

TASTING

In the latest installment of *GiraMondo Wine Adventures' Iberian wines series* on April 9, discover the wines from southern Spain. In this wine class and tasting, learn about the wine regions of La Mancha, Vinos de Madrid, Valencia, Almansa or Malaga. Visit localwineevents.com for more information. **Price:** \$65

SCOTT GREENBERG *Vine Guy*

The wines and hospitality of ...

Castello di Gabbiano

Imagine for a moment that you are driving through the ancient hills of the famed wine region of Tuscany, just 12 miles south of Florence, Italy. Hopelessly lost, you suddenly find yourself at the gates of a 900-year-old medieval castle, surrounded by lovely gardens and acres upon acres of grape vines. Thirsty and desperate for directions back to the main road, you knock on the

grand doors of the castello (castle), hoping for just a glass of water and a friendly nod back toward town.

Instead, you are welcomed with wide arms and whisked inside to join the on-going party like a dear friend or relative that has been unexpectedly delayed for a very long time. Welcome to Castello di Gabbiano.

Originally built by the Bardi family in the 12th century — in order to protect the region during the long-running feud between Florence and Siena — the Castello has always included wine production throughout its noble history.

Today, Castello di Gabbiano has transformed itself from regional guardian into one of Tuscany's leading wine estates. Situated in the picturesque hills of San Casciano in the Chianti Classico region, the 173-acre estate is now planted with vineyards and olive groves that blend seamlessly into the surrounding Tuscan landscape. The estate grows a combination of sangiovese — used for its Chianti Classico and Chianti Classico Reserva wines — as well as cabernet sauvignon and merlot.

In addition to the upgraded winemaking facilities, including state-of-the-art small batch fermenters that allow winemaker Giancarlo Roman to take advantage of the nuances of specific vineyard blocks, the castello now offers overnight lodging in nine luxury guest rooms. There is also a restaurant on the premises that caters to guests staying at the castello, locals and travelers.

I had an opportunity to taste a number of wines from the Gabbiano portfolio with Managing Director, Ivano Reali, during his recent visit to Washington. Retail prices are approximate.

2007 Gabbiano Pinot Grigio, Delle Venezie, Italy (\$10)

Fruit for this wine was sourced from three districts outside of the estate, from Italy's "Tre Venezie" region in the northeast part of the country. These three districts are bordered on the north by the Julian Alps and Dolomite mountain ranges and on the south by the Adriatic Sea. The cool growing climate gives this pinot grigio a lovely nose filled with scents of tropical fruit and lemon-lime citrus. Bright flavors of mango, papaya and the palate echoes the nose with vibrant and fresh tropical fruit flavors that lead to a long finish with lively acidity. It makes a wonderful aperitif on a warm summer evening.



2006 Gabbiano Chianti, Tuscany, Italy (\$10)

Small amounts of canaiolo, colorino and cilieggiolo were added to this sangiovese-based wine. The result produces a pretty cherry-red color in the glass and features scents of violets and red berry fruit. The cherry and berry fruit theme is carried onto the palate where notes of red plum join in on the well-balanced finish. Since this wine does not receive any treatment with oak during its fermentation or aging, the fruit stays bright and focused. An excellent value that would pair well with pasta with mushroom sauce.

2005 Gabbiano Chianti Classico, Tuscany, Italy (\$13)

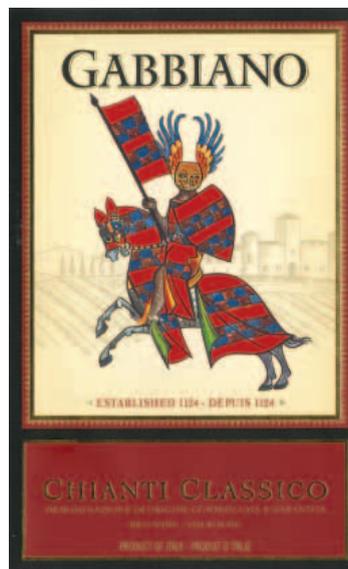
This wine is aged in large-format oak barrels, so the oak treatment is very subtle. It exhibits scents of cherry, plum and toasted oak on the nose. Due to the location and soil composition - limestone, marly sandstone and clay - the wine is favored with complexity and balance and flavors of dark cherry, red fruit and hints of cinnamon. The soft tannins would make this wine a unique choice with roasted chicken - with a side of pasta, of course.

2005 Gabbiano Chianti Classico Riserva, Tuscany, Italy (\$23)

Grapes for this wine come from the oldest — average age of 30 years old — and best vines of the Castello vineyard. The nose features lovely scents of black cherry, black pepper and melted licorice. The palate is rich and well-balanced with flavors of juicy cherry fruit, dark plums and raspberries. Hints of toasted oak glide in on the elegant finish. Enjoy with, what else, Florentine steak.

2004 Gabbiano "Alleanza" Tuscany, Italy (\$35)

Typically referred to as a "Super Tuscan", this flagship wine is a joint effort between Chief Winemaker, Giancarlo Roman and Ed Sbragia, winemaker emeritus at Beringer Vineyards. Filled with elegant aromas of rich dark plums, black cherry and hints of dark chocolate. Mouth-filling flavors of plums, dark fruit,



soft oak and roasted coffee are rich and supple, thanks to soft tannins — courtesy of the high concentration of merlot that makes up the majority of the blend. A value in the midpriced wine category, it would pair well with roasted meats or game.

So, if you're ever in Tuscany, I encourage you to drop by Castello di Gabbiano. Tell Ivano that I sent you.



Do you have a favorite royalty of wine? E-mail me at scott@vineguy.com.

