



Winemaker: Lorenzo Gatteschi
Generation: 2nd



Le Diacce Merlot Toscana IGT

Grown at high altitude in Chianti Classico (approximately 1,800 feet above sea level), this Merlot from Podere Ciona is remarkably clearheaded, with great tannic tension, dark fruit, and subtle layers of earth spice and smoke. With a production of just 4000 bottles, this structured, ageable wine is one of our favorites and if you should find one of the few available, it's not to be missed!

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

In addition to making stunning, small batch wines with his dad, Lorenzo Gatteschi helped found Small Vineyards and remains one of two Italian partners at August Imports. While he has lived extensively in the States, Lorenzo now spends most of his time at the family's high-altitude estate in Chianti Classico.

ENOLOGIST

Vincenza Folgheretti



TASTING NOTES

Color Deep purple red
Nose Earthy spices, chocolate, and toasted nuts
Palate Wild berries with concentrated, well-structured tannins
Finish Prolonged finish, with lingering aftertaste of spice



VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

Vineyard Location	Toscana IGT, Tuscany
Vineyard Size	0.8 ha
Varietals List	98% Merlot 2% Alicante Bouschet
Farming Practices	Organic farming (non-certified), including dry-farming; grapes picked by hand; all native yeasts
Elevation	490 m
Soils	Primarily quartz arenite, some clay schist and marl
Maturation Summary	In French barrels for 24 months and bottled for 12 months
Alcohol	13.0 %
Acidity	5.96 g/liter
Annual Production	4,000 bottles



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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.

TOSCANA IGT

Italy's first, most famous, and most broadly used IGT, this label allows for wines to be made in any village in any of Tuscany's 10 provinces, from Firenze to Grosseto. Likewise, wines can be made in virtually any style, using a long list of varieties, freeing producers from the stiff regulations surrounding DOCs and DOCGs. Its creation revolved around the advent of 'Super Tuscans' and the need for an official tier of wine in between the DOC and Italy's lowly "Vino da Tavola", which doesn't even allow a vintage to be printed on the bottle.

During the late 1960s, around the same time that Italy's DOC system was established, a number of famous producers in southern Tuscany - including the town of Bolgheri - began making expensive, high-quality, modern-style wines, often incorporating Bordeaux varietals. As well-made as they tended to be, these so-called 'Super Tuscan' blends had no historical precedent, and therefore didn't qualify for any of Italy's new appellations. As their wines gained in international acclaim (and price), and with no other recourse than to label their wines 'Vino da Tavola', producers began petitioning the government for another option. Finally, in 1992, the Italian government conjured a new wine classification category: Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT). This created a successful middle ground, allowing wines to print their vintage, varietal (as long as the wine contains at least 85%) and region of origin. Beyond this, very few regulations exist to constrain the winemaker. France's version is VDP (Vin de Pays) and the EU as a whole now uses the equivalent IGP category on wine labels.



PODERE CIONA

Perched as high as one can go in the Chianti Classico region, the story of Podere Ciona is largely one of altitude. Situated at the top of a mountain-sized hill above Gaiole, the south-facing vines cover just 5 hectares but span 490-625 meters. At that height, you can stand in the vineyards and literally watch as clouds and weather systems part to go around the region. Dense woodland forests contrast the Gatteschi's manicured vineyards and silvery olive trees, and the estate enjoys a cooler climate than one might expect in Tuscany (especially at night). While various pockets exist at different altitudes, the soil is largely a mixture of quartz arenite (sandstone), schist, and marl - ideal for high-quality Sangiovese. Combined with the cool meso-climate, these rugged soils help to sculpt powerful wines of great tannic and acidic prowess. Lorenzo's Chianti Classico Riserva, for example, can age comfortably for 15 years, and for many 'Le Diacce'—the family's tannic, architectural Merlot—actually recalls the Right Bank. The addition of a little (true) Alicante Bouschet often lends a fascinating layer of earth-spice to the wines.

Because of the estate's small size, Lorenzo and his father, Franco, are able to personally track and oversee even the smallest detail contributing to their wine. Not only do they pick by hand, but at harvest, instead of whole clusters, they carry out an individual, grape-by-grape selection. The result? A maximum of one bottle per plant for all their efforts - sometimes a little less. Of course, both their size and location also come with inherent challenges. For example, in 2008 a single, 30-minute hailstorm took out their entire crop (1 hectare) of Merlot, and in 2013, an unusually hot summer cut the estate's production by one third (although it also led to some rather amazing concentration). The range of soils, too, makes it an ongoing challenge to find the perfect balance. "Vines that grow in schist are happier," says Lorenzo, "and produce fatter, more harmonious wines, whereas the quartz and bedrock lend themselves to more angular, mineral-driven fruit." Crafting that perfect weave each year is, of course, the beautiful, ongoing enological puzzle that is Podere Ciona.