



Tim's Wine Market

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By J.P. Donnelly-Davis

Every summer it seems like a lot of our customers head to Italy during the summer, so the selections this month are for those of us who are either living vicariously through them, or have recently returned and are missing the wines. Regardless of which camp you fall into, these are two amazing expressions of Sangiovese from Tuscany that show the great range of this amazing variety. - **Tim**

2022 Fattoria le Pupille Morellino di Scansano - \$25

I will spare you my David Letterman impression, but to quote the great late-night host, “my next guest needs no introduction.” Elisabetta Geppetti, known as the “Lady of Morellino” by her peers, has been producing wines in the coastal Tuscan commune of Scansano since 1982. A few years later Elisabetta would begin the process of re-planting the property’s older vineyards, both to native varieties such as Sangiovese, and varieties that had become popular in the “Super Tuscan” movement, such as Cabernet Sauvignon. In the 42 years that have passed since assuming control of the winery, she has continued to expand the family’s holdings and experiment with grape varieties from across Europe to create a large array of wines. However, Morellino di Scansano remains the core of the Geppetti family’s winemaking, and today not only Elisabetta but all 5 of her children are dedicated to the production of this regional specialty.

Morellino is the name of the local clone of Sangiovese, similar to Sangiovese Grosso in Montalcino. Sangiovese is a very adaptable grape variety and takes on different characteristics depending on where in Tuscany it is grown. In this case, “Morellino” means “little cherries” in the local dialect, a reference to the grape’s tart red fruit flavors, small size, and pink skins. The resulting wines, as you will soon discover, are approachable when young (though still capable of aging) and are often slightly lower in tannin than other Sangiovese-based wines.

The estate’s most popular wine, this Morellino di Scansano is sourced from multiple vineyard sites across the commune. The diversity in soil composition is huge in Scansano, but most of the Geppetti family’s vineyards are planted on sandstone which helps to facilitate ripeness. Morellino makes up the majority of vineyard plantings, supplemented with Cilieggiolo and Alicante which contribute color and acidity. All fruit except the Alicante (which requires a longer hang time to achieve ripeness) is harvested during the first week of September and ferments separately in stainless steel. Once dry, the wines are blended together and spend 8 months maturing in stainless steel, while a small percentage matures in gently-used oak barrels before bottling.

When you open this wine, I strongly suggest decanting for at least half an hour. In addition, this wine certainly benefits from serving at cellar temperature, about 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Once this wine has some time to open up it delivers notes of tart red cherry, fresh cranberry, dried rose petal, and clove. Drink now through 2029 with red sauce pasta dishes, roast duck or turkey breast, or charcuterie with olives.

2022 Martoccia Rosso di Montalcino - \$29

Moving further inland, and climbing some extra thousand feet above sea level, we come to the hilltop town of Montalcino, famous the world over for its red wines, particularly the Brunello di Montalcino DOCG. Luca Brunelli works harder than most to produce this legendary wine, for not only are his vineyards so steep that all work has to take place by hand, but his vines are so old and the soils so nutrient-poor that the yields are significantly reduced. In fact, his vines (which he jokingly calls “bonsai” due to their small size) only produce 4 clusters of grape per plant, meaning that it takes multiple whole vines to produce a single bottle of his Brunello! Fortunately for us, Luca also makes a delicious Rosso di Montalcino, sourced from the nearby hamlet of Montecucco, where his vines produce significantly more fruit.

Rosso di Montalcino is a category often overlooked by collectors, but emphatically enjoyed by wine drinkers. Often considered the “little sister” to Brunello, Rosso di Montalcino is a DOC which allows for slightly looser restrictions. While the wines must be made exclusively from Sangiovese Grosso, similar to Brunello, Rosso di Montalcino producers are

allowed to use fruit from a handful of surrounding villages as well as Montalcino itself. In addition, the wine does not require the long additional aging of Brunello, with only 1 year of required maturation before release. This typically results in a fresher, less tannic expression of Sangiovese Grosso. Despite being a younger wine, this is far from a “lesser” wine, and Luca’s signature touches such as dry farming, organic vineyard treatments, and an emphasis on altitude delivers this serious (and seriously good) example of Rosso di Montalcino. All winemaking and maturation takes place at Martoccia, the Brunelli family’s ancient farmhouse, where wine has been produced in the same cellar since the Middle Ages.

When you open this wine, you will want to decant for up to an hour. In addition, this wine benefits from serving at cellar temperature, similar to the Morellino di Scansano detailed above. Well worth the wait, after this wine has some time to open up it delivers notes of blackberry preserve, cooked red cherry, pipe tobacco, and earth. Drink now through 2030 with eggplant parmigiana, beef and spinach lasagna, or any pasta dish heavy on the fresh vegetables and grated Parmesan!

Pasta with Beans and Kale

This is a classic dish typical of the *cucina povera*, or poor cuisine, that is so common particularly in the hillsides of central Italy. Beans take the place of meat, with a healthy dose of kale to add color and some vitamins to what otherwise is a carb-lovers dream. This recipe also allows for a good bit of variation, so choose your favorite pasta, beans and greens. It works well with both wines so fire up a pot, call some friends and host a tasting!

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
4 medium garlic cloves, thinly sliced
3 anchovy fillets (optional)
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1/4 cup dry white wine
4 cups cooked dry white beans (such as cannellini or Great Northern) or two (15-ounce; 425g) cans low-sodium white beans, drained and rinsed
1 cup bean cooking liquid or homemade or store-bought low-sodium chicken stock, or vegetable stock
Kosher salt
12 ounces short tubular pasta, such rigatoni
1 bunch (8 ounces) lacinato kale, tough stems removed, leaves cut into 2-inch pieces
2 1/4 ounces grated Pecorino Romano cheese, divided

In a large straight-sided sauté pan or skillet, combine olive oil, garlic, and anchovies (if using). Cook over medium-low heat, stirring and breaking up anchovies occasionally with a wooden spoon, until anchovies have dissolved and garlic has softened and is just beginning to turn lightly golden, about 5 minutes. Add red pepper flakes and continue to cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Increase heat to medium-high and add wine. Bring to a simmer and cook, swirling pan and scraping up any stuck-on bits with a wooden spoon, until wine has emulsified with olive oil and mixture is slightly reduced, about 30 seconds.

Add beans and bean cooking liquid (if using cooked dry beans) or stock (if using canned beans), and, using a wooden spoon, crush roughly one-quarter of the beans against the sides and bottom of pan. Stir well, season lightly with salt, and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until bean mixture is thickened to a creamy, saucy consistency, 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a pot of salted boiling water, cook pasta until softened on the exterior, but well shy of al dente and still uncooked in the center (about 3 minutes less than the package directions). Right before the pasta reaches this level of doneness, add the kale to the pan with the beans. Using a spider skimmer or slotted spoon, transfer pasta to pan with beans and kale along with 1 cup pasta cooking water. Alternatively, drain pasta using a colander or fine-mesh strainer, making sure to reserve at least 2 cups pasta cooking water.

Increase heat to high and cook, stirring and tossing rapidly, until pasta is al dente and sauce is thickened and coats noodles, 2 to 3 minutes, adding more pasta cooking water in 1/4 cup increments as needed. At this point, the sauce should coat the pasta but still be loose enough to pool around the edges of the pan; because of the starch in the beans and pasta water, the sauce will continue to tighten up in the time it takes to plate and serve, so make sure it's a little looser than you would normally serve a sauce. Remove from heat, add 3/4 of grated cheese, and stir rapidly to incorporate. Season with salt to taste. Serve immediately, passing remaining grated cheese at the table.