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Cover photo by Keith Levit. Keith is a Winnipeg-based photographer with 25 years of experience merging his passions of travel, architecture, art, and photography. In this issue, he shares some of his spectacular photos of beautiful Tuscany. You can also see his photos of Winnipeg Heritage buildings, on permanent display at the Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport and Winnipeg City Hall, or peruse his vast portfolio at www.keithlevitphotography.com. Keith will be displaying his photos of Tuscany at Banville & Jones starting March 1.



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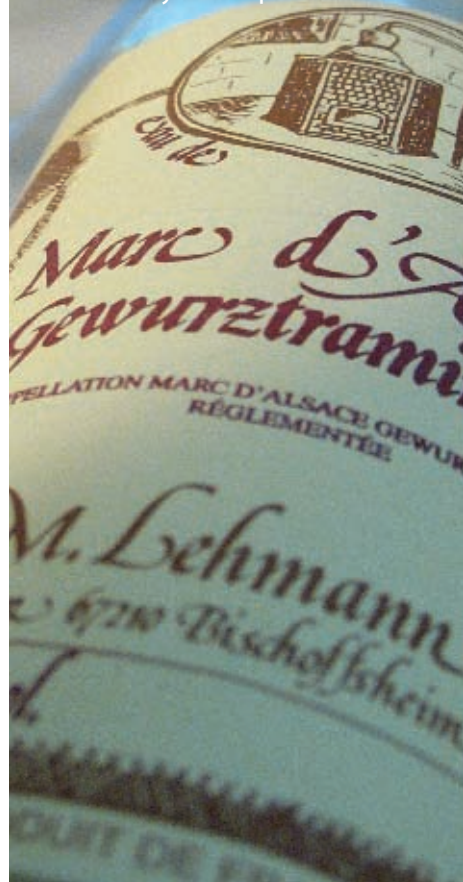


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Published for Banville & Jones Wine Co. by
Poise Publications Inc.
101-478 River Ave, Suite 707
Winnipeg, MB R3L 0B3
www.poisepublications.com

For advertising information, please contact megan@poisepublications.com.

Banville & Jones Wine Co. is a fine wine boutique in Winnipeg, Manitoba that specializes in promoting wine education and lifestyle. Opened by sisters Tina Jones and Lia Banville in 1999, it is located in a three-storey Tuscan-inspired facility that houses fine wine and accessories, an educational facility, and a private function room.

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Printed in Canada by Printcrafters Inc.
With special thanks to Direct Focus Marketing Communications Inc.
www.directfocus.com
ISSN: 1918-5715
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Photo by Joel Ross Studios

a message from tina jones

Every summer as a kid, my family travelled overseas to visit our Italian relatives. I never imagined that, one day, my dad would return to Italy and that Italy, and specifically Tuscany, would become such an important part of the fabric of my life and of Banville & Jones. As a wine merchant, it is a great honour to be able to represent my family winery and help to nurture the seed that is the Tolaini Estate, from my father's native homeland. My dad's goal of making the best wine possible is a testament to his passion to be the very best you can be—no matter what path you choose in life. True to this philosophy, Tolaini Estate is quickly becoming the best that Tuscany has to offer.

The Tolaini tradition is ever-evolving. My sister now owns her own winery and is producing more than 25,000 cases per year! Her rapid success is incredible, considering how many boutique wineries dot the Tuscan landscape. Many work their whole lives to garner success in North America, yet Lia Tolaini-Banville has rapidly achieved greatness that very few will ever see.

In this issue, I want to share Tuscany with all of you, from the pleasure of travelling the wine country, to some of its most exciting wines and winemakers. We hope that you are inspired to try products from this region that are new and old, and that you grow to appreciate this magnificent wine region as much as we do.

The Cellar Door honours Tuscany—from my family to yours.

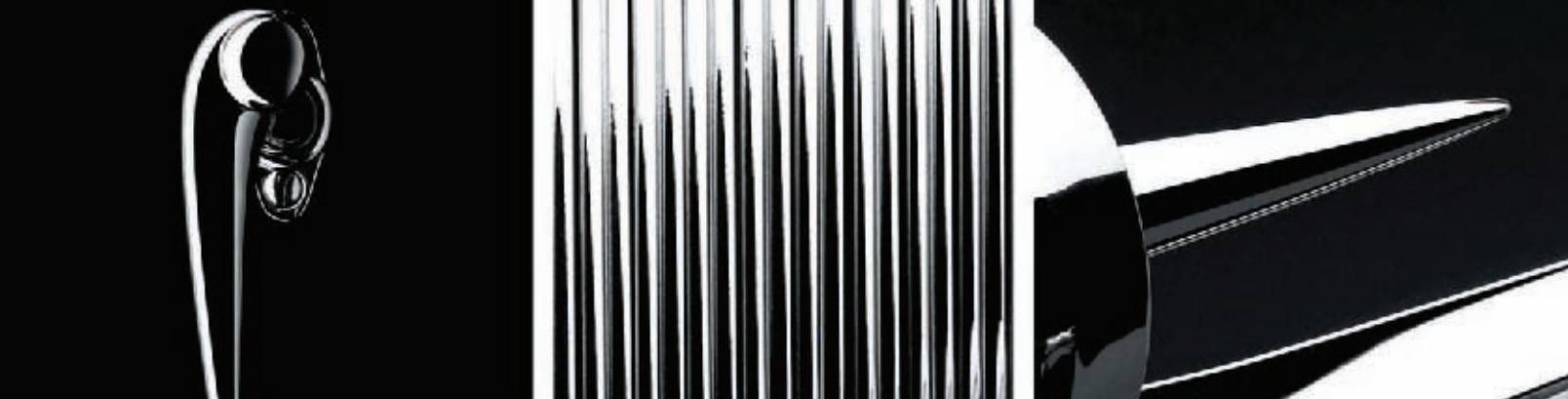
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ask a sommelier

How does soil enhance the flavour of grapes? Can you expect changes in the flavour of grapes with water content and seasonal fluctuations? In short, can you actually taste the weather?

– Lev Zentner

Dear Lev,

Yes! Let's first consider the effect of weather. Few wine regions are blessed with predictable weather year in, year out. Many of the great classic regions (Bordeaux, Champagne, Burgundy) are in "marginal" climates in which the annual weather varies considerably. Great years (or "vintages") experience few threats such as heavy rains, hail, drought, high winds, killing frosts, or growth-stunting heat (>35°C). Great vintages stretch on into the fall so that the growing season is long and even. Great years give excellent, healthy grapes with full ripeness, little disease, and intense flavours.

Less-than-ideal conditions will affect the taste of finished wines. Rain can dilute flavours and intensity; high humidity promotes disease in the vineyard that can affect flavours; high heat can induce premature sugar ripening at the expense of flavour development; excessive sun exposure can sunburn grapes, whereas too little sun can produce under-ripe character in wines (green pepper in Cabernet Sauvignon or cat litter box in Sauvignon Blanc).

The soils in many classic regions can help even out the effects of vintage variation. For example, the free-draining gravel soils of the Left Bank of Bordeaux help prevent the water-logging of vine root systems. Overall, vintage variation creates ups and downs in quality but creates an extra dimension of complexity. And yes, for a well-documented region such as Bordeaux, experienced tasters can guess the vintage based on the flavour profile of the wine.

– Gary Hewitt

What are tannins?

– Darlene Cox

Dear Darlene,

Tannins in wine are what give you a sensation of dryness on your palate, or, in extreme cases, a sandpaper-like mouth-puckering feeling. Since tannins come from the grape skins and seeds (sometimes even the stems), they are noticeably present in red wines. Tannins are antioxidants, so they help preserve wines, and are necessary for any red wine intended for your cellar. (Over time, tannins will drop with other solids in the wine as sediments, and the tannins that are left will become smoother and silkier rather than rough and tough.)

A wine with minimal tannins will feel smooth on the palate—the sort of wine you might enjoy on its own. A wine with rough, bracing tannins might be a good candidate to pair with a high protein meal, since the protein binds with tannins to smooth out the wine and bring out the fruit (which is why many people find a powerful, tannic red wine so good with steak).

If you prefer lower tannins, ask for a wine with smooth, soft or velvety tannins; if you prefer your wine to grab you by the collar and give you a tussle, ask for a wine with firm or bracing tannins.

– Sylvia Jansen

I understand that Port is only made in good vintage years, or do they only make good vintage Port in good years?

– Jim Walsh

Dear Jim,

British journalist Henry Vinzetelly said it best: "There are almost as many styles of Port as shades of ribbon in a haberdasher's shop!" Port is made each and every year and divided into two categories: wood (tawnies, etc.)

and bottle (ruby, LBV, vintage, etc.). Only a few styles show a vintage date, and even fewer are considered "vintage" Port. Even in a very good year, no Port house (winery) will decide on the fate of their young Port until it has developed over 18 months. Then, if both the house and the Port and Douro Wines Institute agree that the wine of a given year is exceptional enough, a "vintage" is declared. In theory, producers can declare each year to be a vintage Port year, but they typically only do so three or four times in a decade, when conditions (and wines) are ideal.

