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Radiant Brunello

The 2010 vintage is one of the best in decades, producing ripe, vibrant and balanced Sangiovese

Bruce Sanderson

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Vintners in Tuscany's Montalcino district were dealt the right cards in 2010, with growing conditions that yielded ripe, fruity Sangiovese. In turn, the year's Brunellos reveal elegance and complexity, showing fruit flavors of strawberry, cherry and raspberry, accented by floral, tobacco and mineral elements. The young wines' flavor profiles, along with their impeccable balance, are so compelling that it's easy to overlook their underlying structure. But make no mistake, the top bottlings from the best harvest since 2001 have all the components to age beautifully.

"The 2010 vintage is an easy one to talk about," says Guido Orzalesi, sales and marketing director for Altesino, whose stunning Brunello di Montalcino Montosoli 2010 (98 points on the Wine Spectator 100-point scale, \$125) is the wine of the vintage. "It is one of the vintages in

which to produce a great wine you only had to be careful not to make any mistakes in the cellar, the rest being taken care of by nature."

The weather conditions during the 2010 growing season were slightly atypical. Not only did the Sangiovese vines begin their development later than normal, but also veraison, when the grapes change color in August, came about a week to 10 days later than average for the past decade.

"Quite unusual was the fact that the grapes reached ripening while the vines were still in vegetation," notes Donatella Cinelli Colombini, proprietor of her namesake estate. "It was an extremely rare but very favorable situation. In 2010, the grape clusters were small, sound, and with small grape berries with lignified seeds."

But ideal weather during August, including enough rainfall to offset the effects of the heat and refresh the vines, advanced the development of sugar and more importantly tannins, resulting in ripe Sangiovese.

The vintage's top Brunellos-beginning with the Altesino Montosoli, a wine that shows purity and elegance-deliver expressive cherry, strawberry, raspberry and plum fruit, with accents of herbs, eucalyptus and tobacco. The flavors are aligned to firm structures that will allow the wines to age.

On the fruity side are the Donatella Cinelli Colombini Brunello di Montalcino Progetto Prime Donne (96, \$65), Poggio Salvi Brunello di Montalcino Pomona (96, \$90) and Villa I Cipressi Brunello di Montalcino Zebras (96, \$90). A touch more woody and firm, with assertive tannins, are the La Serena Brunello di Montalcino (96, \$60) and Valdicava Brunello di Montalcino (96, \$129), while Gaja's Pieve Santa Restituta Brunello di Montalcino Sugarille (96, \$190) layers vanilla, coconut and sweet spice notes over black cherry and plum flavors.

These are the highlights from the more than 85 2010 Brunellos I reviewed over the past year in our New York office. With 21 wines scoring classic (95 to 100 points) and the rest outstanding, the 2010 vintage earns an overall rating of 98 points, making it one of the best vintages in the past 20 years. Another 50 late-release 2009s are also included in this report, along with a handful of 2008s and earlier vintages. (A free alphabetical list of scores and prices for all wines tasted is available at www.winespectator.com/073115.)

Brunello di Montalcino is 100 percent Sangiovese. Although the styles within the zone vary, from floral and elegant in the north to dense and muscular in the south, the high quality of the 2010 season yielded successful wines throughout the region. This freshness is one of the hallmarks of the vintage and one of the major factors that will allow the wines to age.

Bottlings such as the Il Poggione Brunello di Montalcino (95, \$85) exhibit the year's balance and harmony, while the Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona Brunello di Montalcino Pianrosso (94, \$75) and Collosorbo Brunello di Montalcino (94, \$50), both flirting with classic ratings, also deliver freshness and cohesion. The two southernmost estates, Col d'Orcia and Castello Banfi, made excellent 2010s as well. The former's Brunello di Montalcino (\$55), offering pure cherry and plum fruit, and the latter's single-vineyard Brunello di Montalcino Poggio alle Mura (\$90), a beefy style with dense tannins, both clock in at 93 points.

The 2010 winter brought snow and rain, building up the water supplies in the soil. Cool temperatures delayed budbreak slightly. Sufficient moisture in the soil allowed the vines to withstand the heat during the summer. It was this groundwater that also delayed veraison, but the vines caught up in the end. Spring and summer were normal, with enough rainfall distributed evenly, and September, an important month for the ripening of Sangiovese, was ideal. Harvest occurred between the third week of September and the middle of October.

Good farming was also crucial to success. "I do not believe in miracles," states Vincenzo Abbruzzese, proprietor of Valdicava. "The 2010 harvest is the result of 43 years of work in the vineyard, in the vineyard, in the vineyard, by generations who always respected the balance of nature. The idea is not to dominate nature, but to work in a friendly way."

Certainly, 2010 was a year in which nature, man and terroir aligned. For Brunello lovers, it's a vintage to buy and cellar.

