

Coastal Tuscany

The birthplace of the vaunted SuperTuscans, this riviera stretch of Italy's western coast is a patchwork of wine regions, populated by pioneering winemakers with an iconoclastic outlook

WORDS & SELECTION FILIPPO MAGNANI

Over the last 30 years, the 270km of Tuscan coast that abuts the Tyrrhenian sea has become another essential piece of the celebrated region's viticultural patchwork. It's an ample territory, nestled between the coastal strip and the foothills of the Apennines. The maritime climate – with its mild winters, warm, sunny summers and constant sea breezes, which aerate the vines – and the wide range of grapes grown here are the common elements that distinguish the various terroirs of the coast from inland Tuscany.

A MIXED WINE SCENE

North of Pisa sit the two tiny DOCs of Colli di Luni and Candia dei Colli Apuani. Recently, both have been attracting praise for their mineral white Vermentino, but the latter also offers a particular Vermentino Nero, which produces reliable reds and rosés. Nearby are the vineyards of the Lucca and Pisa hills, bastions of organic farming practices.

A short distance south of the famous Leaning Tower lies a minuscule wine region adjacent to the ridge-top town of Riparbella. Sandy, white tufa soils, high-altitude vineyards and constant aeration are particular conditions for growing healthy bunches of international red varieties, but under the libertarian IGT (Indicazione Geografica Tipica) wine category, a handful of dynamic wineries have focused on producing organic and biodynamic wines.

Further south stands the hamlet of Bolgheri, the birthplace of the SuperTuscans. Here, pioneering winemakers first began to plant international varieties, which today are grown together with native grapes. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are often blended with Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Petit Verdot and sometimes Sangiovese. Lately, there has been an increase in single-varietal wines, including examples made from the multifunctional Cabernet Franc. In recent years, Bolgheri has seen a well-defined approach to vinification and wood ageing, using more concrete vats for the former, and less new oak and larger casks for the latter.

For Bolgheri white wines, there are no minimum requirements for ageing, giving producers stylistic freedom. Of the three most widespread white varieties, Vermentino is by far the most planted – wines are typically vinified in stainless steel only, although some producers are beginning to release Vermentino after a brief time stored in large, old oak barrels. Smaller quantities of Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier are planted, with producers more frequently bottling oak-aged versions of these varieties.

Near to Bolgheri, to the west of the Colline Metallifere ('metalliferous hills') and around the Cornia river, lies the micro DOC of Val di Cornia, whose epicentre is in Suvereto. Here, red Bordeaux blends coexist harmoniously with the more broadly planted Sangiovese. For the whites, aside from the local Vermentino, some estates also produce Ansonica, often vinified in amphorae.

The southernmost part of the Tuscan coast – a wide, rural area known as the Maremma – embraces several different wine designations. Morellino di Scansano DOCG is a food-friendly, Sangiovese-based red that can be enjoyed in its youth at accessible prices, but it can also age well when made as a Riserva. Maremma Toscana DOC yields red wines – either entry-level or flagship – bottled as a single varietal, or as a blend of international varieties or the indigenous Cilieggiolo, Alicante Nero (Grenache) and, of course, Sangiovese. As for white wines, Vermentino still remains the fingerprint of this part of coastal Tuscany; it's the most widely bottled variety in the Maremma Toscana DOC. Rosés are also increasing in popularity.

The rising success of the wines made here, and recognition of them by consumers, is partly due to innovative and flexible production regulations. But above all, it's down to the work of the talented estates that firmly believe in the potential of this beautiful, rural coastal outpost of Tuscany.

Major appellations of the Tuscan coast

DOC Bolgheri, Bolgheri Sassicaia, Maremma Toscana; DOCG Morellino di Scansano; IGT Toscana, Costa Toscana

'Mild winters, warm sunny summers and constant sea breezes aerate the vines'

Terenzuola, Fosso di Corsano, Colli di Luni 2022

US\$22-\$30 Cellar d'Or, Joe Canal's, Oak & Barrel, Perrine's, Saratoga Wine Exchange, Wine Solutions After vinification, this superb Vermentino ages first on lees for 6-8 months then in bottle for 2-3 months. Intense, complex bouquet with notes of ripe melon, citrus and a hint of ginger. A tangy palate carries fruit and minerality, providing elegance and finesse. Great potential for ageing. Organic. **Drink 2024-2029 Alcohol 14%**



Michele Satta, Giovin Re, Toscana 2022

michelesatta.com Michele Satta first started to vinify pure Viognier in Bolgheri 24 years ago. The wine ferments in wooden barrels and ages for 18 months in 750L amphorae. Captivating aromas of white peach and light notes of quince and honey lead to a structured and creamy palate with sapid, mineral length. **Drink 2024-2029 Alc 13%**



Tua Rita, Keir Ansonica, Toscana 2022

£30 (ib) Armit Innovative interpretation of a native variety, macerated for two months in amphorae with skin contact, then remaining in concrete vats for three months. Delightful aromas of ripe peach and lemon peel, with white flowers and honey. Dry and savoury on the palate, with vibrant acidity and a balanced aftertaste. **Drink 2024-2027 Alc 13%**



Castello del Terriccio, Con Vento, Toscana 2022

US\$22 Basser's Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc were fermented and aged separately for six months on fine lees in stainless steel tanks. Intriguing aromas and flavours of pear, elderflower and a hint of eucalyptus. The dry, creamy palate has sapidity, matched to moderate alcohol and good persistence. **Drink 2024-2025 Alc 12.5%**



Montauto, Vermentino, Toscana 2022

£16.50 Davy's Grapes from vineyards at 200m on clay and stony soils that experience large day-night temperature swings. Intense on the nose, with notes of lemon and ginger, and a herbal hint. This fragrant welcome leads into good fruit and crisp acidity on the palate, rounded off with an elegant, balanced finish. **Drink 2024-2025 Alc 13%**