The larger, mainly British-owned houses—Grahams, Taylor Fladgate, and Warre's—will often disagree over which vintages to declare, and they will rarely declare two years in a row. A good example of two very good, but contested, vintages occurred in 1991 and 1992.

The 1991 vintage was favoured by most houses, especially the Symington family—owners of Dow, Grahams, and Warre's. In 1992, a few declared, particularly Taylor and Fonseca. The latter is now considered the better year by most!

Again, many of these same players will have a vintage "Quinta" (or single vineyard) Port, which they may make as a vintage Port or a special release in non-vintage years. Some of these may outshine Ports from vintage years and come in at a fraction of the price. Regardless of the year, each year some form of Port is made and most that we see in the market are blends of multi-year Ports. Enjoy one of life's pleasures: vintage Port! (But, please, be patient . . .)

– Darren Raeside

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product review



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Product website: www.sweettruthcandy.com

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Product website: www.bothwellcheese.com

Price: \$13.49



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Product website: www.cavavin.com

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behind the label: donna laura

By Tina Jones



Donna Laura
2006 *Ali* Sangiovese
di Toscana IGT,
Tuscany, Italy
\$14.99



Donna Laura 2006
Alteo Chianti
DOCG,
Tuscany, Italy
\$17.99



Donna Laura
2006 *Bramosia* Chianti
Classico DOCG,
Tuscany, Italy
\$19.99



Donna Laura
2007 *Tre Zie* Vernaccia
di San Gimignano DOCG
Tuscany, Italy
\$15.99

Who is Donna Laura? In the Chianti Classico region of Tuscany, nestled between Siena and Florence, are the wines of Donna Laura by mastermind winemaker Lia Tolaini-Banville. Lia spent many summers in Tuscany, where Aunt Laura was the matriarch. When Lia moved to Tuscany to attend University, Laura took her young Canadian niece under her wing, enveloping her into the family fold and teaching her about Italian traditions. Laura had such an impact on Lia's life that she named her Italian venture Donna Laura ("Lady Laura") in her honour.

Banville & Jones Wine Merchants, Lia's latest venture, is one of the leading wine importers in the United States. After working for many years in the wine industry, Lia noticed a gap in the North American wine market. She knew that producing an affordable range of high quality wines from Tuscany would fill a niche. She did much more than simply fill a niche, however: after just three vintages, Donna Laura is receiving international accolades rarely bestowed upon small, "unknown" wineries.

The *Ali* Sangiovese di Toscana is Lia's first wine. *Ali* is named after her daughter Alicia. *Ali* also means *wings* in Italian, which inspired the sketch of the cupid on the label (by artist Rik Olsen). *Wine Spectator* recently named *Ali* in the top 200 value wines under \$15 in

Europe, where only six other Tuscan reds were given the same honour.

Donna Laura also produces two DOCG red wines that are a modern expression of the traditional Sangiovese grape from the heart of Tuscany. *Alteo* features Bacchus, god of wine, madness and ecstasy on its label. A renowned troublemaker, Bacchus was the perfect choice for the Chianti named for Lia's two sons, Alessandro and Matteo. Donna Laura's top wine is the elegant *Bramosia* Chianti Classico. *Bramosia*, which means "desire," is the most sensual wine in Lia's portfolio. This Chianti Classico is a stunning reminder that the best parcels of land produce the very best wines.

Donna Laura's only white wine, *Tre Zie*, is a Vernaccia di San Gimignano, the original white wine of Tuscany. Lia created *Tre Zie*, or "Three Aunts," for the next generation of matriarchs; as the "Aunts," Lia and her two cousins take centre stage when the family gathers in Tuscany in the summers, mending skinned knees, providing advice, and carrying on the family traditions that Donna Laura cultivated.

Lia's great love and respect for Italy, family, and the tradition of quality winemaking infuse each of her wines. A Banville & Jones favourite, Lia's wines are quickly cultivating local and international reputations that would make Aunt Laura very proud indeed. ☺

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(clockwise from top left): Mike Muirhead, Gary Hewitt, Darren Raeside, France; The Rubicon Estate, Cask Dinner at 529: Christopher Sprague (529 Wellington), Tina Jones & Heather de Savoye (Francis Ford Coppola Wines); Alex Wright, Tina Jones, Diego Bonato (Tolaini Estate Manager), Lindsay Wepler, Julia Jones at Tolaini Estate, Tuscany; Sylvia Jansen top of the hill in Montalcino, Italy; Tina Jones, Gino Guidi, in Viareggio, Tuscany; Jill Kwiatkoski at Firestone Vineyard, Santa Barbara, California.

carlo ferrini: NEO-RENAISSANCE MAN

By Lia Tolaini-Banville



Carlo Ferrini, Italy's celebrated enologist

Lia Tolaini-Banville is a central figure in the growing Tolaini family wine legacy: she is an emerging star on the Tuscan wine scene with her Donna Laura wines, and a successful North American wine importer through Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. On behalf of The Cellar Door, Lia caught up with celebrated Tuscan wine consultant, and good friend, Carlo Ferrini. In this feature, Carlo discusses his accomplishments and philosophies about modern winemaking, and reveals what some winemakers are willing to do in order to maintain tradition.

No focus on Tuscany is complete without an introduction to Italy's most recognized enologist, a modern viticultural da Vinci or Michelangelo (and perhaps as talented), Carlo Ferrini.

Carlo was born in Florence in 1954 and graduated from the Faculty of Agronomy at the University of Florence in 1978. Starting in 1986, he worked in the technical office of the Chianti Classico Wine Consortium where he was in charge of the lab. He acquired a deep knowledge of viticulture and enology, especially regarding the Sangiovese clones grown in Chianti, for

which today he is undoubtedly recognized as *the* regional expert. In 1991 he earned the title of Academic of Vines and Wines, and in 1992 he started his career as a consulting enologist.

Carlo is tall and distinctive yet approachable and always ready to talk about his passion, wine. Carlo does not use email or carry a Blackberry and he doesn't even have an office, which means the only way to contact him is by cell phone. He does not speak English (so he says) and his Italian, with that suave Florentine accent, combines with his wonderful sense of humour to make



Carlo Ferrini checks a young red wine for colour and clarity

him so *simpatico* that, frankly, any excuse to call Carlo brings a smile to my face.

I called Carlo in Tuscany. Carlo is a good friend, so it was a great chance to catch up and to learn more details about the icon himself. After I reviewed my version of his successes (about which we shared a giggle), my first question was, “Carlo, what are you doing in Tuscany presently?”

“I could imagine myself taking care of the vineyard only, but I could never see myself focusing exclusively on the cellars. A good wine is made in the vineyard.”

He confirmed: “Yes, I am the consultant for some of Tuscany’s most important estates, including Casanova di Neri, Donatella Cinelli Colombini, Barone Ricasoli, Sette Ponti, Fonterutoli, and Brancaia.”

A modest response, for the truth is that Ferrini consults for just about every top Tuscan winery that comes to mind. For many he is “the Houdini of Tuscan Wines” because he has repeatedly masterminded escapes from mediocrity to create critically acclaimed wines. He is rightly sought after by many wineries all over Tuscany and has expanded his consulting to other Italian wine regions, including Trento, Sicily, Friuli, and Puglia. He presently consults on all aspects of wine-growing, from vineyard management to crafting the final product, and is highly respected throughout Italy. Carlo Ferrini’s record of award-winning wines has been recognized three times over with the accolade of **Winemaker of the Year**, by Gambero Rosso, by Wine Enthusiast and by the AIS (Associazione Italiana Sommelier), respectively.

Continued on page 26



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Continued from page 25

I asked Carlo the ubiquitous wine interview question: “How is a good wine made?” Carlo’s answer is very well stated: “The focus has to be in the vineyard. I could imagine myself taking care of the vineyard only, but I could never see myself focusing exclusively on the cellars. A good wine is made in the vineyard.”

Today such an answer is common, but in the early 1980s when Carlo advocated cutting back vineyard yields by harvesting fewer grapes per plant, he met great resistance. “When I explained my philosophy of cutting back fruit to one Tuscan winery owner, as a method of increasing the fruit quality for a better wine, the producer laughed at me. He replied that he would rather kill his daughter than cut back the quantity of grapes per plant!” Well, we hope that no Italian daughters have been harmed on Carlo Ferrini’s account: today, top producers are converts to Ferrini’s viticultural renaissance and truly value quality over quantity. In context, Carlo Ferrini can be considered the father of modern Tuscan viticulture.

Carlo and I laughed over the old producer’s comments, especially given the current worldwide revolution in modern viticulture that fully endorses Ferrini’s approach. Although a large contingent of “older” Italian producers still cling to a volume-first strategy, they may yet succumb under the pressure of the global trend to drink less, but better. Tuscany, and actually all of Italy, has come a long way in the past 20 years as quantity has given way to quality in a rebirth of viticulture and wine-making. Thank you, Carlo Ferrini. ☞

GLOSSARY OF WINE TERMS

Agronomy: Plant science that encompasses the study of genetics, physiology, meteorology, and soil science.

