



AMBIENTE 08/08

A CLOSER LOOK AT TUSCAN WINE + FOOD

'The Tuscans have a faculty for making much of common things and converting small occasions into great pleasures.'

– Henry James

From humble peasant beginnings, Tuscan food and wine is now much loved around the world. Who among us hasn't dreamed of enjoying a lazy lunch in a vineyard under the Tuscan sun, replete with the warm glow of deeply satisfying wine and food? In this edition of Ambiente, we take a closer look at the marriage of Tuscan wine and food – and explain how you can recreate the Tuscan experience in Singapore.

VINO

Like every old wine country, Tuscany has its native grapes. The most important is the red variety sangiovese, which produces the famous Chianti, Chianti Classico and Brunello wines.

Sangiovese's name comes from sanguis Jovis, meaning 'blood of Jove' (the Roman god, Jupiter). Sangiovese represents the soul of Tuscany and has probably been grown in the rolling hills of this region since Etruscan times.

Historically, the Tuscans blended sangiovese with white varieties such as trebbiano and malvasia, to produce soft light red wines that were easy to drink young. Bottled in the traditional fiasco (a round bottomed flask wrapped in raffia), it was not unusual for a field worker in Tuscany to drink up to one litre of this wine a day – so it had to be light!

In the last 30 years, the Tuscan wine scene has undergone a remarkable renaissance. The introduction of increasingly sophisticated techniques in the vineyards and cellars, and a shift in emphasis from quantity to quality, means that Tuscany now produces some of Italy's most prestigious and expensive wines.

Sangiovese is no longer blended with white varieties, so Chianti Classico wines are now much richer and fuller bodied. New imported varieties such as merlot and cabernet are now blended with sangiovese to produce the superb Supertuscans which are more of an international style of wine.

The white wines of Tuscany are less well known than the reds. Much of the common trebbiano grape has been pulled out, as regulations now prohibit its use in making Chianti Classico wines. But the Tuscans still treasure the tradition of producing Vin Santo, a sweet after-dinner wine made by drying small quantities of white grapes in a barn over winter. The fruit is then pressed into small oak barrels where it ferments over the next five years before being bottled.

CUCINA

Spend any time in Tuscany and it becomes clear that the marriage of wine and food is fundamental to Tuscan life.

The beauty of Tuscan food is its simplicity. There are rarely more than three flavours in any one dish, as too many flavours can overpower the essence of the fresh ingredients.

'Food and wine belong in that order in the Tuscan mind. Put too much stress on the wine and you upset the balance.'

Hugh Johnson –
Tuscany and its Wines

Pasta is the staple of Tuscan cuisine, but the Tuscans are also big meat lovers. The most famous dish is the Bistecca Fiorentina (a large char-grilled t-bone steak served quite rare). But Tuscan salsicce (sausages) and rosticianna (ribs) are also exceptional. These meats pair beautifully with sangiovese wine. The acidity and high tannin levels of sangiovese work beautifully with the high fat content in the meat, to produce a marriage of balanced flavours and textures.

TUSCANY IN THE TROPICS

If you're looking to inject some Tuscan style into your meals in Singapore, here are a few hints:

Wine

Tuscan wines, with their balance of tannin and fruit, make for great drinking in Singapore.

Jovis Wines offers some highly rated Tuscan wines from boutique producers Le Fonti, IL Borghetto and Castello di Gabbiano. Check out our website for our full range (www.joviswines.com).

Food

Keep it simple and fresh! It's hard to go past a great antipasto platter with fresh mozzarella, pecorino, prosciutto, and olives, followed by grilled steak Tuscan style drizzled with olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Jovis Wines has just imported some fantastic olive oil and balsamic vinegar produced on the Castello di Gabbiano estate in the heart of Tuscany – so why not order a few bottles to liven up your next meal?

Ambience

Tuscans love relaxed and informal meals with family and friends. Experience that Tuscan ambience for yourself at our Tuscan Barbeque on 11 October. Jovis winemaker Justin Bubb will host an alfresco dinner at one of Singapore's beautiful 'Black and White' houses, where you'll get to experience some exceptional wines from the Jovis Wines 2008 Collection and enjoy a menu of Tuscan specialties, specially designed by Oso Ristorante. To reserve your tickets (\$145 each), email enquiries@joviswines.com

And remember, if you're ever heading to Italy and want the inside story on where to go and what to drink in Tuscany, our winemaker Justin Bubb can help with introductions and suggestions to get you off the tourist track.

