della Rocchetta's vineyards) and contain at least 80% Cabernet Sauvignon.

**Yields?** 100 quintals/hectare for whites, 90 for Rossi, 80 for Rossi Superiori and 60 for Sassicaia. With the possible exception of Sassicaia these are high, at least with vineyards planted to moderate densities. However, a number of producers are planting to very high densities; if one has 9,000 vines per hectare each yielding a kilo of grapes, the quality should be quite good despite a high yield per hectare because the individual vines are producing small amounts.

**Cellaring?** As you might expect, most of the whites are released the spring following the harvest, as are the rosés. Bolgheri Rosso can also be released the year following the harvest. Bolgheri Rosso Superiore must instead mature for at least two years from the January following the harvest, a minimum of 12 months in wood and 6 months in bottle. Sassicaia also has to be aged two years, 18 months of which in barriques.

### **Having said all this, a few vintage considerations**

Most of the "important" reds, e.g. Superiore and renowned IGT, were 2003 vintage, and therefore it is likely the vintage that will interest you the most.

Alas, 2003 was just as hot and just as dry along the Tuscan coast as it was inland, and created the exact same problems, causing draught stress in many vineyards that either led to extreme overripeness of the grapes with consequent cooked flavors and aromas, or hampered polyphenolic ripening (the accumulation of the components that produce structure and flavor), with consequent greenish overtones and considerable stridency. The wines made from grapes thus affected tend to be quite alcoholic, and also tend to be soft, especially if the grapes overripened and their acidities fell.

Many of the producers who found themselves with these problematic grapes attempted to compensate for Nature's wants with wood -- one really cannot blame them -- with less than satisfactory results: Wood works very well in a supporting role, but here it was thrust into the limelight and simply yielded oaky soft or strident wines.

In short, 2003 was a difficult vintage along the Tuscan coast, and the wines, especially those from top producers that command hefty prices, should be approached with caution. Many suffered the effects of the 2003 summer terribly, and even those that escaped relatively unscathed are softer than normal, and thus better suited to being drunk soon, rather than aged the way one might in a more normal vintage.

The 2004 Rossi (vini d'Annata) display considerably better balance and greater depth than the 2003 wines, and consequently bode well for the 2004 Superiori and IGT wines now being prepared for release next year. I also liked the 2005 coastal wines; though the area didn't entirely escape the cool wet conditions that prevailed inland, it is drier and warmer, and this was good for the wines.

**And now, The Wines tasted on April 28 and 29, 2006 in the course of the 2006 edition of Castagneto a Tavola**

## **Wines Of The Bolgheri DOC**

### **Grattamacco Collemassari**

Località Grattamacco 129  
57022 Castagneto Carducci (LI)  
Tel 0565 765 069  
<http://www.collemassari.it>

### **Grattamacco Bianco Bolgheri Vermentino DOC 2004**

This is a Vermentino. Brassy white with lively brassy reflections. The bouquet is fairly intense, with a rush of butterscotch laced with gunflint bitterness and some savory green apricot overtones. On the palate it's fairly rich, with powerful mineral laced white berry fruit supported by deft mineral acidity that flows into a clean fairly bitter finish with acidity and hints of butterscotch that carry at length. It will drink nicely with flavorful fish or cheese-based risotti, or with richly flavored fish. I found it growing on me. **2 stars**

### **Bolgheri Rosso DOC 2004**

This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Sangiovese. Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections. The bouquet is quite young, with an initial rush of violets supported by cedar and pleasing forest berry fruit; the overall impression is controlled but opulent in a cheeky sort of way. On the palate it's medium bodied, with rich forest berry fruit that gains direction from deft berry fruit acidity, and is supported by tightly woven very smooth tannins that seem smaller than they are, and flow into a clean fairly sweet berry fruit finish. Quite nice, in a smooth cheeky key -- it brings to mind a smiling teen who has gotten away with something good -- and will drink well with grilled meats or light stews; though there is acidity to provide direction the tannins are smooth enough that I wouldn't pair it with fattier fare. But in the proper occasion it will be perfect, and is well worth seeking out, if you like this style. **2 stars**

### **Grattamacco Bolgheri Rosso Superiore 2003**

This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Sangiovese. Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is delicate, and fairly intense, with bright forest berry fruit laced with lemony berry fruit jam and some underlying cedar; though the heat is evident in the slightly overripe character of the bouquet, it is pleasant. On the palate it's full, with rich cherry plum fruit that gains direction from fairly rich berry fruit acidity, and is supported by ample sweet tannins that have a warm cedar laced burr. It's elegant, and rich, though very much a child of the vintage, and as such I don't think I would lay it down for fear that it fade with time. Now it will work well with succulent red meats, and if you want to take a chance it will hold for 3-5 years. **2 stars**