Chianti Classico Wine Consortium: A regulatory board set up in 1927 to conserve the tradition of Chianti Classico wines.

Enology: The science and study of all aspects of wine-making from grape harvest to bottle.

Viticulture: A branch of horticulture, it is the science, production and study of grapes.



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Donatella Cinelli Colombini and her sorority of winemakers

Carlo Ferrini and Donatella Cinelli Colombini: THE DRAGON AND THE DOVES



Speaking of Carlo Ferrini, I would like to introduce one of his high profile collaborators, a woman who is also a friend of mine and a personal role model: Donatella Cinelli Colombini. As a top producer of Tuscan wines, including the sensational Brunello di Montalcino Progetto Prime Donne, Donatella proudly runs two Tuscan wineries with a winemaking team comprised entirely of women—a sorority that makes a single exception to consult with Carlo Ferrini. The wine Il Drago e Le Sette Colombe (The Dragon and the Seven Doves) was created to symbolize their team. It casts Carlo as the Dragon and the seven women as the Doves. Highly regarded throughout Italy, Donatella helped found the Association of Women

in Wine, and, recently was named one of ten "Heroic Women of Wine and Vines" at Golosaria, a celebration of Italian food and wine.

—Lia Tolaini-Banville

Banville & Jones features the wines of Carlo Ferrini:

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- Teruzzi & Puthod 2007 Vernaccia di San Gimignano DOCG – \$17.99
- Fonterutoli 2005 *Badiola* IGT Toscana – \$21.99
- Brancaia 2006 *Tre*, IGT Toscana – \$29.99
- Mazzei 2006 *Zisola*, IGT Sicilia – \$29.99
- Donatella C. Colombini 2005 *Il Drago e le Sette Colombe*, IGT Toscana – \$36.99
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- Feudo Maccari 2005 *Saia* Nero D'Avola, IGT Sicilia – \$44.99
- San Fabiano Calcinaia 2004 *Cellole* Chianti Classico DOCG – \$62.99
- Tenuta Sette Ponti 2005 *Poggio al Lupo* IGT Toscana – \$76.99
- Belguardo 2004, IGT Toscana – \$87.99
- Brancaia 2005 *Il Blu*, IGT Toscana – \$104.99





Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts



WWW.ASSINIBOINE.NET/MICA

The World has Opened up for William Brown

And it's thanks to the *Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts (MICA)*, *529 Wellington Restaurant*, and premier wine boutique, *Banville & Jones Wine Co.*

Brown was employed at these two Winnipeg establishments this past summer to fulfill the co-operative work education component of his two-year program in Hotel & Restaurant Management at the MICA, which is located at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon.

Brown certainly got an education in the hospitality industry. "At 529 Wellington I learned a lot about professionalism, and Banville and Jones taught me about teamwork," he says. He also learned a lot about wine, having had the privilege of working with seven of Manitoba's 14 certified sommeliers through the summer.

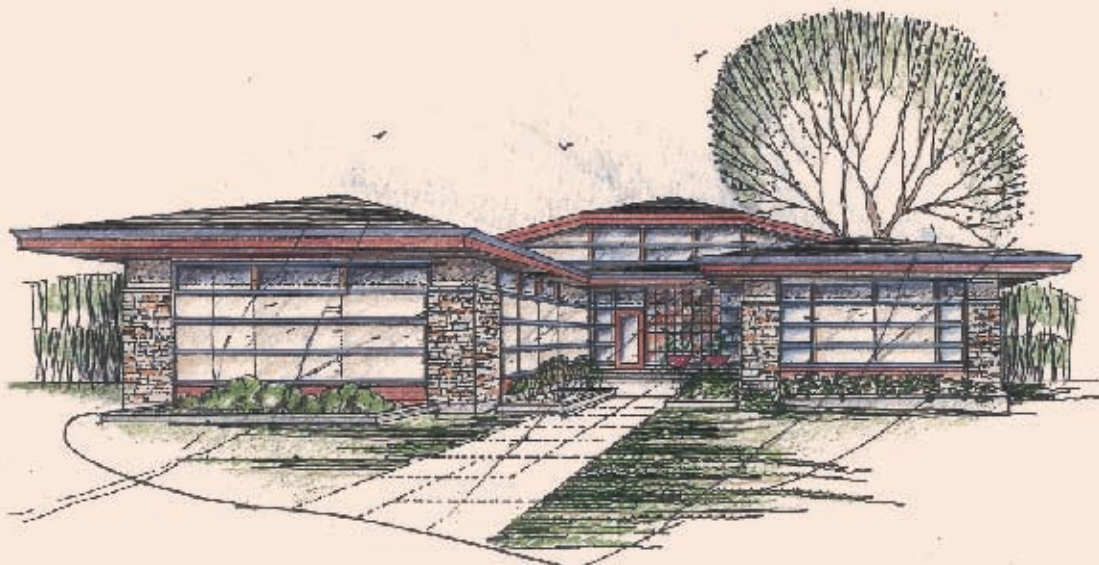
Both employers were delighted with the level of knowledge and professionalism that Brown brought with him to the job. "William came in with a real passion for wine and I think that stems from the exposure in education, otherwise you just don't pick it up," says Saralyn Mehta, assistant manager at Banville and Jones Wine Co. "We would happily take another MICA student if William is any indication of the level of employee we are going to get."

Christopher Sprague, Sommelier at 529 Wellington, was also impressed by Brown's grasp of hospitality, and says that quality educational programs at MICA are important to the industry. "We are seeing the restaurant industry grow in Manitoba and we are finding it very difficult to find people, especially in the management field, so courses like this are becoming vital to the survival of our industry," says Sprague.

An innovative component of MICA's program is the annual viniculture field school trip to Niagara's vineyards. Here students learn first hand about the business of wine.

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Photo by Ian McCausland

By Gary Hewitt, Sommelier (ISG, CMS), CWE

gary's corner

Three thousand years old (at least!) and still relevant: a remarkable achievement for an industry considered a cacophony rather than a finely tuned instrument. Yet the bewildering abundance of Italian wines (with more than 500 designated wine regions!) charms us into perpetual curiosity.

That it should be so reflects history. Discounting the Roman Empire, Italian history sews a patchwork of competing city-states and regions, each fiercely independent. As a result, we think romantically of diverse Italian wines with deep historic roots and centuries-old local grape varieties. We have an image of the old ... but the reality is new. Modern Italy, sewn together into a cohesive whole in the 20th century, produces international-calibre wines in modern facilities, sometimes using grape varieties and processes freely adopted from elsewhere.

How do we stitch together the divergent views? We can start with the introduction of national wine laws in the early 1960s. The DOC (*Denominacion Origin Controllata*) laws enshrined existing grape varieties and best-practice processes in each classified zone. In effect, DOC locked in tradition and inhibited modernization by denying experimentation with either new varieties or processes. DOC stands for tradition.

Did this stop the creative imagination of the nation that builds Ferrari cars, fashions Gucci, or views auto commuting as competitive sport? No! The first challenge to tradition emerged in Tuscany in the mid-1970s when Mario Incisa della Rochetta, bitten by the Bordeaux-bug, produced a wine called *Sassicaia*. He used an intruder grape variety, Cabernet Sauvignon, and aged his wine in small French *barriques* (barrels). *Et voila*, an Italian controversy: denied DOC status, *Sassicaia* could only be a lowly *Vino Tavola* (Table Wine). Yet, it rose to cult status and commanded a royal price envied by others. Not surprisingly, other expensive *Vino Tavola* soon appeared and Super Tuscan wines were born.

Re-enter Italian ingenuity: with the passing of Goria's Law in 1992, the category *Indicazione Geografica Tipica* (IGT) came into being. Freed of the DOC restrictions, the industry immediately flourished, bringing forth wines from new grapes and new methods of production. Everyone emerged a winner: consumers gained a whole category of friendly international-style wines, most often at affordable prices; producers were liberated to pursue modernization and profits; and the image of Italian wines was rejuvenated. IGT stands for modernization.

Look for the terms DOC/DOCG on labels. Although not a perfect guideline, these terms are clues to the style of the wine. If you are choosing a wine for a traditional Italian dish, choose a DOC/DOCG wine, especially one from the same region as the dish. If you are matching to a modern or international dish, you may be more inclined to an IGT wine.

Italian wines: something old *and* something new? Absolutely! Italy preserves our romantic notions *and* satisfies modern sensibilities while enticing us with a coolness factor, maintaining food relevance, and attracting us with beguiling charm. ☞

THE LAND OF WINE

Perhaps **Tuscany** best illustrates the two faces of Italian wine. **Chianti** and **Brunello di Montalcino** embrace tradition with tightly controlled options for grape varieties (primarily Sangiovese), vineyard techniques, and winemaking regimens; whereas, the coastal regions of **Bolgheri** and **Maremma** serve up a lively selection of internationally-inspired wines based on Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah frequently aged in *barriques*.

