

A Place to Nap After Wine Tasting

By ONDINE COHANE

Visitors to Italian vineyards are often treated to lavish wine-tastings, four-course lunches and, sometimes, a walk around 15th-century grounds. But soon after a big meal, one is faced with a challenge: How to drive back to the hotel? Now, three famous vineyards in Tuscany and Abruzzo have solved this quandary by opening hotel rooms — newly refurbished, and often little-advertised — on the vineyard grounds.

Castello di Ama has long been one of the blue-chip names in Chianti. A family-owned vineyard since the 1970s, varietals like its San Lorenzo cru frequently place in the top 10 spots on the Wine Spectator's best 100 list. But just as famous as its grapes is the Pallanti family's contemporary art collection which, sprinkled throughout the Castello's medieval borgo, includes a Louise Bourgeois sculpture called "Topiary" (ingeniously hidden beneath a grate in the cantina floor) and an Anish Kapoor light installation, "Aima," that illuminates the estate's tiny chapel. Now, the vineyard's owners, Lorenza Sebasti and Marco Pallanti, have transformed the elegant villa that anchors the borgo into a three-bedroom hideaway, with each room outfitted with Frette sheets and access to a state-of-the-art kitchen. The view from one unit, the Bellavista, features lines of vineyards as far as the eye can see — and a show-stopping mirrored installation by Daniel Buren that reflects the rolling hills. For dinner, guests convene on the terrace of Il Ristoro di Ama for a meal cooked by Giovanni Bonavita, the family's private chef.

About 100 miles away in Abruzzo, an untamed (and considerably less traveled) part of the country, Castello di Semivicoli has become a refuge for oenophiles in search of the vineyard's famed Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. The 17th-century castle and vineyard (which has panoramic views from the region's Central Appenine mountains all the way down to the sea) was in disrepair until the Maschiarelli family restored the property a few years ago — first reinventing the vineyards, and more recently opening new rooms designed by the architect Lelio di Zio, which incorporate eco-friendly touches on the building's original bones. Guests can stay in the original family's "jail," former servant's quarters — and even the baroness's wing, which has a secret tunnel to the chapel.

One needn't be a wine expert to have heard of Frescobaldi, one of Tuscany's most famous wine families. But the Castello di Pomino, the family's original seat in Tuscany, is a surprisingly intimate affair. Built in the 1500s, the castle — located 20 minutes outside of Florence, near the Rufina — was previously only available for wine tastings and visits; this spring, the vineyard opened five rooms on the property. Surrounded by a lush forest of fir and chestnut trees, the hotel sits in an elevated microclimate (at the highest altitude in the region) and offers the only pinot nero DOC in Tuscany. Miles of hiking trails are accessible from the vineyard — which snake through vines of pinot bianco and chardonnay — perfect for trekking before collapsing into one of the new suites, which all have expansive views of the historic estate.



Clockwise from top left: Daniel Buren's "Sulle Vigne: Punti di Vista" that reflects the rolling hills and Pascale Marthine Tayou's "Le Chemin du Bonheur," both at Castello di Ama; the entrance of Castello di Semivicoli in Abruzzo.

Clockwise from top left: Alessandro Moggi (2); Courtesy of Castello di Semivicoli