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Look To The Black Rooster For Quality Sangiovese In Chianti

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Chianti conjures up many images, from Anthony Hopkin's enigmatic portrayal of Hannibal Lecter to a *fiasco*, straw-wrapped bottle, atop a red and white checkered plastic table cloth in an Italian restaurant.

The region and the wine left a permeant imprint on Marquita Levy, sommelier of Red Hook Winery and Volcanic Selections, on her first trip over twenty years ago. She vividly recalls enjoying an early morning breakfast when a group of cyclists arrived. "They ordered espresso and *un bicchiere di vino rosso*." Upon inquiry the owner explained to her the glass of wine was for "courage." Levy confesses when studying for a wine exam, she too occasionally embraces this act of courage. Located in the heart of Tuscany, the overall region of Chianti is quite large, stretching over one-hundred miles from north to south. Within the historical heart of the region lies Chianti Classico DOCG, signifying the highest guaranteed quality of wine produced within the region at large.

Deciphering the Chianti DOCG sub-zones (7 total) and categories can be confusing. Thankfully, the wine produced here is less complicated: red only, largely comprised of one grape—Sangiovese. This red grape delivers classic notes of tart cherry, violets, dried herbs, and dusty earth. Coupled with mouth-watering acidity and medium tannins, it creates a wine of structure and age-ability. Other grapes such as native Caniolo Nero and Colorino, and international grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are permitted to be blended with Sangiovese.

To better understand the breakdown of Chianti Classico DOCG, think of it as a pyramid divided into three levels. The base represents Annata wines, requiring a minimum of 80% Sangiovese, with twelve months of aging prior to release.



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Next is Chianti Classico Riserva, doubling minimum aging to twenty-four months.

Chianti Classico Gran Selezione, created in 2010 with the first wines released in 2014, sits atop the pyramid, signifying the highest quality designation. These wines are made from grapes sourced from the region's best vineyards and aged a minimum of thirty months prior to release. "I'm excited about this category," explains Levy, "I think it brings attention back tradition, the vineyards, and 100% Sangiovese."

Regarding food pairing options, she sees limitless possibilities. "Chianti is always my go to wine across cuisines," she explains. "It goes with so many types of food." Vegetables, seafood, steak, duck, barbeque, turkey, pasta pomodoro, Levy believes it's the one bottle that will go with just about everything.

She recommends serving Chianti Classico DOCG wines at cellar temperature. Decant the Riserva and Gran Selezione for maximum enjoyment. "A little bit of air makes the bottle sing."



The Black Rooster signifies the quality wines of Chianti Classico
CONSORZIO VINO CHIANTI CLASSICO

When seeking Chianti Classico look for the *gallo nero*, black rooster. Legend has it in the 13th century the rooster was in settling boarder dispute issues being the warring provinces of Florence and Sienna

"I know whenever I see the black rooster, I will be drinking a wine of quality, place, and family tradition. Chianti Classico wines have their own unique history, aspect, and choreography," shares Levy. "I think if consumers are looking for a true expression of Sangiovese they can't go wrong with the *Gallo Nero*."



Four producers to try

Castello di Radda was acquired by the Beretta family in 2003. Today, they own seventeen vineyards within the commune of Radda in Chianti. Along with Vermouth, Vin Santo, and several



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IGT wines, they produce all three styles of Chianti Classico. The **2015 Riserva** offers notes of fresh cherry, warm baking spice, and dusty earth. It possesses length, depth, and balance, with mouthwatering acidity and a long finish.

Established in 1893, **Cecchi** embodies Tuscany. While respecting tradition, they remain dynamic and innovating. With a wide portfolio of wines, the Gli Scudi lines demonstrate their mastery of Chianti Classico through five wines. The protagonist, **2017 ‘Storia di Famiglia’ Chianti Classico** offers affordable luxury. Bright red berries, spice, violets, mocha, and leather dazzle, while firm acidity and long silky tannins delight.

Located in the commune Castellina in Chianti, Villa Tasqua made its first documented appearance in the year 1001. Home to thirteen vineyards stretched out like an amphitheater in the heart of Chianti Classico, Villa Tasqua practices 100% organic viticulture to guarantee typicity in expressing their unique place. Along with a passito and a wide array of IGT wines, Nerento Gran Selezione stays as an icon to the potential of the region. Sourced from estate vineyards planting in the mid-nineteenth century, it offers layers of black and red berries, baking spice, dried herbs, balsamic glaze, and roasted espresso beans. Rich and savory on the palate, with a crushed velvet mouth-feel and long, sultry finish.

Marchesi Mazzei’s centuries old dedication to the hamlet of Fonterutoli has all but stopped time in the Middle Ages. In 1202 and 1208, Fonterutoli was the location of the peace treaties between Florence and Sienna where the black rooster was born. Today, Castello Fonterutoli is home to three Gran Selezione wines in three Chianti Classico communes, each carefully crafted to highlight their unique biodiversity and microclimate. **Vicoregio 36**, within the commune of Castelnuovo Berardenga, is home to 36 biotypes of Sangiovese. Located on a plateau, this experimental vineyard receives full sun exposure, creating an intense, layered, complex wine of sheer elegance and style. **Castello Fonterutoli**, located in Castellina in Chianti, is comprised of eleven best vineyard plots balanced between medium hilly locations. Warm sunny days and cool nights create a mineral-driven wine where fresh berries mingle with earthiness. Structure and elegance are the foundation of this wine. **Badiòla**, within the Radda in Chianti commune, is made from the estate’s coolest and highest altitude vineyards. Imparting dark berries, spice, black pepper, and forest floor notes. The palate is elegant, fresh, and restrained. Mouth-watering acidity and silky tannins coat in a long finish.