

Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

BASED ON MY PRELIMINARY TASTINGS, the 2006 vintage for Brunello di Montalcino appears to be an excellent one. From nearly four dozen wines tasted, most are outstanding (90 to 94 points on *Wine Spectator's* 100-point scale) and two are classic (95 to 100 points).

The styles of wines range from elegant and refined in the northern part of the zone, like the Vitanza Tradizione, Uccelliera and Altesino, to full, generous and opulent versions like Mâté and Podere Brizio-Roberto Bellini, from the lower-altitude, southern sector. My favorite among the Riservas was the Casisano-Colombaio 2004.

The growing season was ideal, with enough rain in the spring to supply water throughout the summer. There was no excess heat in September and the warm days and cool nights allowed for long, slow ripening. The character of the vintage is finesse and balance. On page 4 are the Hot Wines, the top selections of the batch.

—Bruce Sanderson

ITALY Brunello di Montalcino

CANNETA

Brunello di Montalcino Il Pino 2004

94 points | \$42 | 100 cases imported | Red

Ripe and supple, with sweet cherry, raspberry and mineral flavors. Pure and vibrant, with finesse and a beautiful expression of Sangiovese. Very harmonious, this is coming into its own. Best from 2012 through 2022.—B.S.

LA PIEVE

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

94 points | \$65 | 40 cases imported | Red

A touch of new oak gives this a sweet spice element and softens the impact of Sangiovese's dense tannins and bright acidity, working with the black cherry and plum flavors. Everything is in the right proportion, just needs time to integrate. Best from 2014 through 2025.—B.S.

COL D'ORCIA

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

93 points | \$55 | 16,665 cases made | Red

Tightly knit, exhibiting focused cherry, red currant and tobacco flavors, with hints of leather and licorice. Its structure is steely and meshes with the finely woven texture, leaving a harmonious impression as the spice and tobacco notes extend on the finish. Best from 2013 through 2026.—B.S.

FATTORIA LA FIORITA

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

93 points | \$55 | 75 cases imported | Red

Sweet cherry and berry fruit fills the center of this red, with spice, tobacco and bitter almond playing supporting roles. Firmly structured, yet balanced, with a long, spice-filled aftertaste. Best from 2013 through 2026.—B.S.

MOCALI

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

93 points | \$40 | 4,000 cases made | Red

Lovely tobacco, tar, leather and dried cherry aromas and flavors mark this Brunello, which is sweet and tannic, the two components playing off each other through the finish. This has excellent harmony and a long aftertaste. Best from 2013 through 2026.—B.S.

IL POGGIONE

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

93 points | \$80 | 4,000 cases imported | Red

A fresh, elegant style, featuring cherry, blackberry and spice aromas and flavors, with a vibrant structure and well-integrated tannins. This hangs together beautifully through the long finish, which echoes fruit and tobacco. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

LE RAGNAIE

Brunello di Montalcino 2004

93 points | \$70 | 400 cases imported | Red

The bilberry, boysenberry and spice aromas and flavors border on exotic in this effusive red. Though packed with sweet fruit, it's firmly structured and plays an initial smoothness off the refined tannins. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

UCCELLIERA

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

93 points | \$62 | 1,600 cases made | Red

Starts out supple, with licorice, dried cherry and plum flavors, picking up a touch of herbs as this glides to a lingering conclusion. Elegant and almost racy, with grip and character. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

VITANZA

Brunello di Montalcino Tradizione 2006

93 points | \$96 | 1000 cases imported | Red

Lively and delicate, offering cherry, raspberry, floral and spice flavors, with touches of chocolate and mineral. Offers fine balance and harmony, but also well-structured, with a sweet, spicy finish. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

ARGIANO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

92 points | \$66 | 1,000 cases made | Red

Rich, with a glycerol feel to the texture, showing plum, cherry, tobacco and black tea notes, all backed by a solid structure. The acidity and tannins shore this up as the finish glides on. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

CASTELLO BANFI

Brunello di Montalcino Poggio Alle Mura 2006

92 points | \$82 | 250 cases imported | Red

A bruising, powerful red, packed with plum and blackberry, but also stiff tannins. This will require some time to come together, but there's adequate sweetness up front. Best from 2014 through 2027.—*B.S.*

