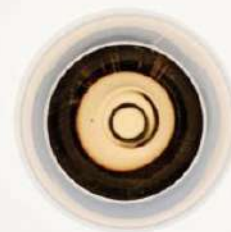


**35TH ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE**

**Wine & Spirits**  
SPECIAL ISSUE



**TOP 100**



**WINES, WINERIES + BEST BUYS**



ITALY | PIEDMONT

## Vietti

*Vietti's 2016 Barolo Rocche di Castiglione is the embodiment of a vintage that many consider perfect.*



LUCA CURRADO VIETTI

LUCA AND ELENA CURRADO VIETTI ARE PARTNERS in every sense of the word, and their teamwork has taken Vietti to ever greater heights. They made the difficult decision in 2016 to sell the winery to the Krause family, and, despite some hand wringing in the wine community, the move has only seemed to strengthen the winery. In the post-World War I era, 100 years before MGAs (Menzioni Geografiche Aggiuntive—essentially, crus) had been classified, Luca's great-grandfather began buying or renting the best vineyards in different parts of the Barolo zone. Luca's father continued that tradition, and now, with the backing of the Krause family, he and Elena have been able to expand their vineyard holdings to include plots in 25 of the region's best single crus. Which means that, as exciting as these current wines are, we have three new single-cru wines to look forward to in the coming years, including one from Verduno's Monvigliero, a cru that Vietti has had his eye on for years. —S.J.



**2016 Barolo Rocche di Castiglione (\$175, 100 points)** Alfredo Currado made Vietti's first-ever single-cru Barolo in 1961 from the southeast-facing slope of Rocche di Castiglione. His son, Luca, made this 2016, from a season he considers the best in his 33 harvests. The wine's red-cherry flavors are vibrant and juicy, with notes of orange peel and fresh tobacco. Its tannins are formidable yet cool, adding to its sense of freshness. The wine continues to gain energy and vibrancy even five days after the bottle was opened. A portrait in balance and equilibrium, this 2016 is a monumental achievement.

**2016 Barolo Lazzarito (\$175, 99 points)** Rooted in the clay-limestone soils of this southwest-facing slope, Vietti's Lazzarito vines grew a 2016 with muscular tannins, framing flavors of dark cherry and raspberry tinged with notes of menthol and blood orange. This wine is compelling for its raw power and energy, and for the verticality and freshness of its chiseled tannins, set to develop over the next decade and beyond.

**2016 Barolo Ravera (\$175, 98 points)** Ravera di Novello, a cru in Barolo's southwestern corner, receives fresh air from the nearby mountains. Harvest typically takes place a week later than other areas, giving the grapes time to develop exuberant floral aromas along with taut red-cherry and plum flavors. Those flavors arrive in waves, propelled by cool acidity, laced with menthol and orange zest, all feeling fully integrated.

**FOUNDED:** 1873  
**OWNER:** The Krause family  
**WINEMAKER/ VITICULTURIST:** Luca Currado Vietti  
**ACRES OWNED:** 160.6  
**ANNUAL PRODUCTION:** 33,334 cases  
**IMPORTER:** Dalla Terra, Napa, CA

ITALY | SICILY

## Tasca d'Almerita

*Tenuta Tascante's single-contrada Etna Rossos have elevated the winery to the top tier of Mount Etna producers.*



ALBERTO TASCAS

TASCANTE HAS RELEASED ONLY TWO VINTAGES of their single-contrada Etna Rossos, but their success did not come overnight.

Alberto Tasca is the current CEO of Tasca d'Almerita, one of Sicily's oldest winemaking companies, based in the center of the island. Tasca became enamored with the alchemy between nerello mascalese and Mount Etna's volcanic soils, and in 2007 he bought vineyards in four different *contrade* on Etna's northern slope. His team spent the next decade vinifying the wines from each *contrada* separately to learn their characteristics, and to determine which old vines to replace and which to sustain. The 2017 vintage marks the second release of Tascante's four single-contrada wines, all recommended by our tasting panels. All are vinified in the same way (fermented with temperature control and aged one year in large Slavonian oak casks) to highlight the expression of each *contrada* and its different era of lava flows. "A good wine can tell you where it comes from," says Tasca, and that is certainly true of these distinctive Etna Rossos. —S.J.