Antinori, Scalabrone Rosato, Bolgheri 2023

£20.39 (2022) All About Wine Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and a tiny portion of Syrah produce a delightful rosé with a Mediterranean touch. Bright pink at the core with a pale reflection, lovely bouquet of cherries and wild berries with a rose petal hint, then a fruity palate with lively acidity and a pleasant finish. **Drink 2024-2025 Alc 13%**



Morisfarms, Rosamundi, Maremma Toscana 2023

£15.50 (2022) Jeroboams A structured rosé from 100% Sangiovese, fermentation in stainless steel tanks. Clear pink in colour, the wine offers a lovely bouquet of cherry with hints of strawberry and sour cherry. Dry, with moderate acidity, it finishes clean and fresh. **Drink 2024-2025 Alc 13.5%**



Tenuta TerraVita, Aurora, Toscana 2022

tenutaterravita.it An unconventional blend of Sangiovese and Grenache, the destemmed grapes ferment naturally on indigenous yeasts. Matures for seven months in amphorae and concrete vats, then six months in bottle. A brilliant salmon colour, the strawberry and pomegranate aromas have a delicate herbal scent. Fresh with light phenolic intensity. Biodynamic. **Drink 2024-2025 Alc 13%**



Roccapesta, Calestaia, Morellino di Scansano 2019

£45.80 (2015) Shelved Wine A pure Sangiovese from a 50-year-old vineyard, matured in oak vats for 36 months. Well structured with a perfumed nose of cassis and wild berries, hints of violet and rosemary. A complex, seductive and mineral palate features vibrant acidity and silky tannins. Elegant structure suggests great ageing potential. Organic. **Drink 2024-2035 Alc 14.5%**



Caiarossa, Aria di Caiarossa, Toscana 2020

US\$43 Total Wine & More

There's a real minerality to this intriguing blend of Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Grenache. It exudes light balsamic notes with hints of cardamom and chocolate. Succulent and juicy, with flavours of dark cherry and prune, silky tannins and a sapid background. Biodynamic. **Drink** 2024-2030 **Alc** 14.5%



Fabio Motta, Le Gonnare, Bolgheri Superiore 2021

£41-£43 (2020) Theatre of Wine, WoodWinters

A blend of 70% Merlot and 30% Syrah. Scents of liquorice and rhubarb introduce a full-bodied wine with a distinctive flavour of blackberry, rich red fruits on the mid-palate, then a smoky hint at the back. A harmonious wine with polished tannins and a long, fresh finish. Organic. **Drink** 2024-2035 **Alc** 14%



Antonio Camillo, Vallerana Alta Ciliegiole, Toscana 2021

@antoniocamilloviniditerritorio

Vallerana Alta is a roughly 60-year-old Ciliegiole vineyard, planted at 350m on clay topped with a layer of red gravel. A niche wine with an intriguing nose of red cherry, raspberry and light mint scents. Juicy and harmonious, a lovely red fruit palate well integrated with lively acidity, then a vibrant yet delicate finish. Organic. **Drink** 2024-2031 **Alc** 13.5%



Podere 414, Morellino di Scansano 2021

£18.50 The Wine Society

A blend of 85% Sangiovese with a mix of Ciliegiole, Colorino, Alicante and Syrah, fermented in concrete vats and aged in mixed wood for 12 months. Pronounced aromas of black cherry and wild berries with an edge of earthiness. Full on the palate with linear tannins, crisp acidity and a juicy finish. Organic. **Drink** 2024-2031 **Alc** 14.5%



Podere Conca, Apistós, Costa Toscana 2021

podereconcabolgheri.it

A charming monovarietal Cabernet Franc that ferments in concrete vats for 30 days and is then matured in mixed oak barriques for 16 months. Pronounced blackberry aromas, notes of balsamic and eucalyptus. Rich and well structured, it has lively acidity and a savoury finish. Organic. **Drink** 2024-2031 **Alc** 14.5%



Bruni, Oltreconfine, Maremma Toscana 2020

US\$28 Saratoga Wine

In 2013, the Bruni family began making a pure Alicante (Grenache), a grape that was introduced to the Maremma from Spain in the 16th century. Great purity on a graceful bouquet, notes of blackberry, spice and anise. Smooth with ripe fruit and moderate acidity, ending with volume and freshness. **Drink** 2024-2030 **Alc** 14.5%



Tenute Lunelli, Auritea di Podernovo, Costa Toscana 2018

tenutelunelli.it

A pure Cabernet Franc, the free-run juice fermented in stainless steel and the wine aged in French barrels for 18 months. Intriguing bouquet of dark cherry and plums, nuances of green pepper and a light chocolate hint. Fragrant and tangy palate, vibrant acidity and soft tannins, then a lingering finish. Organic. **Drink** 2024-2028 **Alc** 14%



Valle del Sole, Ebrius, Toscana 2020

valledelsole.eu

Spontaneous fermentation with indigenous yeasts, the juice and skins then manually punched down. The wine matures in French oak barrels for 18 months. Full of red cherry, strawberry and violet aromas with scents of mint. The palate exhibits pure red fruit with lively acidity and supple tannins. Soft and juicy, medium length. **Drink** 2024-2026 **Alc** 13.5%



La Fralluca, Ciparisso, Suvereto 2018

£32.70 Tannico[†]

Made with handpicked Sangiovese from Suvereto, the wine is aged in French oak casks for 24 months then spends a further 18 months in bottle before release. An ample bouquet combines notes of red cherry and blueberry with scents of violet and new leather. Good balance of acidity, delicate tannins and a lively finish. **Drink** 2024-2027 **Alc** 14.5% **D**