Sicily has grown into a dynamic supplier of wines based on international varieties such as Syrah and Chardonnay, but has also elevated local grape varieties such as Nero d'Avola to international attention to create modern classics.

Veneto, the traditional home of light, quaffable Valpolicella, has witnessed the re-emergence of *Ripasso* wines and new internationally-inspired *Rosso Veronese*.

Campania has resurrected almost extinct varieties famous in Roman times (Falanghina, Fiano), using modern white wine methods to create delicious, round wines unique in the wine world.

Apulia aggressively competes in the modern international market with cleanly-made traditional varietal wines based on Primitivo and Negroamaro, varieties that traditionally produce dry earthy wines with dried cherry and leather character.

The regions of **Venezia Giulia-Friulano** and **Trentino-Alto Adige** create copious amounts of ultra-fresh white wines based on a wide array of traditional and international grape varieties, but they are perhaps best known for gulpable Pinot Grigio.

The central Italian regions of **Abbruzzi** and **Marche** offer lovely alternatives to their more westerly neighbour, Tuscany. They offer fresh, medium-weight reds based on the grape Montepulciano and fresh, lively whites based on Verdicchio.



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PORSCHE



The streets of Tuscany (courtesy Keith Levit)

si, toscana

By Sylvia Jansen, Sommelier (ISG, CMS), CSW

It can be hot in Tuscany during summer. Very hot. So hot that you can convince yourself that eating *gelati* once, twice, even three times a day is crucial to prevent heat stroke. So as we sat in the shade at the *trattoria* l'Oste di Borgo, inside the old walls of Colle di Val d'Elsa, even the fresh salads needed a finisher.

The quiet was broken by the footsteps of local business people in dark suits and silk ties, and of workers in overalls. They disappeared into a door and emerged eating *gelati*. When we entered a few moments later, twenty glistening mounds of Italian ice cream beckoned. We ordered our desserts and ate inside, the air conditioner bravely humming.

That hot afternoon was a treasure of Tuscany: a place where walls of old towns stand in testament to ancient struggles between medieval city-states. Anchored by

Siena, Florence and the sea, Tuscany has history that pre-dates the Roman Empire; a noble wine heritage; castles and basilicas; and inspiring cuisine. One could spend weeks in Tuscany and barely scratch the surface. But a few moments of being there is enough to fall in love.

Any good love affair includes a portion of both *si e no*: the contrast of yes and no. *Si*, ensure you leave time to relax in a small town and sample the espresso or *gelati* that locals love. *No*, do not shy from visiting famous sights, just because they are crowded. *Si*, live among



A wagon full of traditional Tuscan *demigiana* (courtesy Keith Levit)

locals by shopping for lunch at the Co-op in Siena. *No*, do not just live on the skinny: treat yourself to a memorable meal. *Sì*, ensure you visit great wineries, or taste some iconic Tuscan wines. *No*, do not avoid regional, everyday wines offered at local places.

One could spend weeks in Tuscany and barely scratch the surface. But a few moments of being there is enough to fall in love.

Sampling Tuscan wine is experiencing an art form of the highest order. Wine is produced in every small corner, from the coast to the Apennine slopes. From this canvas, grape growers and winemakers offer an array of impressive wine styles. At its heart are the ancient hills between Florence and Siena, a rolling landscape of vineyards, villas, cypress trees, and olives.

In the wine bars of Castellina in Chianti, one of the anchors of Chianti Classico, many owners know their winemakers as well as their wines. A modern wine tasting here can be enjoyed at a stand-up bar on a small street, protected by the town's medieval fortified walls. Stop to shop, taste wine, and shop some more at wine bar and boutique Enoteca Le Volte di Olmastroni Alessandro (at 12, Via Ferruccio).

A scenic drive south of Castellina is Montalcino. The town sits atop a hill, its stone walls majestically dominating the landscape that

Continued on page 36

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The rolling vineyards of Tuscany.

Continued from page 35

surrounds it; its wines are suitably matched in power and stature. The old streets are lined with *enotecas* (wine bars), where more than a hundred sophisticated Brunellos are available by the glass or the taste. Tuscan wine is also about new style, where producers have turned the old rules upside down. It is worth seeking out these modern, internationally-styled wines. Prepare to be turned upside down.

As the home of the Renaissance, Tuscany also offers high art and architecture around every corner in the cities of Siena and Florence. Siena's heart is the Piazza del Campo, the square that hosts a chaotic horse race twice each year. Most of the time the piazza hosts espresso lovers and gelati aficionados. Further north, Florence is the city of innumerable treasures. Avoid waiting in lines by booking ahead (see *Inside Guide*). Avoid heat stroke by stopping for gelati at Vivoli.

Breathe in the art. Eat well. Taste the divine. Sì, it's Toscana. ☞



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Inn at the Forks

Si Toscana: Inside Guide

Sylvia Jansen's at-a-glance guide to top Tuscan tips.

Best advance planning:

A few weeks—or even months—ahead, book an entry at the Uffizi Gallery and Accademia in Florence. Your Florence hotel will make your reservation if you ask. Once there, walk past the queues, get your ticket and go in.

Best single buy:

Towns such as Siena, Florence, and Pisa will offer single tickets in a package to visit their churches, museums, and attractions. The bundled tickets have two great benefits: you have the chance to see the treasures most people miss and you get to see them without waiting in the crushing line-ups! Find out about the bundles at any local tourist information office.

Best time to tour:

Wake up early and arrive by 8 am for the Campo Santo in Pisa, or the sights of San Gimignano. An early start means great parking and a peaceful stroll.

Best wine tasting:

The bar of Grand Hotel Continental, Siena: Via Banchi del Sopra 85 (www.royaldemeure.com).

Best Canadian wine connection:

Tolaini Estates, Strada Provinciale 9 di Pievasciata, 28 Castelnuovo Berardenga (www.tolaini.it). World class wine with a Winnipeg connection.

Best place to live like a local:

The Siena Co-op, beside the main train station. Wine, bread, produce, and cheese: instant picnic.

Best splurge dinner:

Arnolfo Ristorante, Via XX Settembre n. 50, Colle di Val d'Elsa (www.arnolforistorante.com).

Best trattoria:

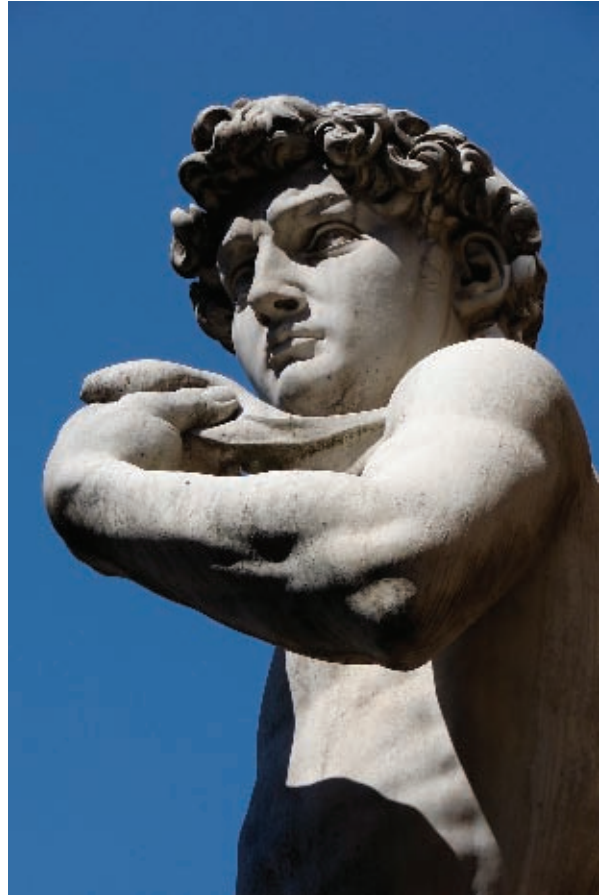
Oltre l'Il Giardino, Panzano: fantastic local specialties and a great wine list.

Best gelati:

Mario Barone, Via G. del Secco n. 32, Colle di Val d'Elsa. Divine.

Best butcher in Tuscany:

L'Antica Macelleria Cecchini, the butcher shop of Dario Cecchini in Panzano. The place looks like an art gallery, and offers a moveable feast.



Top: Michelangelo's *David* in the Piazza della Signoria, Florence;
Bottom: Dario Cecchini and staff hard at work in Panzano

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green cork

By Saralyn Mehta, Sommelier (ISG), CSW

When I was growing up, my mother told me that the label isn't everything, and that every generation's bright new ideas stem from the bright new ideas of those who came before them. Naturally, I assumed she was trying to talk me out of buying my Calvin Kleins, and trying to co-opt the amazing new ideas that my generation was inventing. But it seems that she might have been onto something.

Now that I am older, I am more apt to listen to my mother, and, after fielding several requests from customers about our stock of organic wines, I began to scour the store shelves for wine labels indicating organic processes. What I found was curious: it is significantly easier to find an organic label on wines from the New World (everywhere but Europe) than on those from the Old World (Europe).

