

WINE

Wine Picker
Ecole du Champagne

Maremma in pursuit of terroir



[22 maggio 2015 Wine Reports By Delphine Veissiere](#)



Home to the Etruscans, the Maremma is a vast area along the Tuscan coast that stretches from south of Livorno to south of Grosseto. In the southern part, it extends far inland to Scansano and Pitigliano. Broadly speaking, we can divide the Maremma into two distinct regions: North and South. In terms of red wine, the North is home to the “Super Tuscans,” wines that are made from international varieties, while the

The wine picker

Southern denominations are predominantly Sangiovese. On the other hand, Northern whites often include Vermentino as the core component of the blend in the denominations, and there are also single grape varietal wines allowed from other grapes. In the South, where Trebbiano Toscano, Ansonica, and Vermentino play important roles, there are two white-only denominations and a wider variety of white grapes permitted.

Differences in altitude and exposure to the sea winds and its cooling effects create a multitude of microclimates, oftentimes within the same vineyard. Some vineyard areas are protected from the sea by the initial foothills and so have a more continental climate, with a greater diurnal temperature range. In fact, two wineries within 6km of each other in Suvereto have different climates: one is continental and the other is maritime.

Soil types range from sand, clay, and stone, in the lower altitudes to calcaire, rocks, and sandstone in the higher altitudes, especially around Scansano, where vineyards are planted up to 500m above sea level. There are also iron deposits scattered across the region. The area around Pitigliano has volcanic tufa soil.

Northern Maremma

Bolgheri DOC is the star of the Northern Maremma, an area pioneered by Marchese Mario Incisa della Rocchetta, who planted the first Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc vines in Bolgheri in 1944. This was a bold move, as Tuscany is the true heartland of Sangiovese, the most widely planted red grape variety in Italy. Despite the outrage, his intuition was correct. The climate and soil of the area around Bolgheri are ideal for the Bordeaux varieties and not as suitable for Sangiovese. Although summers in Tuscany are hot, the maritime influence of the sea keeps yearly temperatures within a similar diurnal range as the aforementioned French region. The Marchese's wine, Sassicaia, which launched the "Super Tuscans," now has its own single vineyard designation, Bolgheri Sassicaia DOC.

Wineries throughout the region have retained the original sense of experimentation that led to the development of this wine style, and so will often produce wines that do not adhere to DOC or DOCG regulations. Such wines must be labeled Toscana IGP.

Just as interesting and often equally as good as the Bolgheri wines, are the "Bolgheri-satellite" denominations, including Montescudaio DOC, Monteregio di Massa Marittima DOC, Suvereto DOCG, Terratico di Bibbona DOC, and Val di Cornia Rosso DOCG. Just as in Bordeaux, these "satellite" denominations are often much better value for money.

The wine picker

All the above denominations feature mostly international grape varieties for the red wines, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, and Petit Verdot. Sangiovese is also used, usually as part of the blend, though sometimes as the main grape variety. White wines focus on Vermentino, but also include Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Trebbiano Toscano, and Viognier,. A common blend is Vermentino and Viognier. The percentage allowed of each grape variety varies according the DOC/DOCG.

Southern Maremma

The Southern part of the Maremma is the administrative region of Grosseto. Here the red wine denominations are predominantly Sangiovese and the other traditional Tuscan grapes. As in the northern Maremma, wineries are also experimenting with international grape varieties, as well as varieties from other parts of Italy, but generally these varieties mostly play supporting roles. This area is only now starting to come into its own. A quiet revolution is taking place: quality is improving drastically as investment in vineyard management and winemaking is increasing.

The most famous denomination is Morellino di Scansano DOCG. It finally became a DOCG in 2006 The wine must be made using a minimum of 85% Sangiovese. The remaining 15% The grape traditionally consisted of local varieties such Canaiolo, Ciliegiole, or Colorino . Modern styles can use Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and other red grapes allowed in Tuscany. Morellino di Scansano is still considered as an honest, good value-for-money wine that is best drunk young. Wineries such as Morisfarm and Fattoria Le Pupille were pioneers in improving the quality and longevity of the wines, and now many other wineries are doing the same.

Montecucco DOCG is another area that is producing outstanding wines based on Sangiovese. It was designated a DOCG in 2011, and many of the producers are making organic wines.