**2017 Etna Rosso Tenuta Tascante Contrada Sciaranuova V.V. (\$100, 95 points)** From Tascante's oldest vines, planted in 1961 on the terraced slopes of Contrada Sciaranuova, this is an exciting wine, bursting with scents of fresh flowers and wild herbs. The red berry and cherry flavors are concentrated yet lively, veined with dark mineral tones that evoke Etna's rugged slopes.

**2017 Etna Rosso Tenuta Tascante Contrada Sciaranuova (\$50, 93 points)** Fruit for this wine comes from the younger vines in Contrada Sciaranuova, planted in 2008 and reaching up some 2,400 feet above the sea on Etna's northern slope. Although less concentrated than Sciaranuova V.V., it is also brighter, its high-toned flavors of plum and pomegranate lifted by hints of orange zest and imbued with saline energy.

**2017 Etna Rosso Tenuta Tascante Contrada Planodario (\$50, 93 points)** Planodario is Tascante's highest-elevation plot among its four single-contrada wines; the vines were planted in 2010 at up to 2,540 feet altitude. Those young vines yielded a vibrant and playful wine, less weighty and tannic than its siblings but juicy and inviting, with bright red-berry flavors and cool herbal tones that take on dark, tarry notes with exposure to air.

**FOUNDED:** 1830  
**OWNER:** The Tasca d'Almerita family  
**WINEMAKER (TASCANTE):** Stefano Masciarelli  
**VITICULTURIST:** Davide Bacchlega  
**ACRES OWNED:** 1,122  
**ANNUAL PRODUCTION:** 250,000 cases  
**IMPORTER:** Dalla Terra, Napa, CA (Tascante); Winebow, NY (Tasca d'Almerita)

lovers of “classic” vintages. Gaja’s Camaranda is one of the finest Bolgheri blends we tasted from this vintage, packed with flavors of crunchy plum and blackberry that are vibrant, laced with notes of licorice, tobacco and graphite. Bright and lively, taut and energetic, seamless and elegant—these words all apply to this wine and, in the end, the 2018 Camaranda is simply gorgeous. —S.J. (W&S 10/21) *Terlato Wines Int’l, Lake Bluff, IL*

**96 | Grattamacco** \$100  
**2018 Bolgheri Superiore** This wine is packed with pure flavors of blackcurrant and raspberry buoyed by brisk acidity. A blend of cabernet sauvignon with 20 percent merlot and 15 percent sangiovese, Grattamacco aged in French oak barriques, about one-third new, where the lightly chewy tannins developed, giving shape to the bold, primary fruit tones. The wine takes on notes of graphite and fresh tobacco, while lively spices energize the fruit through a long, exuberant finish. —S.J. (W&S 10/21) *Winebow, NY*

#### BEST CHIANTI CLASSICO



**96 | Rocca di Montegrossi** \$70  
**2016 Chianti Classico Gran Selezione Vigneto San Marcellino** Chianti Classico’s superb 2016 vintage yielded some excellent wines, and Marco Ricasoni-Firidolfi’s Gran Selezione is among the best we’ve tasted. The wine stands out for its combination of firm structure, elegant texture and vibrant flavors. The fruit tones are dark and plummy, a nod to the six percent of pugnucello in the blend, and the wine unfolds to reveal layers of licorice, tobacco and subtle spice. Fine tannins give shape to those rich flavors, and well-integrated acidity lifts the finish. —S.J. (W&S 4/21) *North Berkeley Imports, Berkeley, CA*

#### BEST TUSCANY: BRUNELLO

**98 | Il Marroneto** \$300  
**2016 Brunello di Montalcino Selezione Madonna delle Grazie** The temperate 2016 growing season has generated much anticipation among devotees of Brunello di Mon-

talcano, and the vintage lives up to its hype with exciting wines like Alessandro Mori’s Brunello from the Madonna delle Grazie vineyard. Il Marroneto lies on the northern side of the village of Montalcino, where cool evening temperatures infused the grapes with electric acidity. That acidity pulses through intensely concentrated dark cherry flavors, the wine slowly revealing scents of lavender and violets as it opens with exposure to air. It layers rich fruit tones with notes of licorice, iodine and warm spice that linger on an incredibly long and heady finish. This is a wine that demands some patience but will be worth the wait. —S.J. (W&S 4/21) *Winebow Imports, NY*