Based on this evidence, it would stand to reason that more organic wines come from the New World. This, in fact, is not the case. It's not all in the label. A new generation of wine drinkers is looking for proof of organic certification, while historic European winemakers have modestly practiced organic production for generations—and they are ahead of us still.

This is when I gained a new perspective on organic farming in the Old World: organic wine production in much of France is the rule rather than the exception. Respect for what the land provides the wine is paramount, so much so that they have given the effect of the soil on wine a name: *terroir*. Organic methods are so prevalent, that very few producers feel the need to have their status proven by a governing body.

Therefore, certification for organic farming is not sought, and as a result, the word *organic* cannot appear on the wine's label.

Can we expand this knowledge of France's inherently organic wine production methods to the rest of the Old World? Indeed, we can. In 2008, Italy was named the European and world leader for the production of organic wines by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). According to IFOAM, there are 80,000 hectares of land worldwide dedicated to organic wine production. The surprise: 34,000 of those are found in Italy! France comes in second with 19,000, then Spain with 16,000 and Germany with 2,800 hectares.

I was shocked to discover that the Old World was responsible for nearly 90 per cent of the world's organic wine production: *Bravissimo!* I am duly impressed with the New World's commitment to the ongoing expansion of its organic production. The New World, particularly producers in Australia and California, have done a brilliant job marketing organic wines, bringing them to the forefront of an ever-growing base of healthy and environmentally-conscious consumers.

Like any self-respecting daughter, I am mortified to admit that my mother was right—again. It's not all in the label, and even though a new generation of wine drinkers is looking for organic certification, the winemakers who have been growing for centuries in Europe are way ahead of them! ☞

These wineries practice biodynamic viticulture (one step beyond organic) but do not indicate "organic" on their labels:

Colle Dei Venti 2004

Tufo Blu Monferrato Rosso DOC, Italy

In all of Ornella Cordara's varietals you see Old World tradition blended with a modern sensibility. They are all structured wines with guts and glory: no shyness here! A blast of black fruit balanced with spice and dried wild flower notes make this wine a perfect match to grilled or roasted meats. – \$19.99

Alain Brumont 2005

Les Jardins de Bouscassé Pacherenc du Vic Bilh, France

When I fell in love with this wine I had to go to my favourite reference book to find out what grapes made

up Pacherenc Du Vic Bilh: a blend of local grape varieties Courbu, Petit Mensang, Arrufiac and an allowable smattering of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc. This wine is round and weighty with gorgeous floral notes and elegant layers of peach, pear, and apricots. – \$23.99

Joseph Phelps 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California

I have loved Joseph Phelps wines ever since my first extraordinary adventure to the Napa Valley. This one has rich, bold cherry and currants layered in caramel and cream. It is powerful yet elegant and is sure to please even the fussiest palette. – \$85.99



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banville & jones wine institute



ISG CERTIFICATION

The International Sommelier Guild (ISG) program is intended for wine enthusiasts and for those pursuing a career in the food and hospitality industry. Four courses lead from an introduction to wine and spirits (Wine Fundamentals Levels 1 and 2) to certification as a Professional Sommelier and ultimately to a Grand Sommelier Diploma.

We are proud that our own wine educator, Gary Hewitt, has achieved the high standards required of ISG instructors and presents our programs.

ISG Wine Fundamentals Certificate, Level 1

This introductory, 8-class course for the wine novice or enthusiast provides an introduction to the basic aspects of sensory evaluation; wine terminology; grape growing and winemaking; food and wine matching; wine storage and aging; and wine service. Level 1 explores wine based on the major grape varieties and their distinctive characteristics. Up to 60 wines, including fortified and sparkling wines, will be tasted. Although the course is presented in a casual, fun atmosphere, students must pass a multiple-choice exam to obtain certification.

Duration: three hours, once a week, for 8 weeks (non-consecutive)

Starting: April 14, 2009 (Tuesdays)

Course cost: \$600.00, includes GST

.....

ISG Wine Fundamentals Certificate, Level 2

Level 2 expands upon the topics covered in Level 1, and beer and spirits are introduced. The overall emphasis of Level 2 shifts to the study of regional wines with the introduction of regional wine laws, and broad-ranging tastings of more than 100 wines from Old and New World wine regions. Level 2 culminates in an intense 3-hour, 3-part exam. The goal of this course is to prepare you for the Sommelier Diploma Program.

Duration: three hours, once a week, for 16 weeks (non-consecutive)

Starting: February 9, 2009 (Mondays)

Cost: \$1000.00, includes GST

.....

ISG Sommelier Diploma Program

The SDP in-depth curriculum covers viticulture, vinification, tasting techniques, cellaring, investment strategy, menu design, and regional analysis of wines, spirits, and beer. You will taste over 400 wines, beers, and spirits. A key objective of the program is the development of a high standard of wine service backed by knowledge, experience, and technical expertise.

To achieve certification, candidates must successfully pass all parts of a 5-part, 2-day examination that covers wine knowledge, restaurant wine management, wine service, and blind tasting.

Duration: 23 classes, 8 hours per class, presented over approximately 6 months

Starting: October 19, 2009 (Mondays)

Cost: \$3250.00, includes GST

SEMINARS

Wine Basics, Level 1

A two-evening course designed for the beginner wine enthusiast.

Two Thursday evenings: April 16 & 23; 7:00–9:00 pm

Cost: \$69.00 per person

.....

Beyond Basics, Level 2

A new format for 2009! A four-evening intermediate course designed to build upon the knowledge gained in Level 1.

*Four Wednesday evenings: May 6, 13, 20, 27;
7:00–9:00 pm*

Cost: \$139.00 per person

.....

Wine Wisdom, Level 3 and Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) certification

A new format for 2009! This six-evening course explores the wine world, from the technical to the tasting. This course helps prepare students to write the Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) qualifying exam. Level 3 is also great prep for further study in the International Sommelier Guild courses. No prerequisites are required for Level 3.

Banville & Jones offers the CSW on behalf of the Society of Wine Educators. Successful participants obtain the certified CSW designation, which is widely recognized in the wine industry throughout North America. The CSW exam guide and exam fee are included in the program fees, but sitting for the exam is optional.

Six Wednesday evenings: starting February 25 and ending April 8; 6:30–9:30 pm

Exam: April 15 (optional, but included); 6:30–9:30 pm

Cost: \$899.00 per person

.....

All seminars are held in the 2nd floor Tuscan room. We sincerely apologize that our Tuscan Room is not wheelchair accessible. Please note that payment is required in full at time of registration; cancellations or changes are not permitted. Contact Banville & Jones at 948-WINE (9463) for registration information. Gift certificates are available for all wine seminars (excluding ISG courses). Please check www.banvilleandjones.com for more information about classes and course prerequisites.



banville & jones events

As we move out of winter and into spring, Banville & Jones Wine Co. gives you several reasons to wake from hibernation with its innovative events calendar.

Wine In Pairs

Tasting in pairs is the ultimate way to understand matching food and wine! Guest chefs from the city's most exciting restaurants and our team of wine experts will delight you with their creations.

Cooking and Wine Tasting Classes

The evening includes exclusive wine pairings, gourmet food tasting with recipes from Winnipeg's finest chefs, and a Banville & Jones apron for you to take home.

Luxury Tasting

Once a month, our wine experts open the doors of our Specialties cabinets to explore some of Banville & Jones's exclusive treasures.

Tasting Tours

Wine & Cheese

Wine & Cheese pairs some of our favourite wines with a selection of Bothwell cheeses.

Wine Lover's Walkabout

Held in our Tuscan Room, this is a great event to mingle with other wine enthusiasts and taste some fun wines selected by our experts.

Returning this summer: Tasting on the Terrace

When the sun returns, join us on our beautiful Tuscan terrace for a wonderful summer evening of wine tasting!

Banville & Jones is proud to announce two very special Tuscan wine events:

Ciao Bella!

Join winemaker Lia Banville for an afternoon tasting of Lia's award-winning Tuscan wines. Lia will also preview her Banville & Jones Wine Merchants portfolio featuring tastes from the best wines of Italy!

Date: Saturday, February 28

Time: 1:00–5:00 pm

Cost: \$29.99

Ode to Tuscany

Pierluigi Tolaini hosts his first winemaker's dinner featuring Chef Michael Dacquist. We will showcase the highly acclaimed wines of Tolaini Estate including Picconero, Tolaini's flagship wine. (94 points in *Wine Enthusiast*).

Date: Saturday, March 21.

Time: 7:00 pm

Cost: \$99.00 per person, plus taxes (limited seating)

Test Kitchen Encore

As a new feature event, join our very own Chef Joel Lamoureux to savour the current Test Kitchen recipe and wine pairings (see pages 47–49 for the recipe and wine pairing).

BANVILLE & JONES WINE EVENTS SCHEDULE

February 2009 through May 2009

Events begin at 7:00 pm unless otherwise noted. Please check www.banvilleandjones.com for updated information on wine event themes and dates.

