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## 6 Killer Chiantis at 90+ Points

New reviews of impressive Italian reds from Tuscany for \$33 or less



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Chianti makes some spooky-good wines.

Cassia Schifter

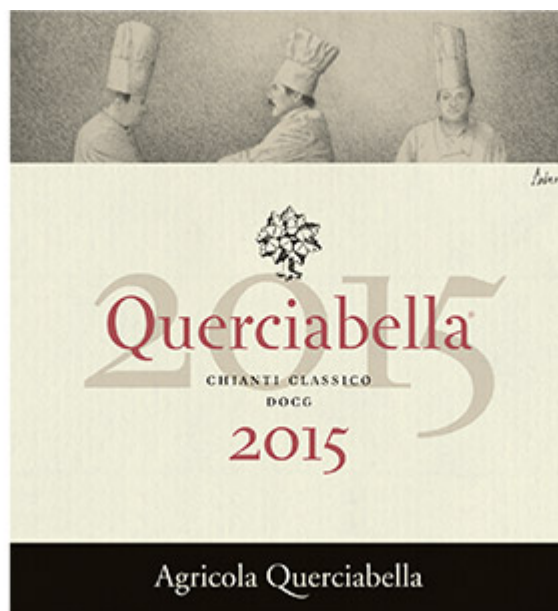
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*Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.*

For some, thinking of Chianti may trigger images of jug wine sold in a fiasco. But these Tuscan reds have come a long way in terms of quality, especially in the Classico and Rufina subzones. Richly structured, the wines can be drunk young but can also be aged for several years. They are great with food, whether you like liver and fava beans or more traditional Italian fare like pizza and pasta. These six wines all scored 90 points or higher and cost less than \$35.



**QUERCIBABELLA Chianti Classico 2015 Score: 92 / \$33**

**WS Review:** Rich, round and expressive, featuring black cherry, black currant, earth and iron aromas and flavors. The pure fruit notes are offset by distinctly Tuscan accents, with a hint of herbs on the finish. Fine balance. Best from 2020 through 2032. 2,250 cases imported.—*Bruce Sanderson*

**Why It's of Note:** This Chianti Classico is the only one in our selection that is 100 percent Sangiovese. Querciabella has vines in the Gaiole, Greve, Panzano and Radda subzones, and all their wines are made using biodynamic viticulture practices.



**FATTORIA DI BASCIANO Chianti Rufina 2016 Score: 91 / \$15**

**WS Review:** A vibrant core of black cherry, black currant, cedar and tobacco flavors is framed by refined, if dusty, tannins in this red. In need of a bit of polishing in the bottle. Shows fine length. Best from 2021 through 2036. 2,000 cases imported.—*B.S.*

**Why It's of Note:** Fattoria di Basciano, which dates to the early 1900s, is a family-run operation founded by Renzo Masi. This Chianti Rufina 2016 went through malolactic fermentation in stainless steel tanks, and was aged for 12 months in *barriques*.



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**LUIANO Chianti Classico 2016 Score: 91 / \$20**

**WS Review:** A lively version, offering a smooth texture and an elegant profile for the cherry, strawberry and floral notes. Well-integrated, with a moderate structure, this lingers with mineral and tobacco elements. Drink now through 2032. 2,500 cases imported.—*B.S.*

**Why It's of Note:** This 2016 from Luiano is the only wine in today's selection that makes use of international varieties, as opposed to Sangiovese and other indigenous varieties found in Chianti, like Canaiolo and Malvasia Nera. Although 90 percent of this wine's blend is the traditional Sangiovese, there is also 5 percent Merlot and 5 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, both of which are native to France.

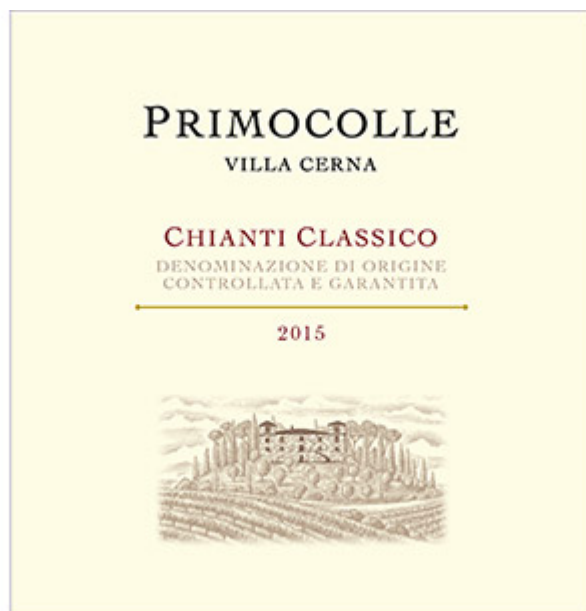
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**SELVAPIANA Chianti Rufina 2016 Score: 91 / \$18**

**WS Review:** A focused style, with cherry and plum flavors accented by a smoky note. Juicy and balanced, leaving hints of earth and tobacco on the long finish. Drink now through 2033. 5,000 cases imported.—*B.S.*

**Why It's of Note:** The Rufina subzone of the Chianti region is the smallest and highest in elevation; the wines here are notable for their often-high acidity. Selvapiana makes wines that are approachable when young, but capable of aging nicely over the next 10 to 15 years. At \$18, this wine is a steal.

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**VILLA CERNA Chianti Classico Primocolle 2015 Score: 91 | \$20**

**WS Review:** Totally Tuscan in character, this red boasts juniper, rosemary, wet earth and stone notes framing a core of black cherry and plum fruit flavors. Finishes dry and pleasantly astringent. Best from 2020 through 2033. 1,500 cases imported.—*B.S.*

**Why It's of Note:** Located in the heart of Chianti Classico, Villa Cerna is owned by the Cecchi family. This Primocolle cuvée was fermented in stainless steel and then aged in oak for nine months and in bottle for three months before release.



**CASA EMMA Chianti Classico 2016 Score: 90 | \$19**

**WS Review:** This red combines a mix of pungent Tuscan scrub—juniper, rosemary and sage—with pure cherry, strawberry, earth and tobacco flavors. Shows fine harmony and length. Drink now through 2028. 2,100 cases imported.—*B.S.*

**Why It's of Note:** Casa Emma's entry-level bottling is a great example of what the winery can offer. With classic Tuscan herbaceous flavors, this wine is a crowd-pleaser on its own and with food.

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