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Anteprime Toscane 2017: Visiting Tuscan Wineries - Cecchi

June 27: Headquartered in the town of Castellina in Chianti, Cecchi is a 4th generation family owned estate run by brothers Andrea and Cesare Cecchi with their mother Anita Cecchi still active at 89, which produces 8.5 million bottles in different parts of Tuscany and Umbria, writes Subhash Arora who visited two of their Estates in Castellina in Chianti and San Gimignano during his visit to Tuscany for Anteprime Toscane Tastings earlier this year

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Driving South from Florence Airport, picked up by my friend from Fratelli Vineyards **Alessio Secci** who had kindly offered to pick me up and drive straight to Villa Cerna in Castellina in Chianti, in the center of Chianti Classico wine producing area, through the 60- km stretch of winding and hilly terrain, we reached the Estate in 50 minutes. We were received by **Leonardo Raspini**, General Manager who I had [met in Delhi](#) last year and had promised to visit the winery on my next visit, where the Villa Cerna vineyards as well as the main winery and admin offices are located.

From the office, we were taken in a 4-wheel drive to the hilly vineyards and the winery by a charming hostess who explained that Famiglia Cecchi, the family owned company since 1893 is being run since 2004 by the 4th generation Cecchi brothers with the assistance of their mother Anita. They own **Villa Cerna** in the Castellina in Chianti, **Castello Montaùto** in San Gimignano, **Val delle Rose** near Grosseto in the Maremma area and **Tenuta Alzataura** in Montefalco Umbria.

In the 1970s, Cecchi moved to the current location, traditionally known for producing quality Chianti Classico dogc wines. The cellar is equipped with the latest technology. The office and the environs are very modern and chic too.

Production

The company produces 8.5 million bottles (700,000 cases) annually from all its production centers and exports half of the production, with 80% sold in 6 countries- Germany, US, Canada, Sweden, UK and Benelux. 'We have not made a satisfactory dent in the Eastern European market yet but we are making slow inroads. Three of the labels are now being exported to India. Villa Cerna with 70 hA of vineyards is the flagship winery, says Leonardo when we are back after the visit and meet him.

Wine Tasting



In the plush Tasting Room, I could taste the complete range of wines from the Cecchi stable with Leonardo, Alessio and their export manager- including **Villa Cerna Chianti Classico** and **Riserva de Famiglia Cecchi**. It was a treat to also taste 3 vintages-2009, 2010 and 2011 of their Super Tuscan **Queveo** with a blend of around Sangiovese 50%, Cabernet Sauvignon 20%, Petit Verdot 10% and Merlot 20%. It was interesting that Sangiovese and Cabernet Sauvignon are from Castellina in Chianti whereas Petit Verdot and Merlot are from Maremma. These were very dark coloured, intense and perfumed full bodied wines with a lot of concentration (the low yield of 4 tons/hA shows on the palate) and shades of spices. Although drinking well now, these elegant beauties are meant for laying down for several years. Very satisfying to taste- I wish there was time to drink them at leisure.

Another interesting wine tasted was Montefalco Sagrantino dogc 2011 from their winery in Umbria-**Tenuta Alzataura** in Montefalco. Made from Sagrantino grapes, it is a full-bodied, intense and complex wine with flavours of dark fruit, that has brought forth Umbria (known for its language university for foreigners in Perugia and the Orvieto white wines) as a serious wine producer in the world. The wine was quite robust, still not fully ready to drink but for a discerning wine drinker an excellent alternative to perhaps Amarone, Barolo or Brunello.

Famiglia Cecchi as a Distributor

While showing me the beautiful, modern office building of which the impressive Tasting Room was a part and where we tasted 9 wines, Leonardo explained to me that Cecchi had also added a distribution arm in 2011, with distribution arrangements for several wines. He said, 'though we have a wide range of Tuscan wines including an excellent Super Tuscan Queveo, we wanted to cater to a wider market. Cecchi has also tied up with **Collard Picard**, a champagne producer in Marne Valley and Cotes du Blanc slopes.' There is a Distribution tie up also with the Ferragamo-owned **Castiglion del Bosco** estate in Montalcino which makes fine Brunello di Montalcino, also being imported on an experimental basis in India.



Tasting more at Lunch

A further treat awaited us as we went to a specialty restaurant **L'Antica Trattoria** in the nearby town of **Colle di Val d'Elsa** where we tasted 4 different wines with Lunch, including a Vernaccia di San Gimignano and a Morellino di Scansano Riserva 2011 from Vale delle Rose with a classical cuisine.

Castello Montaùto in San Gimignano

I managed to visit the Cecchi facility at **Montaùto winery** in San Gimignano, thanks to Raspini who had come specially to see me in San Gimignano where I had met him at the Gala Dinner the previous night. He drove us to the village at

a distance of 3.4 kms (but felt like 5) on a bumpy road but with charming countryside. The winery was bought over by the



Montefalco Sagrantino
2010 Tenuta Alzataura-
Cecchi



family in 1988 and has 82 hA land out of which 48 hA are planted and have the winery. Besides the Vernaccia grapes it also grows Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sangiovese and Canaiolo. Chianti docg is allowed to be produced in this town and all their Chianti wines are produced here.

An interesting bit of trivia- I was told by the winemaker that the official population of Village Montaùto was 5 which included 3 from Cesare Cecchi. He was not much off the correct number- the village is listed officially as residence for 10 families with a total [population](#) of 32. As is normal in many Italian homes, Cesare has a church within his house and lives at a stones throw from this winery.

The view of the vineyards with San Gimignano in the background is simply mesmerizing. A visit if possible, is highly recommended to check out the steep vineyards and a view of San Gimignano. Don't miss walking past the house of Cesare as well.

Cecchi in India



Residence of Cesare Cecchi in Village of Montaùto, San Gimignano

Three Cecchi labels are already being imported –**Cecchi Chianti docg** produced at their Castello Montaùto facility in San Gimignano where the appellation also allows the production of Chianti docg (Sangiovese, Colorino and Canaiolo grapes). The second wine is **Cecchi Riserva de Famiglia Chianti Classico docg** –a blend of Sangiovese, Colorino and Cabernet Sauvignon. These wines are available at Rs. 2290 and 4590 resp. in Delhi. **Cecchi Brunello di Montalcino** may not be imported in future since the Castiglion del Bosco produced wine may not find too many buyers at an MRP of Rs. 8,550 in Delhi or Mumbai where it is even more expensive at Rs. 9,200. Fratelli has been in discussion and negotiations for the import of Orvieto from Montaùto and Morrelino di Scansano DOCG and Vermentino from Val delle Rose. Hopefully, they will import Vernaccia di San Gimignano too- a wine of nobility as compared to the plebeian Orvieto, though a quaffable pleasant wine.



Magnificent View of San Gimignano from the Cecchi Winery in the suburban village of Castello Montaùto, across the Valley

More details can be visited at www.Cecchi.it or write to Cecchi@cecchi.net

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