Wine in Pairs

Cost: \$69.99 per person, plus taxes

Sunday, February 8: *Wine in Pairs* with Bistro 7 1/4

Friday, February 13: *Red Hot Reds* with Chef Craig Guenther

Saturday, February 21: *California Dreamin'* with Dandelion Eatery

Saturday, March 7: *Northern Italy* with Amici Restaurant

Tuesday, March 17: *Go Green* with Craig Guenther

Friday, March 27: *Tuscany* with Amici Restaurant

Saturday, April 18: *Wine in Pairs* with Craig Guenther

Wednesday, April 22: *Wine in Pairs* with Pizzeria Gusto

Sunday, April 26: *Wine in Pairs* with Bistro 7 1/4

Tuesday, May 5: *Cinco de Mayo* with Café Dario

Saturday, May 9: *Staff Picks* with Amici Restaurant

Friday, May 29: *Wine in Pairs* with Dandelion Eatery

Cooking and Wine Tasting Classes

Cost: \$89.99 per person, plus taxes

Wednesday, February 18: *Hot and Spicy* with Rembrandt's

Tuesday, March 24: *Cooking* with Pizzeria Gusto

Luxury Tasting

Cost: \$99.00 per person, plus taxes

Thursday, February 26: *Pinots*

Thursday, March 12: *Super Tuscan!*

Thursday, May 28: *Southern Hemisphere*

Wine and Cheese

Cost: \$35.99 per person, plus taxes

Friday, February 27

Friday, April 24

Friday, May 22

Wine Lover's Walkabout

Cost: \$35.99 per person, plus taxes

Friday, February 6

Test Kitchen Encore

Cost: \$89.99 per person, plus taxes

Thursday, May 21

Visit www.banvilleandjones.com for info about our wine enthusiast classes in Assiniboine Community College's Continuing Education program in Brandon.

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Photo by Ian McCausland

In this issue's Test Kitchen, Chef Joel Lamoureux brings sous vide cooking techniques to the masses, with a sumptuous pork belly, baked fagioli and fennel side dish. Sous vide is a French cooking technique meaning "under vacuum." Cooking meat in a vacuum-sealed bag for long periods at low temperatures retains flavour and moisture that is lost in most other techniques. For more information about sous vide cooking, go to www.banvilleandjones.com/cellar.aspx. Sommeliers Mike Muirhead, Sylvia Jansen, and Gary Hewitt weigh in on the perfect wine pairings to this meal on page 49.

THE MEAL

Ventre di maiale arosto

(Roasted Pork Belly Sous Vide with Baked Fagioli)

2-1kg centre cut pieces pork belly (preferably a younger, leaner cut)

Vacuum sealer and bags

2 sprigs each of fresh sage, thyme, rosemary

15ml/1 tbsp canola oil

Salt mixture (recipe follows)

15ml/1tbsp white truffle oil (optional)

Salt mixture: In a food processor, add 15g/1tbsp whole black peppercorns, 2 bay leaves, 6 cloves of garlic (unpeeled), fresh thyme, sage, and rosemary. Pulse until you have a paste. Add 600g of kosher salt and pulse until you have an even, aromatic salt mixture. Keep refrigerated.

Trim off excess fat on the inside of the pork belly. Lay skin-side down and cover generously with salt mixture. Let the meat cure for about 4–5 hours, then rinse with cold running water. Blanch pork in boiling water for

test KITCHEN

2 minutes, then remove immediately to an ice water bath. Once cooled, seal the pork belly and herbs in vacuum-pack bags.

Tip: If you don't have a vacuum sealer, braise the pork in 3 litres of chicken stock, 500ml of white wine, 1 bay leaf, fresh herbs and 5 ml/1 tsp salt for about four hours at 300–325°F.

Fill a large pot with enough water to cover the bags of pork. Place a grill or inverted plate in the bottom of the pot to ensure the bags do not melt on contact with the metal bottom. Bring pot to a temperature of 79–80°C/174°F and place the sous vide pork into the water. Stirring occasionally will keep the water at a constant temperature (the biggest challenge!). Avoid the danger zone 4–60°C/40–140°F; this is the ideal environment for bacteria.

Cook for a minimum of 6–8 hours (for specific cooking times, see www.banvilleandjones.com/cellar.aspx). Once cooked, open the bag, pat the pork dry with a tea towel, and discard the herbs. Heat canola oil in a non-stick skillet and sear the pork on low heat. Press the pork flat with a heavy pan to prevent it from curling up. Sear slowly, allowing a crispy crust to form. Once the pork is nicely seared, finish in a 375°F oven for 15–20 minutes to warm through; slice and serve. To finish, garnish pork with truffle oil and fried sage.

Baked Fagioli

500g/2 cups dried cannellini beans

15g/1 tbsp fresh sage, chopped

1 bay leaf (if using dried beans)

50g/1/4 cup sun-dried tomatoes, sliced

45 ml/3 tbsp olive oil

75g/5 tbsp Pecorino Romano cheese, enough to cover
Salt and pepper to taste

To prepare, soak dried beans in water overnight. Drain and rinse. Add a bay leaf, sage and cover with cold water. Add 5g of salt for every litre of water used to cover the beans. Cook slowly on medium-low heat, without boiling, for about 1 hour until fork tender. Avoid boiling the beans, as this will split the skin and you will end up with soggy beans. Once cooked, strain and toss in a bowl with salt, pepper, sun-dried tomatoes, sage, and olive oil. Place in a baking dish and cover generously with

Continued on page 49



Photos by Ian McCausland

test kitchen: the wines



**ILLUMINATI 2006 RIPAROSSO
MONTEPULCIANO D'ABRUZZO
DOC, ITALY, \$15.99**

Sylvia: There is a really honest regional expression to this savoury wine. The weight and acidity stand up beautifully to the earthiness of the beans and the intensity of the sundried tomatoes and funky fennel. It shows that you don't need a \$50 bottle of wine to go with this rich meal.

Mike: This wine has an earthiness and herbaciousness and a nice mouth feel. It has enough acidity to hold up well to the meal, and is a great balance to the bean dish. This is a great mix with the pork as well. It's very versatile.

Gary: This wine pulls together the herbs in the meal. It is not singing on its own, but is a fine compliment to the ingredients. This is not a structured wine and would fit well if you plate the meal rustically and take big mouthfuls with each sip.

Also try: Laurent Miquel 2006 Syrah/Grenache Vin de Pays d'Oc, France, \$18.99



**TOLAINI 2004 AL PASSO
TOSCANA IGT, ITALY
\$29.99**

Sylvia: This is the kind of wine you have a conversation about, not over. The tannin presence is clear and intense on the palate—it is much more structured than the Riparosso. The care and skill that went into this wine is obvious and it tastes great with the beans and fennel.

Mike: The tannin structure in this wine gives it a fuller mouth feel on the mid-palate. It is great on its own, and really stands up to the meal. This is a great match for the pork especially.

Gary: This is a more elaborate, structured wine that is lovely with the meal. The freshness of the fruit really stands out. There is an intensity and richness to it, but it does not come across jammy with the meal. The oak aging complements the meat well.

Also try: Ventisquero 2006 Grey Carménère Maipo Valley, Chile, \$24.99



**CASTELLO DI QUERCETO 2003
CIGNALE COLLI DELLA TOSCANA
CENTRALE IGT, ITALY, \$98.99**

Sylvia: This is a real treat. This wine meets the fennel like hand in glove to create something that is better than the pieces are separately. It also smoothes out the beans beautifully. Everyone should treat themselves to the combo of this wine and meal.

Mike: [stunned silence] This is so good I can't speak. It's not screaming truffle, rather it combines well with the truffle oil and meat, and works perfectly with the beans. Wow!

Gary: This is definitely not a wine anyone would send back! It does need about an hour decanted to truly express itself. The earthiness of the wine comes alive with the truffle oil and the richness of the pork. This works well with the dish, but I would age it two years longer in order for its true expression to develop.

Also try: Hacienda Monasterio 2003 Ribera del Duero DO, Spain, \$73.99

Continued from page 47

grated Pecorino cheese. Bake at 375°F about 30 minutes until golden brown.

Roasted fennel and cipollini onions

3 fennel bulbs
6 cipollini onions
15g/1tbsp fresh basil, chopped
15g/1 tbsp fresh mint, chopped
30ml/2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Slice the cipollini lengthwise and the fennel into even wedges. Toss with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Lay onions and fennel on a baking sheet, and roast at 425°F for 30–40 minutes until tender and caramelized. Finish with a good quality Tuscan extra virgin olive oil and chopped basil and mint.

Join Chef Joel Lamoureux at Banville & Jones on May 21 for Test Kitchen Encore—watch him re-create this dish and sample the wine pairings for yourself (see page 44 for more details). ☞



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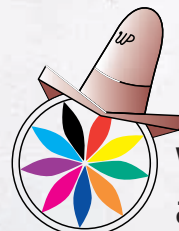
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Grape cover at Tolaini Estates, Tuscany

tuscany from the trenches:

THE WORK OF FINE WINE

By Mike Muirhead, Sommelier (ISG, CMS), CSW

I grew up on the Prairies. Despite the fact that they are nestled in the Wheat Basket of Canada, I have to confess that the only thing that I ever picked, growing up, were strawberries at the Mayfair Farm. When the opportunity to travel to Tuscany and work at the Tolaini vineyard and winery arose, I could not resist—but I also had no idea what to expect. The air of ease I felt when I arrived was deceptive and did not prepare me for the sheer volume of time, work, and dedication it takes to make great wine.

