

FAMIGLIACECCHI

Tom's Wine Line

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Cecchi: Toscanissimo

When talking about Tuscan wines, and especially Chianti Classico, it's easy to forget the Cecchi wines, just as, when you're trying to negotiate the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, it's easy not to notice the Empire State Building. In their own way, both are monumental – and you have to step back a bit from both to put them in the proper perspective and see their dimensions clear.

I think it was Daniele Cernilli, the Italian wine guru, who said that in Tuscany, anyone who puts his mind to it can make a good bottle of Chianti – but to make 100,000 good bottles of Chianti, year after year, is a magnificent accomplishment. The Cecchi family has been doing just that for decades now. I do think it's time we all started noticing.



Cesare Cecchi, left; Andrea Cecchi, right

Cecchi is a large firm, but it's still family-owned and family-run. A lot of family wineries have grown substantially during the continuing wine boom of the past 40 years, but very few have grown as intelligently, with as consistent a level of quality, as has Cecchi. These days, brothers Cesare and Andrea are in charge of several vineyards in the Chianti Classico, the family's home base, in the Tuscan Maremma, and in the Sagrantino growing area of Umbria.

For all the varied production that necessitates, the Sangiovese grape and Chianti Classico remain where Cecchi's heart is: Those were the core from which it started, and where its best efforts still go.

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I tasted recently a trio of Cecchi's new releases, all Chianti Classicos: 2016 Storia di Famiglia; 2015 Riserva di Famiglia; and the 2015 Gran Selezione, Valore di Famiglia. Each one was a fine example of its level of Chianti Classico.



The basic **Storia di Famiglia** serves as the fundamental Chianti, a wine meant to be drunk young, usually within five years of its harvest, though in good vintages it can easily go longer. This bottle had a really nice aroma of currants, berries, and dried flowers. On the palate it tasted of gentle cherry fruit. It was lightly acidic, live and pleasing, with a slightly tannic finish tasting of dried cherries. I consider this an excellent example of what Chianti Classico ought to be.



The **Riserva di Famiglia** resembled the Storia bottling, but more so, from its nose of dried cherries, dried flowers, and wet stone to its long finish. On the palate, it tasted meatier and showed more structure, with its tannins appearing earlier. I would put this one away for at least a year or two, probably more, and serve it with roast meats, good cheeses, and such. It gives every indication that it will mature nicely for a decade at least.

The Gran Selezione **Valore di Famiglia** appropriately topped off this progression of Sangiovese quality. It opened with a distinctive, high-pitched aroma of tar, warm earth, and dried roses – almost Nebbiolo-like. In the mouth, it was all big

fresh fruit (it's very young, after all) and an impressive underlying structure, with a very long, juicy finish. I thought it fairly reticent now (if you're going to drink it young, give it lots of time to breathe), but it's clearly a big wine with a great aging capacity. This is a wine you should try hide away for a good while: It will be worth the wait.



FAMIGLIA CECCHI

In my experience, wines of this caliber and this fidelity to Tuscan character are typical of Cecchi's production. You can count on Cecchi, year in and year out, to deliver real quality and the true taste of Chianti Classico. That is an achievement the family can be proud of and that lovers of Tuscan wine ought to enjoy frequently.