## **Azienda Agricola Ornellaia**

Via Bolgherese 191

57020 Bolgheri (LI)

Tel 0565 71811

<http://www.ornellaia.it>

### **Tenuta Ornellaia Le Volte Indicazione Geografica Tipica Toscana 2004**

This is a blend of Sangiovese, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep pigeon blood ruby with black reflections and cherry ruby rim. The bouquet is bright, with fairly rich jam laced berry fruit that gains direction from pleasing slightly greenish acidity, and is supported by some cedar and slight vegetal notes mingled with underbrush. On the palate it's medium bodied tending towards full, with fairly rich red berry fruit, a mixture of currants and cherries with some raspberry acidity to keep things in line, supported by tightly woven smooth sweet tannins that flow into a clean berry fruit laced finish with greenish tannic underpinning. Deft, in a sunny smiling key, and will drink quite nicely with succulent grilled meats, up through steak or lamb chops, or hearty beef or pork stews, though it's not quite rich enough for game. I'd drink it now to enjoy its freshness. **2 stars**

### **Tenuta Ornellaia Serre Nuove Bolgheri Rosso DOC 2004**

This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot. Impenetrable pigeon blood ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. Poured ink. The bouquet is fairly rich, with a pleasing mixture of graphite shavings and black currant fruit supported by a certain greenness; there isn't much acidity, but it's not flat. On the palate it's full and soft, with ample black currant fruit laced with plums, which gains direction from moderate mineral acidity, and is supported by ample smooth tannins that have a slight cedary overlay, and flow into a fairly long finish. It's big, and rather soft, and if you like the style you will like it, though I would give it another year for the tannins to fold completely into the wine. If you instead prefer tighter wines with better definition, this won't work for you. In short, particular, and in any case I would serve it with drier meats. **2 stars**

### **Tenuta Ornellaia Ornellaia Bolgheri Rosso Superiore 2003**

This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections. The bouquet is rich, with powerful black currant fruit supported by some greenish jammy notes and by clean spice with underlying alcoholic warmth. Quite elegant, and though the heat of the summer is evident, there is a pleasing richness to the fruit. On the palate it's full and quite smooth, with powerful black currant fruit that gains some direction from deft berry fruit acidity, while the tannins, which are smooth enough that they seem smaller than they are, provide beautiful direction. It's quite elegant, and though softer than one would find in a better vintage, displays considerable depth and power. Because of its softness I would drink it with drier red meats, for example roast beef cooked medium, or roast pork loin. I don't think I would age it for too long. **2 stars**

### **Tenuta Ornellaia Masseto Indicazione Geografica Tipica Toscana 2003**

This is a Merlot. Deep pigeon blood ruby with black cherry rim. The bouquet is intense, with considerable cedar and spice overlying some sea salt; there's not much fruit. On

the palate it's big and soft, with ample plum berry fruit supported by moderate acidity and by ample rather lax tannins that have a powerful cedar overlay and flow into a clean cedar laced finish. **1 star**

### **Tenuta San Guido**

Località Le Capanne 27

57020 Bolgheri (LI)

Tel 0565 762 003

<http://www.sassicaia.com>

### **Tenuta San Guido Guidalberto Indicazione Geografica Tipica Toscana 2004**

This is a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese. Deep cherry ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is fairly rich, with greenish red berry fruit supported by lively acidity and some vegetal accents. On the palate it's full, with fairly rich cherry fruit supported by deft clean sweet tannins, while there is also pleasant red currant acidity for direction. It will drink nicely with succulent red meats. **2 stars**

### **Tenuta San Guido Sassicaia Bolgheri Rosso Superiore DOC 2003**

This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and hints of almandine at the rim. The bouquet is fairly rich, with considerable depth; there's fairly rich bell pepper laced fruit backed up by considerable alcohol and spice, with some savory balsamic notes in the background; it's pleasant bit doesn't have the richness nor the texture one finds in better years; the wood is stepping in to a degree. On the palate it's full and rich, with powerful jammy red berry fruit that gains direction from some, but not too much acidity, and is supported by ample smooth tannins that have quite a bit of cedar to them; it's a touch flat, and the grapes clearly overripened meaning that the wood had to step in to flesh out the structure, a task it was able to perform, though not so well as one might have liked. In short, it's the child of a difficult vintage, and though it is elegant it cannot match better vintages. **1 star**