Perhaps Cinelli Colombini sums it up best: "The Brunello 2010 unite three virtues of Sangiovese from Montalcino: elegance, concentration and longevity."

Senior editor Bruce Sanderson is Wine Spectator's lead taster on the wines of Tuscany.

- [Bruce Sanderson's Top-Scoring Brunellos di Montalcino \(in PDF Format\)](#)

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Bruce Sanderson's Top-Scoring Brunellos di Montalcino

More than 150 wines were reviewed for this report. A free alphabetical list is available at www.winespectator.com/073115. WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
ALTESINO Brunello di Montalcino Montosoli 2010 A stunning red, showing peony, strawberry, cherry and mineral flavors. Intense and deep, with great purity and elegance.	98	\$125	LA FORTUNA Brunello di Montalcino 2010 This is saturated with cherry, raspberry, spice and tobacco flavors, with a supple texture, succulent acidity and refined tannins.	95	\$60
DONATELLA CINELLI COLOMBINI Brunello di Montalcino Progetto Prime Donne 2010 Features terrific fruit, with flavors of cherry, raspberry and plum. Well-structured, but stays balanced and precise.	96	\$65	IL MARRONETO Brunello di Montalcino Madonna delle Grazie 2010 Bright and pure, offering cherry, raspberry, spice and underbrush flavors, with ample tannins. Combines power and finesse.	95	\$109
PIEVE SANTA RESTITUTA Brunello di Montalcino Sugarille 2010 Intense yet fluid, with a core of black cherry and plum shaded by vanilla, coconut and sweet spices. Beautifully integrated.	96	\$190	SILVIO NARDI Brunello di Montalcino Poggio Doria 2010 Pretty cherry, raspberry, spice, tobacco and eucalyptus flavors highlight this elegant red, which opens up beautifully with aeration.	95	\$NA
POGGIO SALVI Brunello di Montalcino Pomona 2010 This classy and harmonious red is elegant and intensely flavored, with strawberry, cherry, currant, mineral and tobacco notes.	96	\$90	SIRO PACENTI Brunello di Montalcino Vecchie Vigne 2010 This brooding version is lean and sinewy in profile, with dusty, chewy tannins gripping the cherry and strawberry fruit.	95	\$85
LA SERENA Brunello di Montalcino 2010 Mint and eucalyptus aromas lead to dried cherry and soy flavors in this firmly tannic red. Sweetness and acidity drive the finish.	96	\$60	PALAZZO Brunello di Montalcino 2010 Ripe and juicy, boasting cherry, raspberry, spice and tobacco flavors. Racy and balanced, staying taut and focused on the finish.	95	\$70
VALDICAVA Brunello di Montalcino 2010 Effusive aromas of incense, green olive, sweet strawberry and cherry, licorice and leather mark this structured version.	96	\$129	IL POGGIONE Brunello di Montalcino 2010 Rich, with excellent density, ripe cherry and plum fruit. Licorice, earth and tobacco notes add depth on the finish.	95	\$85
VILLA I CIPRESSI Brunello di Montalcino Zebras 2010 Smells like a red Burgundy, with cherry, currant, earth and floral aromas and flavors. Elegant and firm, with fine depth.	96	\$90	LE RAGNAIE Brunello di Montalcino Fornace 2010 Round and smooth, offering cherry and strawberry flavors, with dense, ripe tannins and a mix of savory and spicy elements.	95	\$125
CASANOVA DI NERI Brunello di Montalcino Tenuta Nuova 2010 Beautiful aromas of cherry, plum, tar and black pepper mesh with an elegant profile in this fresh, focused red, with plenty of cherry fruit.	95	\$97	SAN FELICE Brunello di Montalcino Campogiovanni 2010 This firm, dense red has the fruit, structure and harmony to develop, with black cherry, black currant, cedar and tobacco flavors.	95	\$60
LA COLOMBINA Brunello di Montalcino 2010 This rich version is saturated with cherry, plum, spice and earth flavors, with dense tannins and vibrant acidity.	95	\$50	SAN FILIPPO Brunello di Montalcino Le Lucère 2010 Fresh cherry and berry flavors lead to leather, tobacco and herbal notes in this focused, balanced, firmly structured red.	95	\$70
FATTOI Brunello di Montalcino 2010 Iron and graphite aromas accent cherry and raspberry fruit in this supple, saline red, beautifully balanced and complex.	95	\$70	LIVIO SASSETTI Brunello di Montalcino Pertimali 2010 This tightly wound red has depth and complexity, from the cherry and menthol notes to the earth and mineral elements.	95	\$55
LA FIORITA Brunello di Montalcino 2010 Aromas of strawberry, currant and medicinal herbs show anise, tobacco and earth hints, all backed by a firm, vibrant structure.	95	\$70			