

dal giornalista americano Joel Mack sul suo blog

*Based on personal observations and conversations during a recent media trip to the region, November 26-30, 2012, sponsored by Consorzio Brunello di Montalcino.

Before Montalcino became an international food and wine destination, before its lands hosted great vineyards, there were other things:

When phylloxera arrived in the 1930's to devastate the vineyards, interrupting whatever early fame Brunello may have won, there was despair. And there were hard times when post-war poverty held Montalcino in its grip and tears, too, for what the earth would not give. Weary parents and children, silently uncertain they could carry on. Abandoned farms. Isolation. Doubt.

Opening presentation with Consorzio General Manager Stefano Campatelli
If you want to know anything at all about Brunello, if you want to really taste Brunello di Montalcino, then you must first know its history and not forget it. Because the Italians have certainly not forgotten, nor have the new-comers to this territory. As if they ever could. Brunello's history, the traditions and values which derive of it, flow somehow from the earth and up into the feet of these happy, resilient people, runs through their veins and out from their hands to imbue Brunello di Montalcino with a soul so deep as to be inaccessible to mere language. If you want to experience the deepest dimensions of one of the world's greatest wines, Brunello di Montalcino, you must embrace its history. One cannot be known without the other.

As near as I can tell, it was during the 1950's when a handful of visionary local wine producers, understanding of Brunello's great potential, began bottling their own wines which got things back on track. The law around DOC wines was passed in July of 1963 and in July of 1980, Brunello di Montalcino was the first Italian wine to be awarded DOCG status.

Brunello di Montalcino sets itself apart as a wine made from a single vine called Sangiovese, locally referred to as "Brunello". The varied soils and microclimates of Montalcino transmit to Brunello – and to the region's other wines - a unique, terroir-driven fingerprint. Interpreted by each producer, the wines I tasted were deliciously different and yet maintained the typicity of their DOC/G. Insofar as Rosso di Montalcino, a younger bottling recognized with DOC status in 1983, is produced from the same Sangiovese vine and in a similar manner, I include it in the tasting notes below.

Paradisone

After buying the estate in 1985, the owners of Paradisone, hailing from Milan, lived for five years with the former owners to learn about the land and how to follow nature and not oppose it. Paradisone intends to produce a traditional style of Brunello and finds strength in "being small". All preparations are made by hand, and there are no controlled temperatures before fermentation (only during). Rosso di Montalcino 2007 showed nice cherry fruit, spice, simple and refreshing. Rosso di Montalcino from the 2008 vintage was more open than was the 2007 and with

more high-toned personality. 2007 marks the first vintage of Paradisone Brunello which showed on that day with pleasing cherry-cola, chocolate and menthol. Admittedly, these wines challenged me some insofar as I think they could have definitely benefitted from more air exposure, and I look forward to seeing how they behave with earlier bottle opening.

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