CAMIGLIANO

Brunello di Montalcino Gualto Riserva 2005

92 points | \$95 | 833 cases made | Red

A cool, compact style, showing cherry, currant and sweet spice flavors, backed by a vibrant structure. The profile is elegant and delicate, but not fragile. A nice long finish caps it off. Best from 2012 through 2022.—*B.S.*

FANTI

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

92 points | \$60 | 15,000 cases imported | Red

A dose of new oak lends vanilla and clove aromas and flavors, along with cherry and blackberry. There's a brightness to this red and the tannins are well-integrated, despite being firm and dense. Fine length. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

FATTORIA LA LECCIAIA

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

92 points | \$38 | 2,000 cases imported | Red

Lovely balance and harmony matches the cherry, leather, tobacco and spice aromas and flavors with the well-integrated structure in this red, which shows some power, but also elegance, with a lingering tobacco finish. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

SAN FILIPPO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

92 points | \$42 | 850 cases made | Red

Aromas of ripe cherry, sweet spices and autumn woods draw you in, where all the elements integrate on the palate for a harmonious whole. Features a fine, long aftertaste of tobacco and spice. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

TERRE NERE

Brunello di Montalcino Campigli Vallone 2006

92 points | \$38 | 200 cases imported | Red

Spicy and already showing some mushroomy and woody aromas, this is complex and flavorful, with cherry and tobacco notes and a touch of licorice. Tightly wound, with a lingering, savory aftertaste. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

TERRE NERE

Brunello di Montalcino Campigli Vallone Riserva 2004

92 points | \$45 | 150 cases imported | Red

An aroma of tar overlays cherry, plum and tobacco in this intense red. There's sweetness and a bitter almond component, yet this is balanced overall, with a long aftertaste. Best from 2013 through 2025.—*B.S.*

ALTESINO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

91 points | \$75 | 1,500 cases imported | Red

Smells like Burgundy, with floral, cherry, woody and graphite aromas and flavors. Sweet and silky, underscored by firm, integrated tannins. Distinctive and delicious. Best from 2013 through 2022.—*B.S.*

COL D'ORCIA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2005

91 points | \$90 | 833 cases made | Red

This has softened up somewhat, with bright acidity framing the cherry, sweet plum and spice notes. There's still an edge of tannins, but this is nicely put together. Best from 2012 through 2020.—*B.S.*

PICCINI

Brunello di Montalcino Villa al Cortile 2006
91 points | \$50 | 500 cases imported | Red

Round and generous, with a hint of menthol gracing its cherry, plum and leather aromas and flavors. Turns sleeker and more nimble on the finish, where the fine tannins mingle with licorice and spice. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

PICCINI

Brunello di Montalcino Villa al Cortile Riserva 2005
91 points | \$60 | 200 cases imported | Red

There's richness to this, showcasing its cherry, leather and spice flavors until the firm tannins sweep in. Sinewy and tight at this point, but I like the way it plays out on the finish. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

PININO

Brunello di Montalcino Clandestino 2006
91 points | \$80 | 180 cases imported | Red

This starts out with cherry, earth and spice flavors and a supple texture. Then the assertive tannins take over and build on the finish. There's a touch of oak as well. This has excellent length, but needs time to integrate. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

CASTELLO ROMITORIO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
91 points | \$60 | 1,400 cases imported | Red

A rich, generous red, this firms up on the finish, showing fine length. Sweet cherry, berry, spice and mineral notes mingle, then the layer of tannins emerges. Well-proportioned, just needs time. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

CASTELLO BANFI

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$55 | 5,500 cases imported | Red

Smooth and round, this red offers cherry, bitter almond, spice and woody notes. The tannins are dense, but this is balanced overall and lingers on the finish. Best from 2013 through 2022.—*B.S.*

CAMIGLIANO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$59 | 11,666 cases made | Red

A lean, tight style, with the structure dominant now. Licorice, cherry and tea flavors are embedded deeply, and this stays vibrant and long on the tightly wound finish. Best from 2013 through 2024.—*B.S.*

CAPARZO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$45 | 5,000 cases imported | Red

A tight, linear style, elegant and supported by firm, dusty tannins. Cherry, molasses and tobacco notes are savory, while the chewy texture persists through the finish. Best from 2014 through 2025.—*B.S.*