I arrived by train into Siena around 11pm in early October, at the very beginning of the harvest season. After a long day of air travel, I somehow managed to make both of my train connections and arrive on time, without speaking even a lick of Italian. I fell into bed that night, exhausted from a long day of travel, but eagerly anticipating the next day's activities.

I woke up early, and after a quick espresso, it was down to the *cantina* (winery) to have a look around with my host. It struck me almost immediately that the winery is an amazing mixture of technology and tradition. Though it fits right in with the surrounding picturesque

buildings and farmhouses, I discovered this was just a façade for the amazing modern technology that hid behind the doors: huge stainless steel, temperature controlled fermenting tanks; beautiful open-top French oak fermenting vessels; a state-of-the-art bottling line; and an amazing *barrica* (cellar) with three large tunnels where all the wine is kept for aging in optimal conditions.

I met Marco and Nigel, two of the winery managers who look after day-to-day operations. After a quick chat with them, I got my first piece of action. Some of the Cabernet Franc in the open-top fermenters needed what's called *pigeage* and I was more than willing to help. During

Grapes start arriving from the fields at about two o'clock, and don't stop until after six. I think this is one of Mr. Tolaini's favourite parts, as I often saw him, shirt sleeves rolled up, checking on the quality of the fruit going into his winery.

red wine fermentation, red wine skins get pushed to the surface and dry out to form a hard cap. *Pigeage* (or punching down the cap) needs to be done two to three times a day to promote saturation of the skins, which adds colour and tannin to the finished wine. I was given a large wooden device that looked like a flat plunger and told to get to work.

After about 20 minutes working on each of the three fermentors, I had worked up quite a sweat. After an incredible lunch prepared fresh by their amazing cook, Carmella, I was set free to tour the vineyards, take some pictures, and poke around the winery. The first day was pretty easy, and I started thinking to myself, "I could do this for a living."

BALANCING ACT

It quickly became apparent that they had gone easy on me that first day. The rest of my time at Tolaini Estate was both fascinating and exhausting. Days begin at 7:30 am during vintage (the collective term for all things that happen to make wine—picking, sorting, fermenting, monitoring, pressing, etc.), a little earlier if you want to catch some breakfast and a coffee. Morning is the time to get winemaking work done before the grapes start arriving.

We would start by tracking the sugar readings of each batch of juice. Fermentation is the process of converting sugar

to alcohol, and it is important to track this progression. By tracking sugar each day, you can measure the sugar levels dropping, and determine the amount that still needs to be converted to alcohol. Once the fermentation is done, the juice can be siphoned off into oak barrels to age, and the tank can be cleaned and re-used if there are some later-ripening grapes yet to come in.

Every day, each wine is tasted by the talented winery team, and its needs are assessed, a decision that involves a fine balance of the wine, oxygen levels, technology, and skill of the winemaker. The wine then undergoes any number of a series of processes. Each day involved something different, but there were a couple of very interesting tasks. Many times I found myself doing what is called a "pump-over." It has somewhat the same effect of the *pigeage*, but more rigorous.

Imagine perching at the top of a gleaming stainless steel tank 50 feet above ground. When I opened these "closed-top" fermentors, I had to be careful not to stick my head in too far. Inhale a good whiff of carbon dioxide and it will lay you flat on your back. Attaching a pump to the bottom of the tank, I had to snake the hose all the way up to the top, and let the juice fly. Like in *pigeage*, the purpose is to make sure the "cap" stays wet, and to extract as much colour and flavour from it as possible. It is also important to help distribute the yeasts that collect



Grapes are hand-picked with the help of the patented Tolaini tractors.



The Tolaini *barricaia*

on the skins of the grapes and to circulate oxygen to stimulate yeast reproduction, and thus make sure you have an alcohol-rich, and “dry” wine. It also ensures that there will be no bacterial growth (and therefore spoiled wine). No use waiting 6 months for perfect grapes only to ruin them in the winery! Pump-over can take between 20 minutes and an hour. With over 30 tanks of juice needing attention, this task alone can keep you busy until the wee hours.

At Tolaini Estates, all the vines are hand-picked, put into small crates and then loaded onto trucks. Grapes start arriving from the fields at about two o’clock, and don’t stop until after six. I think this is one of Mr. Tolaini’s favourite parts, as I often saw him, shirt sleeves rolled up, checking on the quality of the fruit going into his winery. To promote the high quality of the end-product, pre-selection of the fruit occurs even before fermentation starts. Talented vineyard workers pick only the ripe and healthy grapes, which are sorted two more times to ensure the best grapes are moving ahead. After that, it is up to Nature to do her work.

Once all the grapes are chosen, they are lightly crushed and travel into the massive fermentation tanks. It takes a lot of grapes to fill up one of these tanks, and we would fill, on average, one per day.

At the end of each afternoon, the big clean up begins. Every surface, hose, and pump is cleaned and sterilized, so there isn’t a drop of wine left on the winery floor that might attract unwanted insects. A clean winery

means a clean wine.

After one more *pigeage* and a quick test of sugar levels to see how fermentations are progressing, it’s off for dinner.

As much as I love wine, there is nothing better than a really cold beer after a day in the winery. I have met many winemakers who live by the creed, “It takes a lot of beer to make good wine.” After a hearty meal of Tuscan fare, and a couple glasses of last year’s Tolaini wines, I listened to the winemakers recount the day’s events, the quality of the fruit, how each wine is progressing. It is nearing 10 pm, and I begin to anticipate retiring to my warm bed. That’s when Nigel tells me to put on my boots: we have one more *pigeage* to go. 🍷

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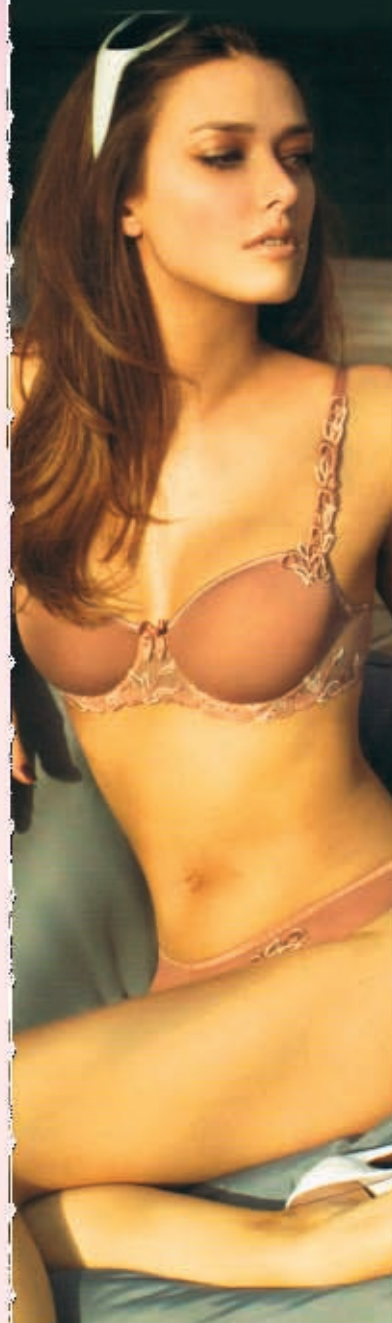
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Any way you describe it, this little acronym is behind the purchasing at Banville & Jones Wine Co. Every year, our wine experts and Sommeliers sample more than 1,500 wines from around the globe. There are many amazing wines, but only a small percentage of them fall into what we call great QPR.

So what is Quality/Price Ratio, and how does that help you? QPR is a marketing term meaning that you get what you want for the price that you want to pay. When we are in the field trying wines, we usually try them “blind,” which, in QPR terms, means we don’t know the price before tasting. We will analyze the wine, evaluate it, and then come up with a price that we would be happy to pay for it.

This is where QPR comes in. If we think that we would pay \$15 for a wine, and it actually costs \$10, that is *great* QPR. If we decide that it should cost \$20 and in reality it would sell for \$25, we will probably take a pass on it. This is one of the main criteria of every wine we buy: whether it is \$9 or \$90, we always strive for the best value for our wine dollar.

Gary, Darren, and I travelled to France and Germany on a buying trip last year. When we did the math, we estimated that we had tasted about 800 wines in two weeks (feel free to insert your “tough job” jabs here). From that trip, we ended up ordering only 15 new wines! That may sound picky, but it is the QPR test that really narrows the field, and brings the best tasting, and best value, wines home to you. Those wines are now available in our store, and range from \$11 to \$60. Whichever one you choose, we hope that you’ll agree that it is worth the money you are spending. We did. ☺

WHAT DID YOU BRING US?