#### BEST ETNA ROSSOS

**95 | Tasca d’Almerita** \$100  
**2017 Etna Rosso Tenuta Tascante Contrada Sciaranuova V.V.** Alberto Tasca released four single contrada Etna Rossos from the 2017 vintage. All four of the wines are vinified in the same way (fermented with temperature control and aged one year in large oak casks) to highlight the expression of each contrada and its different era of lava flows. The V.V. (*vigna vecchia*, or old vine) grows at a parcel planted in 1961 on the terraced slopes of Contrada Sciaranuova. It’s an exciting wine, brilliant translucent ruby in color and bursting with scents of fresh flowers and wild herbs. The red berry and cherry flavors are concentrated yet lively, veined with dark mineral tones and supported by cool, ferrous tannins. It is a wine of impressive depth, evocative of Etna’s rugged slopes. —S.J. (W&S 6/21) *Dalla Terra, Napa, CA*

**95 | Tenuta delle Terre Nere** \$81  
**2018 Etna Rosso Calderara Sottana** Marco de Grazia’s Terre Nere wines are consistently delicious from vintage to vintage. Calderara Sottana stands out for its soaring aromatics and weightless intensity. The wine’s beautiful scents of cherry blossoms and freshly crushed cherries lead into penetrating red fruit flavors. Those flavors are concentrated yet lively and bright, wrapped in cool, polished tannins, balanced by undertones of smoke and minerals on the long finish. —S.J. (W&S 6/21) *Skurnik Wines & Spirits, NY*

#### BEST TAURASI

**96 | Feudi di San Gregorio** \$85  
**2013 Taurasi Riserva Piano di Montevergine** Feudi di San Gregorio proprietor Antonio Capaldi acknowledges that aglianico has a reputation as a hard and rustic

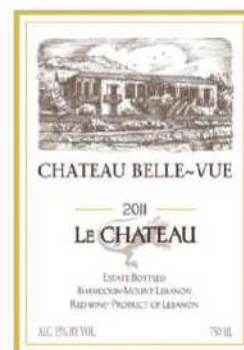
variety, yet he asserts that it can be sweet and soft if picked at the right time. That appears to be the case with this Riserva, its rich blackberry and plum flavors couched in a velvety texture and infused with lively acidity. Piano di Montevergine is a 7.4-acre cru, its vines planted in 1986 on a mix of volcanic and limestone soils. The 2013 is drinking beautifully at the moment, those bold fruit and spice tones beginning to take on developed notes of roasted mushroom and dried herbs, yet the long, energetic finish suggests the wine has not yet reached its peak. —S.J. (W&S 6/21) *Terlato Wines Int’l, Lake Bluff, IL*

#### LEBANON

##### BEST WHITE

**94 | Couvent Rouge** \$45  
**2017 Bekaa Valley Racine White** This comes from a vineyard in Deir Al Ahmar (“Couvent Rouge,” in Arabic), the 15-year-old viognier vines nestled in a valley at nearly 6,000 feet in altitude. It’s cool up there, the vines fed by snowmelt from the peaks of Mount Lebanon, yet the sun is warm and the summers are dry—the fruit is ripe by early August. In 2017, Walid Habchi let this wine ferment for three weeks in stainless steel tanks before moving it into new French oak barrels. The wine is a deep orange hue, with rancio tones of salted caramels and candied orange peels. Yet it’s also fresh, with floral notes of quince and juicy tangerines; the acidity sends off sparks of energy that keep it feeling lively for days. It’s a fascinating white wine, complex and elegant, built for meals of roasted fish or white meat. —T.Q.T. (W&S 8/21) *Terra Sancta Trading Co., Jacksonville, FL*

##### BEST RED



**93 | Château Belle-Vue** \$52  
**2011 Mont Liban Bhamdoun Le Château** In 1999, Naji Boutros moved his family from London to Bhamdoun, where his