



The rustic entry to Fondoti Winery, which is located in the Chianti region of central Tuscany, Italy.

A Super Tuscan Experience

AFTER SPENDING MOST OF A WEEK in Northeast Italy, my wife Pat and I drove to Tuscany to meet some friends. We were invited by Jeanne and David Varwig from Barrington to meet with them and other friends to spend two days in Castellina in Chianti. We stayed at a fabulous B&B which was converted from a castello built by the Mazzei family in 1435.

Our breakfasts and evening meals were taken at the castello's restaurant across the road. The weather was always perfect, so all meals were *al-fresco*. The wine list was comprehensive and much fun was had by all.

My focus for the rest of the article is on the two wineries we visited on our full day. Until our first

visit, I had never met or heard of anyone who had visited Montevervine Winery in Radda. The greatest wine, Le Pergola Torte, consists of 100 percent Sangiovese grapes and could be labeled as Chianti. However, when it was first produced in 1977, the Chianti Consorzio had decreed that Chianti must include nominal amount of other Italian indigenous grapes, e.g., Colorino and Canaiolo. The owner decided to produce the best wine he could, so he used only Sangiovese grapes and the great wine was then labelled Indicazione Geographica Tipica (IGT). Not only had I never visited, but I had rarely been able to buy this great wine.

We were graciously welcomed at Montevervine, and after a few minutes spent photographing



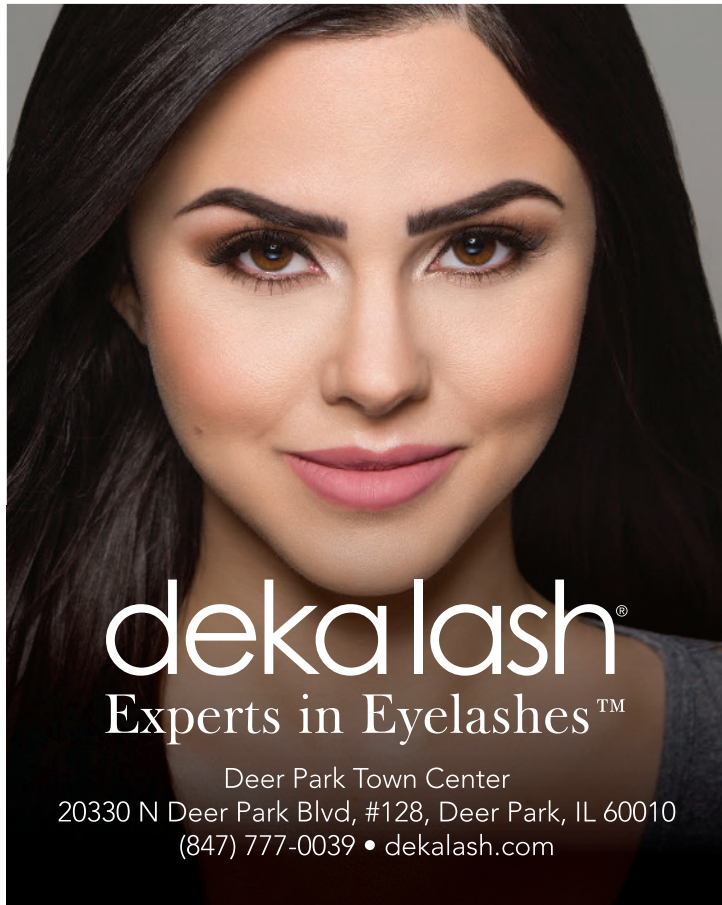
PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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the vineyards, we started touring the winery. It is very traditional and after a short visit, we wound up the spiral staircase to the display bins of past vintages. It was almost overwhelming to see these legendary wines that I had fought so hard to find.

The best was yet to come as we were treated to several vintages of Montevervine wines while seated at a table surrounded by such ambiance. All were excellent, but I will focus on the greatest of them.



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LE PERGOLE TORTE 2014

From a vintage that wasn't kind to Chianti, this wine turned out to be one of the best ever produced. The older vines produced a wine of great minerality with overtones of cherry and just the right amount of oak.

LE PERGOLE TORTE 2015

This wine is from one of the greatest Tuscan vintages ever. It will mature slowly for several decades and produce a wine to be known for both its nose (cherry) and tastes (red fruits). It may eventually rival the 1990 as the only vintage in which one barrel was selected as a Riserva.

We left Monteverdine in high spirits and went to lunch in Panzano at Restaurant Oliveto, a restaurant owned by Giovanni Manetti. Giovanni also owns Fontodi, which produces Flaccianello, also made solely from Sangiovese. I have been fortunate enough to be able to buy and drink this rare wine over the past decade and had taken a small, but different group there in 2014.

We were able to make a winery reservation and after lunch we left and were graciously greeted by the chief administrative officer who had led our previous tour. We were fascinated by the layout and cleanliness of the winery and the beauty of the amphorae which have been used to age some of the wine in recent years. Then we had a great tasting.

All the wines were wonderful beginning with the Merino Sauvignon Blanc 2017, the Chianti Classico 2015, and Vigna dell Sorbo 2014. We finished with two sterling examples of Flaccianello, the 2009 and 2015. Both were of the highest order—almost an ethereal experience. I encourage you to buy Flaccianello whenever you have the chance. A Votre Santé! 🍷



Amphorae age fine wines at Fontodi Winery.