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Photo by Cori Solomon

MAREMMA AND THE WINES OF MORELLINO DI SCANSANO: ITALY'S HIDDEN SECRET



CORI SOLOMON ([HTTP://WWW.WANDERWITHWONDER.COM/AUTHOR/CORISOLOMON/](http://www.wanderwithwonder.com/author/corisolomon/)) x MAY 30, 2017

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56

57

10

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When we think of Tuscany and wines, our minds immediately reference Chianti, Brunello di Montalcino, Montepulciano but rarely do we conjure up Maremma and the wines of **Morellino Di Scansano** (<http://www.consorzioamorellino.it/en/>). This region lying in the Tuscan Province of Grosseto is Tuscany's best-kept

secret. There is more to Maremma than Sangiovese wine. Discovering Morellino Di Scansano was an eye opener to the famous and most popular Italian wine region of Maremma. Come along as we wander through Tuscany and explore the Morellino Di Scansano wines of Maremma.

The Region of Maremma

The history of Maremma goes back to ancient Roman and Etruscan civilizations. Now considered the wild west of Italy, the region of Maremma lies between the Ombrone and Albegna river basins. Rambling through the hilly area, there is an untamed quality to portions of the region. Tuscany is like California in many ways. Maremma is akin to Paso Robles while the rest of Tuscany is similar to Napa and Sonoma.



Maremma Vineyards. Photo by Cori Solomon

Maremma and the Citta' di Cosa

The ancient ruins of the Roman colony of Cosa, located on the promontory of Ansedonia, date back to 273 BC. In addition to the ruins, there is a small museum.



Maremma's Citta' di Cosa. Photo by Cori Solomon

There is a spectacular panoramic view of the Tyrrhenian Sea. On a clear day visitors can see the Tuscan coastal islands of Giannutri and Giglio Porto. Although visibility was limited on the day I visited, I was mesmerized by the view.



The view at Maremma's Cosa. Photo by Cori Solomon

Parco dell'Uccellina Preserve Surrounding Maremma

A natural preserve, known as the Parco dell'Uccellina, surrounds Maremma. Here I found the *Morelli*, or workhorses. Also on hand were the legendary *Butteri*, or cowboys, who herd and breed the cattle of this region.



Maremma's Morelli and Butteri. Photo by Cori Solomon

You can explore the park by horse drawn wagon. The trail leads across the park to the coast. The preserve follows the coastline. Unfortunately, we were not able to see much wildlife during our visit but the natural beauty along the way and the vistas at the coastline offered great wow moments.



Maremma's Parco dell'Uccellina with the horse drawn wagon and the coastal View. Photo by Cori Solomon

The Wine of Maremma

Maremma is best known for Morellino Di Scansano wine. The region originally attained its DOC designation in 1978 and obtained DOCG status in 2007. The wine is Sangiovese based, requiring a minimum 85% Sangiovese and 15% other red varietals. These include Alicante, Cilieggiolo, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.

There are three styles of Morellino Di Scansano. The first, a base wine is bottled and sold in the spring after harvest. Most noteworthy, the Riserva ages a minimum of two years with at least one of those years in barrels. The final variation ages from 4 months to a year in wooden barrels but must fully age no more than two years.



Maremma Vineyard View. Photo by Cori Solomon

Maremma's sandy soils mixed with volcanic ash and the area's proximity to the sea provide excellent conditions for growing Sangiovese. It is also ideal for Vermentino, the popular white wine of the region. As a result of the Mistral wind coming down through France and hitting the coast of Italy, the grapes have sapidity.

The wines of Morellino Di Scansano are less expensive than other parts of Tuscany yet the quality is outstanding. Many established Tuscan wineries have now opened a second winery in the area.

The Maremma Wineries

I visited five wineries during my stay. I found them eclectic considering their size and focus. Each conveys its own style and approach to winemaking depending on the wine produced.

Massi Di Mandorlaia

Massi Di Mandorlaia's family history goes back to the 12th Century. The original Guicciardini family winery, Castello di Poppiano, was established in the Chianti Hills of Florence. Approximately 20 years ago, current owner Ferdinando Guicciardini purchased land in Maremma and planted vineyards in 1999. The wines are more traditional and old world. For Ferdinando, Maremma creates the new image of Tuscan wine by creating easy drinking Sangiovese.

