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## Super Tuscan Seconds

By Jay McInerney

Super Tuscan wines have gone in and out of fashion several times since someone first thought up this moniker for wines that didn't fit the DOC rules for Chianti. Among the first Super Tuscan wines to make a splash were Tignanello and Le Pergole Torte which were, like Chianti, sangiovese based wines. But the term has come to be most closely associated with Bordeaux-blend wines from the Bolgheri region, particularly since Sassicaia grabbed the attention of the wine world with its spectacular 1985 vintage.

Sassicaia, Ornellaia and Solaia were all the rage in the late nineties, when I first visited the area, their profiles raised in part by the new wave of Italian restaurants springing up in this country at the time. Angelo Gaja, the baron of Barbaresco, ended up buying into the boom, purchasing land in this area whose proximity to the sea gives it more moderate temperatures than the hills of Chianti. The inevitable backlash set in, fanned by some poor vintages and the high prices that these wines had come to command.

Nevertheless, winemaking has continued to improve as the vines get older and a recent string of great vintages make this a good time to revisit the category. These wines are still expensive, and take years to come around, but all of the major houses make second and even third wines which offer good value while being approachable on release.

I recently tried the 2009 Le Serre Nuove dell'Ornellaia, and I was extremely impressed with the polish and complexity of this Bordeaux blend. (54 percent Merlot, 31 percent cabernet sauvignon, 10 petit verdot and 5 percent cab franc). It's drinking beautifully already at about a third the cost of Ornellaia, which takes years to show its stuff.

The 2009 Guidalberto, the second wine of Tenuta San Guido, makers of Sassicaia, is also superb, deep and rich with silky tannins that make it more than drinkable now, though it will improve for several years. This is a 60 percent cabernet and 40 percent merlot blend.

I haven't yet had a chance to taste the 2009 Ca'Marcanda Magari, Gaja's second wine from the Ca'Marcanda estate, but the 2008 was a beauty. At around \$60 none of these wines are cheap, but Ca'Marcanda's Promis is about half that price and Ornellaia has a third wine, Le Volte, which is inevitably a great value in ripe vintages. I thoroughly enjoyed a bottle of the 2007 Le Volte the other night with some chicken parmigiana. Yes, that's right, chicken parmigiana. It, too, is coming back into fashion.

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