Some great QPR wines from our buying trip to Burgundy, France and Prowein, Germany:

Claude Val 2007 6, Blanc, Vin de Pays d’Oc. The “6” represents the grapes that make up this wine: Vermentino, Chasan, Grenache Blanc, Chenin, Sauvignon Blanc, and Mauzac. This fresh white totally overdelivers. – **\$11.99**

Domaine Astruc 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Vin de Pays d’Oc. As one of our wine experts, Todd Antonation, put it “it is like the best California wines and the best French wines had an affair and this is the result!” – **\$17.99**

Clos de la Roilette 2006, Fleurie AC. This was one that we struggled with. It is a Cru Beaujolais (tastes more like a Burgundy), but it was such great QPR we had to give it a go! We stock limited quantities, but it is worth it! – **\$29.99**



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sidebar

By Sylvia Jansen,
Sommelier (ISG, CMS), CSW

In the falling light of a hot July day in Tuscany, my travelling companion and I sat down on the patio of a small town *trattoria* for dinner. Cypress trees framed the scene, and lyrical voices of Italian customers were the soundtrack. It was the perfect end to a lovely day. We ordered a modest Chianti—a Sangiovese-based wine from the hills of Colli Senesi, by a producer I had never heard of.

I was enjoying myself. No phone was ringing to remind me of a deadline. No appointments were on the schedule—in fact, there was no schedule. A simple pizza came to the table, a freshly made crust topped with *bufala mozzarella* and a few slices of grilled vegetables. It was drizzled with extra virgin olive oil

and topped with fragrant oregano. The wine's fruit and spice aromas floated above this simple meal in a little dance.

To ensure we would remember that dinner, we pulled out our cameras. Sure, I could see the restaurant staff staring at us while we took close-ups of food, the wine label, and water bottle. It was probably routine for them to see tourists taking pictures while dining in beautiful Tuscany. But for tourists to take pictures of wine and food, well, that was probably just a bit too weird. I imagined them in the kitchen, laughing that out on the patio people were doing a photo shoot of Franco's little brother's pizza. Well, I was willing to be their comic relief. I needed to make it real

by connecting those lush flavours and fragrances with a place and time.

The trouble with travelling is that some souvenirs come back home more easily than others. *Things* are easy to bring. But that vacation taste—a wonderful dinner, a brilliant wine pairing, aromas—these are infuriatingly impossible. Sometimes we are tempted to find that exact same wine at home to recapture the experience. But a great wine memory, like any great memory, is evasive. Even if the same wine comes home, it's not the same. The circumstances have changed. The light is different. Deadlines loom. The phone rings. The memory of that fabulous taste blurs into oblivion. So when I travel, I let myself look ridiculous by photographing wine labels. It helps.

More important, though, are details that help me remember the personality of the wine itself: the wine's origin, quality, price, aromas, and the food match that made it beautiful. All of these will help me talk about taste without needing to pull the cork of the exact same wine—or going back to that same *trattoria* (where they might still be talking about me!).

With wine, talking taste is remembering whether it was full-bodied and robust, or light and airy; whether it was full-on fruity, or an aromatic mix of spice, herbs, and wood. Those bits of memory are infinitely more helpful in re-creating the taste than the frustrating search for a wine not available in our market.

That little *trattoria* in Tuscany helped me recall the simple pleasure of an honest, modest Chianti paired with a meal of a few ingredients, enjoyed in a casual atmosphere with good friends. It really doesn't matter that I do not have that exact wine. I can invite a few friends over, open another nice Chianti, and stand in the kitchen nibbling on a simple pizza we made ourselves from a few good ingredients. Then we can talk taste, and take pictures of the food.

So here's to you, with good taste memories. 🍷



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❑ Il Faggeto Prosecco di Valdobbiadene \$18.99	62
❑ Illuminati 2006 <i>Riparosso</i> Montepulciano D'Abruzzo DOC, Italy \$15.99	49
❑ Joseph Phelps 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley, United States \$85.99	40
❑ Kilikanoon 2006 <i>Killerman's Run</i> Cabernet Sauvignon, Australia \$28.99	14
❑ Laurent Miquel 2006 Syrah/Grenache Vin de Pays d'Oc, France \$18.99	49
❑ La Vis 2007 <i>Dipinti</i> Pinot Grigio Vigneti Delle Dolómiti IGT, Italy \$16.99	14
❑ Marquis Philips Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, Australia \$27.99	15
❑ Marquis Philips Sarah's Blend, McLaren Vale, Australia \$27.99	15
❑ Mazzei 2006 <i>Zisola</i> Sicily IGT, Italy \$29.99	27
❑ R Wines <i>Bitch</i> Grenache, South Australia, Australia \$17.99	15
❑ R Wines <i>Boarding Pass</i> Shiraz, South Australia \$29.99	15
❑ R Wines <i>Evil</i> Cabernet Sauvignon, South Australia \$18.99	15
❑ R Wines <i>Pure Evil</i> Chardonnay, South Australia \$16.99	15
❑ San Fabiano Calcinaia 2004 <i>Cellole</i> Chianti Classico DOCG, Italy \$62.99	27
❑ Sweet Truth Candy \$4.99-\$7.99	14
❑ Telmo Rodriguez 2007 <i>Basa</i> Rueda DO, Spain \$16.99	14
❑ Tenuta Sette Ponti 2005 <i>Crognolo</i> Toscana IGT, Italy \$43.99	27
❑ Tenuta Sette Ponti 2005 <i>Poggio al Lupo</i> Toscana IGT, Italy \$76.99	27
❑ Teruzzi & Puthod 2007 <i>Sarpinello</i> Bianco Toscana IGT, Italy \$14.99	27
❑ Teruzzi & Puthod 2007 Vernaccia di San Gimignano DOCG, Italy \$17.99	27
❑ Tolaini 2004 <i>al passo</i> Toscana IGT, Italy \$29.99	49
❑ Ventisquero 2006 <i>Grey</i> Carmenère Maipo Valley, Chile \$24.99	49
❑ Wildly Delicious Brie Baker \$16.99	15

Due to the nature of the wine industry, any prices and vintages listed in this publication are subject to change and cannot be guaranteed by Banville & Jones Wine Co.

top picks



BETTY SETKA
Cantina Leonardo Da Vinci
2006 Chianti DOCG
Italy
\$15.99

This Chianti is a great fruit-forward wine that goes well with all kinds of starters, light meat dishes, and, of course, pasta of all types. The deep ruby red colour compliments the cherry and red fruit aromas. The wine is fresh in the mouth with soft tannins. There is just a hint of spicy pepper notes to add a little zing to the wine. A great wine to share with family and friends!



ANDREA EBY
Domaine Astruc
2007 dA Merlot
Limoux, France
\$13.99

If you are looking for a versatile wine that pairs nicely with food and is also great by the glass, then look no further. New to the store, Domaine Astruc has a range of good value wines and their Merlot is one of them! Medium-bodied with nice acidity and smooth tannins, aromas of bright red fruit, plum, mocha and a touch of spice that wafts out of the glass.



CARMEL STOESZ
Il Faggeto
Prosecco di Valdobbiadene, Italy
\$18.99

Here's a yummy little sparkling wine that will get everyone into a celebratory mood. Made from the Prosecco grape in northern Italy, this lightly sparkling wine displays medium bubbles with a soft hint of yeast on the nose, along with citrus and white stone fruit aromas. With fresh acidity to liven your palate and those delicious soft fruit notes, it is a wine for any occasion and delicious paired with almost any dish.



PAULINE BURNETT
Arabella
2006 Merlot
South Africa
\$10.99

A party favourite from waaay down under! This great little buy is full of fresh plums and dried red fruit. Its smoothness is guaranteed to impress even the seasoned wine drinker. A perfect wine to cozy up with at the fire on a cold winter's night, it is a great match with roast pork and mushrooms.



RICK WATKINS
Heartland
2006 *Director's Cut* Shiraz
South Australia
\$46.99

Crafted by Australian wine genius Ben Glaetzer, this Shiraz has a gorgeous nose of vanilla oak with a hint of eucalyptus. It shows intense dark berry flavours, cassis, licorice, and spice. Fantastic now, but it will be stunning in three to five years. Awarded 98 points by Vintage Direct, buy a six-pack and follow its evolution for the next five years.



JILL KWIATKOSKI
Conundrum 2006
California White Table Wine
California, United States
\$36.99

One of Napa Valley's white gems! A fresh, full-flavoured, well-rounded wine, this little Californian is a magnificent blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Muscat, Viognier, and Chardonnay—it will keep your palate intrigued with every sip. As the winery so delightfully explains, "The 'puzzle' of Conundrum lies partly in guessing the range of grape varieties we use, because we never reveal its exact composition."

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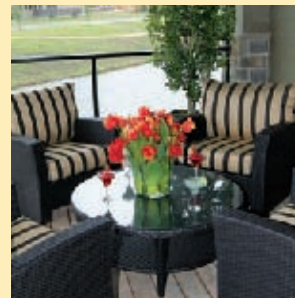
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WINEMAKER CHARLES THOMAS

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