

Decanter | buying guide

GUIDE TO:

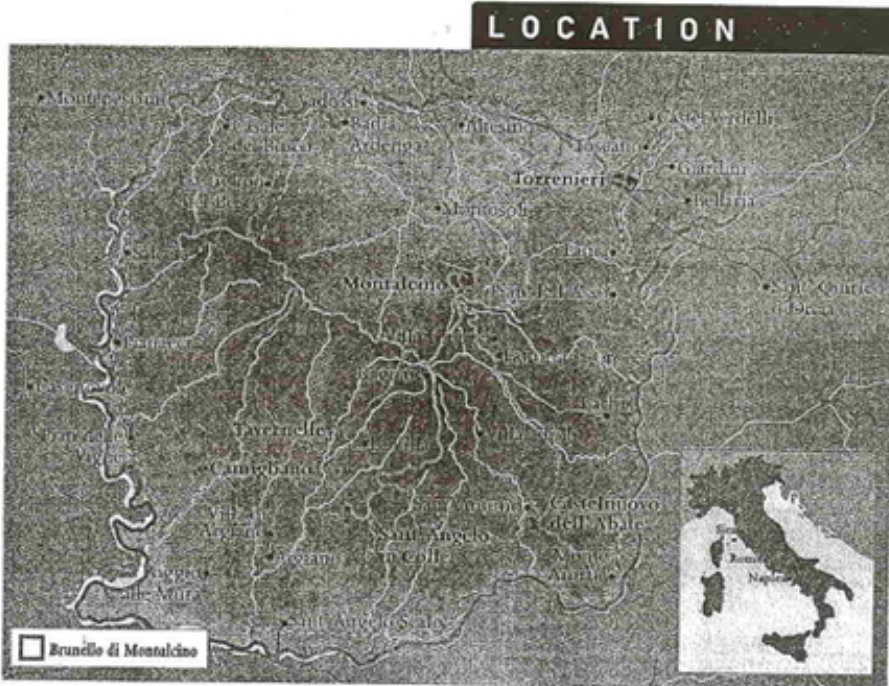
Brunello di Montalcino 2000

Brunello di Montalcino is Tuscany's most prestigious DOCG. **PETER McCOMBIE MW** introduces a style of wine that offers high levels of ripeness, with structure and finesse

Amid the tangle of grape varieties and denominations crowding the Italian wine scene, there are a limited number of names that stand proud, of which Brunello di Montalcino is one. The wine has a reputation and heritage perhaps equalled only by Barolo.

It has been said that Brunello di Montalcino was 'invented' by the Biondi-Santi family towards the end of the 19th century. In fact, Ferruccio Biondi-Santi's genius was to recognise that the hard tannins in the local clone of Sangiovese, Brunello, needed long ageing, and he and his son Tancredi helped establish Brunello's reputation as rare, expensive, powerful and long lived.

DOC regulations were promulgated in 1960. These stipulated the only permitted grape as the local Brunello clone, and a minimum ageing period of 48 months, 42



MAP: MAXINE HEATH

Brunello di Montalcino 2000

recommended (cont...) ★★★

wine name	price	tasting note	drinkability	stockist	mean score
Vitanza	£26	Perfumed, roses, Indian spice, lovely. Broad, full, rich, dried fruits and spices, linen-textured tannins, lovely freshness on finish. Long aftertaste. Up to 5 years. (PS)	WMI		15.33

requirement dropped to 36 months, with the total ageing period remaining at 42 months. Today Brunello di Montalcino, now elevated to DOCG status, remains one of the more sought-after and expensive of Italy's wines.

The area has a Mediterranean climate and is warmer and drier than the Chianti zones to the north, but because of its

down the wines tend to be more forward and open. In between, as Nick Belfrage writes, 'structure meets ripeness of fruit, to produce what many consider the finest Brunello in the medium term'.

Quality is generally high in the zone, and most Brunello, whether made in a modern or traditional style, remains resolutely Tuscan. The last decade has seen a run of generally good vintages.

The 2000 vintage was marked by a heat spike in August, causing vine stress, which can inhibit physiological ripeness. Picking was early, so the zone avoided the

Central and Southern Italy (Mitchell Beazley)

VINTAGE GUIDE

2004	★★★★★	(Consorzio del Brunello rating)
		Very, very promising
2003	★★★★	Low yields, excellent potential
2002	★★★	A difficult vintage
2001	★★★★	Excellent. Classic rather than blockbusting
2000	★★★★	Fruity and forward
1999	★★★★★	Excellent with classic structure, elegant
1998	★★★★★	Not bad, but lacking intensity
1997	★★★★★	Very ripe, tannic, impressive
1996	★★★★	Good
1995	★★★★★	Outstanding

THE FACTS

DOCG BRUNELLO: 1,300ha under vine, 5,500,000 bottles annually
ROSSO DOC: 3,500,000 bottles