### **Antinori Agricola Tenuta Guado al Tasso**

Località Scalabrone

57020 Bolgheri (LI)

Tel 0565 749 735

### **Guado al Tasso Bolgheri Vermentino DOC 2005**

This is a Vermentino. Pale papery white with pale gold reflections. The bouquet is fairly intense, with a rich mixture of gooseberries and heather that has some bitter almond overtones. On the palate it's full, with moderately intense gooseberry fruit supported by considerable bitter almond bitterness and underlying savory acidity that carries into a fairly long bitter finish. Pleasant, in an up front key, and will drink nicely as an aperitif with flavorful antipasti, or with rich fish dishes, including grilled salmon and such or fried fish, and one could also serve it with quickly cooked white meats. **2 stars**

### **Guado al Tasso Scalabrone Bolgheri Rosato DOC 2005**

This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and Aleatico. Pale salmon with brilliant salmon reflections. The bouquet is fairly rich, with raspberry fruit laced with raspberry and red currant acidity supported by some heather and the herbs of a Tuscan field in summer. On the palate it's rich, with bright raspberry fruit supported by lively raspberry and red currant acidity, with slight tannic underpinning, which flow into a clean bright acidic finish. Zesty, and will drink nicely as an aperitif if that's your preference, though I would be more tempted to drink it at a cookout or picnic, or perhaps with a platter of mixed fried meats and vegetables, or even fried fish. Expect it to go quickly. **2 stars**

### **Guado al Tasso il Bruciato Bolgheri Rosso DOC 2004**

Impenetrable pigeon blood ruby with cherry ruby rim. The bouquet is quite fresh, with violets and cherry blossoms mingled with red berry fruit and berry fruit jam that confers roundness and richness; the overall impression is fairly voluptuous. On the palate it's full, with powerful, fairly sweet jammy forest berry fruit supported by moderate black currant acidity, and by clean sweet tannins that flow into a clean fruit laced finish. Because of its softness it will drink best with drier meats. **1 star**

### **Guado al Tasso Guado al Tasso Bolgheri Rosso Superiore DOC 2003**

This is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. Deep pigeon blood ruby with black reflections and cherry rim. The bouquet is smoky, with a fair amount of cedar and some savory spice, but not much in the way of fruit, though it does give an impression of softness. On the palate it's ample and soft, with moderate red berry fruit supported by tannins that have greenish cedary overtones and flow into a fairly long clean distinctly green tannic finish. In a word, heatstruck. **1 star**

### **Azienda Agricola Le Macchiole**

Via Bolgherese 189/A

Tel 0565 766 092

### **Le Macchiole Le Macchiole Bolgheri Rosso DOC 2004**

This is a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese. Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections. The bouquet is frankly oaky, with moderate red berry fruit. On the palate it's fairly rich, with moderate forest berry fruit supported by some, but not excessive acidity, and by tannins that have a distinctly cedary edge to them. I found it a bit too oaky for my taste. **1 star**

### **Le Macchiole Messorio Indicazione Geografica Tipica Toscana 2002**

This is a Merlot. Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and some almandine in the rim. The bouquet is rich, with deft raspberry acidity supported by red berry fruit and considerable spice, with some greenish notes as well. Pleasant. On the palate it's rich, with lively sour red berry fruit supported by deft acidity, and by clean tannins that lay a greenish veneer over the tongue; it's the child of a difficult vintage, and I wouldn't want to drink it far from the table, but it will go nicely in the near future with succulent red meats. **2 stars**

### **Le Macchiole Paleo Rosso Indicazione Geografica Tipica Toscana 2002**

This is a Cabernet Franc. Deep black cherry ruby with black reflections and almandine rim. The bouquet is fairly intense, with scrappy red berry fruit supported by some vegetal notes and underlying cedar, with moderate balsam and a fair amount of sea salt as well. On the palate it's full, with fairly intense slightly sour red berry fruit supported by lively acidity, and by rather greenish tannins that flow into a long clean greenish tannic finish. After tasting a slew of 2003 wines it's remarkably refreshing, and if you're drinking it by itself it will work well with succulent red meats. Not the child of a great vintage, but it does display a certain charm, and will contribute nicely to the table, though I wouldn't keep it for that long. **2 stars**

*posted by Kyle Phillips*

Read the entire article at:

<http://italianwinereview.blogspot.com/2006/07/castagneto-tavola-rundown-of-tuscan.html>

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