South Maremma is also home to two white only denominations that produce distinctive wines: Bianco di Pitigliano DOC (minimum 50% Trebbiano Toscano) and Ansonica Costa dell'Argentario DOC (minimum 85% Ansonica.)

Other denominations include Capalbio DOC, Parrina DOC, and Sovana DOC. Wines produced in Southern Maremma that use permitted grape varieties but that fall outside specific denomination requirements can be designated Maremma Toscana DOC. Just as in the North, some wineries choose to ignore the rules, experimenting with various styles and grape varieties, and label the results as Toscana IGP.

Here is a selection of some **our favourite wines from the Maremma:**

96 points – Giorgio Bartholomäus Toscana IGP 2010: **Tenuta Argentiera**. Giorgio Bartholomäus, a mono-varietal Merlot, is full of fresh red currant, raspberry, blueberry jam, toast, and earthy minerality. The tannins are still grippy, but this is impressively elegant. You can drink it now, but better to hold on to it for at least two years.

95 points: Morellino di Scansano DOCG Riserva 2011: **Morisfarms**. This Morellino di Scansano Riserva has layers of complexity: strawberry, blueberry, liquorice, earthy minerality, and even a hint of peach. This is an elegant Morellino di Scansano with a lot of finesse

95 points: San Lorenzo Ciliegiolo Maremma Toscana DOC 2011: **Sassotondo**. San Lorenzo has a wonderfully fresh acidity and minerality that adds a great deal of finesse, reflecting the vineyards more continental climate and volcanic soil. There are wonderfully complex notes of pepper, cherry, kirsch, raspberry preserve, rocky minerality, balsamic and herbal notes. The finish is very clean. The tannins are still going through adolescence, and so hold on to this.

95 points – Toscana Cabernet Franc 2011 IGP: **La Fralluca**. – This young winery is in a continental microclimate, and this mono-varietal Toscana Cabernet Franc has precise strawberry, raspberry, green capsicum, pepper, herbal, blackberry, flint, and graphite notes. The tannins are finely grained and there are additional cedar notes on the palate. You can drink it now, but it will improve with age.

95 points – Hide Syrah Toscana IGT: **Bulichella**. Hide is a mono-varietal Syrah of complex black currant, black plum, blackberry, pepper, leaf, forest floor, mushroom, and earthy minerality. The tannins are well integrated and the palate adds flavours of game and white pepper. Drink this now or hold it to enjoy its evolution over the years.

94 points – Poggio Lombrone Montecucco Sangiovese Riserva DOC 2011: **Castello Colle Massari**. Poggio Lombrone has loads of potential but is very much still developing. The nose has notes of stone, earthy minerality, toast, chocolate, and kirsch, while the palate has flavours of cherry, chalk, stone, chocolate and cigar box. This stills at least a year or two before it's ready, the fruit aromas are just beginning to emerge.

94 points – Sopra Montescudaio Sangiovese DOC 2012: **Colline di Sopra**. Sopra is a mono-varietal Sangiovese from this young winery. Fresh cherry and strawberry combine with notes of clove, vanilla, and the typical earthy minerality of the grape. The wine is fresh on the palate and the tannins are well integrated. The subtle oak note are still integrating, but the varietal fruit flavours are emerging. Wait at least a year before drinking.

The wine picker

93 points – Caiarossa IGT Toscana 2010: **Caiarossa**. Made from 7 different grape varieties, Caiarossa has aromas of cherry, lavender, toasted wood, black currant, white pepper, and mushroom. The tannins are well integrated and smooth, and on the palate there are additional flavours of blueberry, chalk, blackberry, smoke, tobacco, mushroom, and stone. Though it would benefit from another year of ageing, you can drink it now.

93 points – Poggio Valente Morellino di Scansano DOCG 2010: **Fattoria Le Pupille**. On the nose, Poggio Valente is still very tight, but notes of kirsch, cherry, strawberry, balsamic herbs, pepper, stone, and toast notes are emerging. The tannins are powdery and grippy, and the acidity is fresh. The palate adds notes of tobacco and chalky minerality. Wait at least a year before drinking.

93 points – Magistro Passito di Ansonica Val di Cornia DOC 2011: **Rigoli**. A delicate sweet wine with flavours of prune, fig, apricot, and hazelnut. There are also subtle notes of Marsala that keeps everything very interesting. This is on the drier side of sweet, and is very easy to drink.

William Hutchinson