



# Tim's Wine Market

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The concept of “Super Tuscan” red wines began in the 1970s not as a unified movement but rather the convergence of two different groups of producers. The first were producers primarily in the Chianti Classico zone eager to modernize their wines by including non-traditional varieties in their blends. The second, and perhaps now most famous, were new wineries working the coastal zones of Tuscany where there was less tradition of quality production. Both groups were eager to bring the wine industry of Tuscany into the modern world but it created many problems, first with regulation from the government and second, what to call the wines.

For two decades this created havoc between the wine industry and regulators until 1992 when they created a generic appellation, Toscana IGT (Indicazione Geografica Tipica). Shortly after, in 1994, they also created the Bolgheri DOC/DOCG, codifying rules for the epicenter of the coastal regions. Since then other appellations have been created as well, with examples similar to our features this month. Today, while not explicitly stated, the term “Super Tuscan” is discouraged by the regulators in lieu of the official designations you will taste this month.

## **2022 Rocca di Frassinello “Poggio alla Guardia” Maremma Toscana | \$23**

This wine is the coastal project of a legendary Chianti Classico producer, Castellare di Castellina. Already famous for their commitment to quality, lower-intervention viticulture, and cultivation of a rare clone of the Sangiovese grape known as Sangiovetto. The team behind Castellare di Castellina acquired this property in 2007 in partnership with the family that owns Chateau Lafite-Rothschild, the famed First Growth of Bordeaux. Taking advantage of the warmer coastal climate of Maremma they cultivate French varieties such as Merlot and Petit Verdot in addition to their treasured Sangiovetto.

This wine is from the Maremma which is the coastal region of southern Tuscany, known for a long, sunny growing season with temperatures moderated by the proximity to the sea. Soils in this area are a mix of limestone rich clay, which are similar to Bordeaux, so these varieties play a major role in the wine. Thanks to vast resources this is a very large estate, more than 1200 acres, but only 225 of planted vineyards and nearly 100 of olive trees. This allows the winemaking team to use only the best sites on the property for grape vines, the remainder is left as conservation land for indigenous plants and animals. The vineyards sit at roughly 100 feet above sea level and are planted to roughly 50% Sangiovetto and 50% Bordeaux varieties. This gives the winemakers, led by the Lafite team, plenty of options to craft the best wine each year. The final blend for the 2022 Poggio alla Guardia is 40% Sangiovetto, with the remaining balance split between Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Humorously, the translation of the winery tech sheet describes the soils of this area as “rich in skeletons” so perhaps this would be a better feature for October.

The Rocca di Frassinello winery produces two red wines, the “grand vin” which is aged in oak, and this their entry level which is produced without time in barrel. In lieu of oak the team uses concrete, which provides for slow aging while preserving fruit character. When you open this wine, you will want to decant for up to a half hour. Once this wine has some time to open up it has a powerful core of dark fruit with notes of black plum, black currants, wild raspberry, clove, and forest floor. Drink 2025-2032 with charcuterie with hard cheeses or slow braised pork ribs with figs and cipollini onions, or our non-traditional recipe of pasta Bolognese.

## **2019 ColleMassari Montecucco Riserva | \$24**

The Colle Massari label encompasses 4 properties in Tuscany in high-profile appellations such as Bolgheri and Brunello di Montalcino. However, the family’s crown jewel, and the first winery managed by the brother and sister team of Maria Iris and Claudio Tipa, is the Castello Colle Massari. This hillside estate is located in the Montecucco DOC, located halfway between Montalcino and the Tuscan coast.

Though not as famous as other coastal Tuscan appellations such as Bolgheri and Morellino di Scansano, the wines of Montecucco have been appreciated since the Renaissance era, when the region was largely known for its dessert wines.

Similar to many Tuscan appellations, the ample sunshine and elevation make Montecucco an ideal growing environment for the Sangiovese grape. The post-WWII period brought a new wave of farmers and winemakers to this region, who focused on dry wines made from traditional Tuscan varieties, a paradigm shift that intensified when the region was awarded DOC status in 1998. Though neighboring appellations such as Bolgheri have embraced French varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, the red wines of Montecucco must be primarily Sangiovese-based to qualify for DOC status, a nod to the region's long history with this variety.

As you can imagine from a growing region that sits between the hills of central Tuscany and the Tyrrhenian Sea, Montecucco is home to a wide variety of soil types. All fruit used in production of this wine comes from vineyards situated at roughly 900 feet above sea level. However, the soils that make up the family's vineyards consist of limestone, red clay, gravel, and sandstone among others, which lend a natural complexity to the finished wine. The highest altitude vineyard sites are home to the family's Sangiovese vines, which make up approximately 80% of the finished blend, while Cilieggiolo and Cabernet Sauvignon are grown on the low-lying alluvial and limestone soils.

To make this wine, all fruit is harvested by hand after severe pruning to reduce yields and increase quality and concentration. In the winery, the grapes are de-stemmed and co-fermented in traditional oak vats. Once dry, the finished wine is racked to large neutral oak barrels for 18 months before bottling, in order to qualify for the "Riserva" designation. When you open this wine, I recommend decanting for 30-45 minutes before serving. Once this wine has some time to open up it delivers notes of fresh red currant, red plum, dried plum, tomato leaf, and black pepper. Drink 2025-2029 with couscous with vegetables, grilled chicken with mushrooms or this incredible pasta Bolognese recipe.

### **Marcella Hazan's Pasta Bolognese**

The traditional pasta sauce of Tuscany employs boar as the protein, not beef, but that can be hard to find even today. However, this classic sauce Bolognese from Marcella Hazan is a worthy stand in and a great dish to make on a rainy Sunday and let cook all afternoon. It works exceptionally well with both features this month. I typically make a double batch and freeze half for a second, often week night meal.

**1 tablespoon vegetable oil**

**3 tablespoons butter, plus 1 tablespoon for tossing the pasta**

**1/2 cup chopped onion**

**2/3 cup chopped celery**

**2/3 cup chopped carrot**

**1/2 pound ground beef chuck**

**1/4 pound ground pork**

**1 cup whole milk (not reduced fat)**

**Salt and pepper**

**1/8 tsp nutmeg**

**1 cup dry white wine**

**1 1/2 cups canned imported Italian plum tomatoes, cut up, with their juice**

**1 1/4 to 1 1/2 pounds pasta**

**Freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**

Put the oil, butter and chopped onion in the pot and turn the heat on to medium. Cook and stir the onion until it has become translucent, then add the chopped celery and carrot. Cook for about 2 minutes, stirring vegetables to coat them well.

Add ground beef and pork, a large pinch of salt and a few grindings of pepper. Crumble the meat with a fork, stir well and cook until the beef has lost its raw, red color.

Add milk and let it simmer gently, stirring frequently, until it has almost evaporated. Add nutmeg and stir. Add the wine, let it simmer until it has evaporated, then add the tomatoes and stir thoroughly to coat all ingredients well. When the tomatoes begin to bubble, turn the heat down so that the sauce cooks at the laziest of simmers, with just an intermittent bubble breaking through to the surface. Cook, uncovered, for 3 hours or more, stirring from time to time.

While the sauce is cooking, you are likely to find that it begins to dry out and the fat separates from the meat. To keep it from sticking, add 1/2 cup of water whenever necessary. At the end,

however, no water at all must be left and the fat must separate from the sauce. Stir to mix the fat into the sauce, taste and correct for salt.

Toss with cooked drained pasta, adding the tablespoon of butter, and serve with freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano on the side.