LE CHIUSE

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$65 | 400 cases imported | Red

There's richness in this round red, underscored by cherry, bitter almond and tobacco flavors. Shows fine balance and lingers on the finish. An easygoing style that's approachable now. Best from 2012 through 2022.—*B.S.*

LAZZERETTI

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$62 | 100 cases imported | Red

Very fresh and layered, sporting dried cherry, tobacco, leather and black tea aromas and flavors. There's sweetness and firm tannins, with a sense of elegance and a long, tobacco-tinged aftertaste. Best from 2012 through 2022.—*B.S.*

MOCALI

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna delle Raunate 2006
90 points | \$50 | 300 cases made | Red

A touch of new oak lends spice, sweetness and polish to this silky red. Cherry and blackberry flavors also prevail, but just when you think this is on the soft side, the firm, tannic structure shows itself, with a slightly dry finish. Best from 2013 through 2022.—*B.S.*

IL PALAZZONE

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$94 | 692 cases imported | Red

Supple and round, with an underlying earthiness, offering cherry and spice flavors. This is bright, with dusty tannins closing in on the finish. Balanced overall, in an elegant style. Best from 2013 through 2023.—*B.S.*

POGGIO SAN POLO

Brunello di Montalcino 2006
90 points | \$90 | 400 cases imported | Red

Cinnamon and clove notes mix with cherry and red currant flavors in this red, which starts out smoothly, turning tannic on the astringent finish. Feels more like wood tannins than grape tannins. Best from 2014 through 2025.—*B.S.*

HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator Insider*. They are high-scoring, low-production wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

MÂTÉ

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

95 points | \$65 | 1,200 cases made | Red

An opulent, fruit-driven style, yet fresh, with cherry, raspberry and blackberry up front and tar and licorice lurking behind. The richness is mouthcoating, and there are dense tannins hanging out on the finish. This has immediate appeal, yet should age well too. Best from 2014 through 2027. *From Italy.—B.S.*

PODERE SALICUTTI

Brunello di Montalcino Piaggione 2006

95 points | \$85 | 120 cases imported | Red

There's fine depth to the cherry, plum and licorice aromas and flavors in this supple red, which is concentrated, yet balanced and refined, with the dusty tannins asserting themselves on the finish for now. Very complex and long. Best from 2013 through 2027. *From Italy.—B.S.*

PODERE BRIZIO-ROBERTO BELLINI

Brunello di Montalcino 2006

94 points | \$55 | 1,800 cases made | Red

A smooth customer, with sweet oak spice, ripe cherry, plum and black tea aromas and flavors. The stiff structure shows up on the finish, but this has depth and layers, lingering for a long time on the finish. Best from 2013 through 2026. *From Italy.—B.S.*

CASISANO-COLOMBAIO

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2004

94 points | \$110 | 550 cases made | Red

A powerful Brunello, this is packed with plum, black cherry, sweet spice and mineral aromas and flavors. Combines purity and a deft use of oak, with a great texture and lovely integration. Best from 2013 through 2024. *From Italy.—B.S.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

The Most Experienced Team of Wine Journalists in the World

Wine Spectator's tasting staff includes 12 people in two offices. They work together to review more than 18,000 wines each year, more than any other publication. Together, our six senior tasters count more than 140 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind in our offices in Napa and New York. This is your guarantee that our reviews are fair and objective, and that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed. We score wines using the 100-point scale, explained below.

James Laube Senior editor, Napa

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: California

Kim Marcus Managing editor, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: Austria, Greece, Port, Portugal, Southern France

Thomas Matthews Executive editor, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: New York, Spain

James Molesworth Senior editor, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1997. Tasting beat: Argentina, Bordeaux, Chile, Finger Lakes, Loire Valley, Rhône Valley, South Africa

Bruce Sanderson Tasting director, New York

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Burgundy, Champagne, Germany, Italy

Harvey Steiman Editor at large, San Francisco

Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: Australia, Oregon, Washington

Tasting staff:

Tim Fish (California)

Alison Napjus (Alsace, Italy)

Nathan Wesley (Italy)

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Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale

95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very good
80-84	Good
75-79	Mediocre
50-74	Not recommended