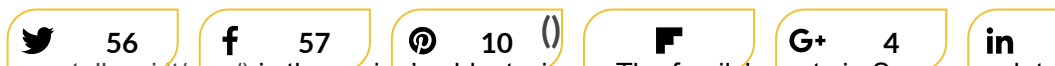


Wines of Massi Di Mandorlaia, iMassi and Vermentino. Photo by Cori Solomon

The Vermentino is a superb and crisp wine with aromas of white flowers, lemon and honey. The wine is bright yet refreshingly viscous and exudes flavors of melon, honey and peach.

Both the Massi and the Mandorlaia Riserva represents the family's traditional approach to making Morellino Di Scansano.

Mantellassi



Mantellassi (<http://www.fattoriamentellassi.it/eng/>) is the region's oldest winery. The family's roots in Scansano date back to the 1960s when they established the winery with 4 hectares of vineyards. Their first vintage was in 1977. Now in its fourth generation, with Aleardo and Giuseppe Mantellassi at the helm, they have 100 hectares and produce 13 different wines. The family was instrumental in obtaining Morellino Di Scansano's DOC status in 1978. Today Giuseppe is president of the **Consorzio a Tutela del Vino Morellino Di Scansano**. (<http://www.consorziomorellino.it/en/>)



The Mantellassi Family. Photo by Cori Solomon

In terms of winemaking, Mantellassi mixes tradition with modern techniques to perfect the wines. Mantellassi is about family and sampling the wines during a family-style luncheon proved this point.



Wines of Mantellassi, San Giuseppe, Le Sentinelle Riserva and Scalandrino Vermentino.

Photo by Cori Solomon

My favorites at Mantellassi winery included the Scalandrino Vermentino, a crisp wine with flavors of melon, pear and peach. I also liked the San Giuseppe and the Le Sentinelle Riserva with their ever consistent qualities of bright and vibrant cherry flavors.

In addition, I received a wonderful bottle of the Mantellassi olive oil. Maremma olive oil is as much a part of the region as the wine.



Mantellassi Olive Oil. Photo by Cori Solomon

Val Delle Rose

Probably the largest winery we visited, **Val Delle Rose** (<http://www.valdellerose.it/>), and owned by the Cecchi Family, is Maremma's Italian version of the Robert Mondavi Winery in terms of tours and innovation. Luigi Cecchi started his first winery in 1893. Now in its fourth generation under Andrea Cecchi, the family owns five wineries throughout Italy.



The barrel room at Val Delle Rose. Photo by Cori Solomon

Val Delle Rose was established by Cecchi in 1995 on 25 hectares. There are now 105 hectares of vineyards and the impressive state of the art winery facility is quite grand.



Andrea Cecchi, Owner, Val Delle Rose. Photo by Cori Solomon

I recently met Andrea Cecchi at a Los Angeles wine tasting. As a result, I revisited many wines I sampled in Maremma. I was thoroughly impressed as many of the wines were favorites on my Italian visit.



Wines of Val Delle Rose: Morellino Di Scansano, Aurelio and Coevo. Photo: Cori Solomon

My favorites were the Morellino Di Scansano with its well integrated savory spices accenting the cherry and tomato flavors. Another, the Aurelio Maremma Toscana, a blend of Merlot and Cabernet Franc is also well balanced and smooth with silky textures of stewed fruit. Finally, the Coeve, which means contemporary, “represents a love story between two different regions,” stated Andrea Cecchi.

I came away with the impression that integration within the blends was an extremely important factor for Cecchi.

Santa Lucia

Another family winery whose legacy began in 1898 is **Santa Lucia**. Lorenzo and Luca Scotto operate this third generation winery. The winery is dedicated to their great grandmother Lucia. In 1980 the winery produced its first vintage. Santa Lucia sits on 40 hectares. The winery built atop a hill offers a magnificent vantage point of Maremma.



Barrel Room at Santa Lucia. Photo by Cori Solomon

We joined Lorenzo and Luca for a family-style lunch. Here I enjoyed a Salad Niçoise with the wonderful wines served. The perfect pairing for my salad was the crisp Vermentino Brigante. The wine displays aromas of apple and jasmine with flavors of stone fruit and apples.



Wines of Santa Lucia: Toro Del Morro and Ansonica. Photo by Cori Solomon

A unique white, the Ansonica is a wine created from Vitigno grapes. I found a very balanced flavorful wine with soft aromatics of apple accented by pear.

The Toro Del Morro Riserva was another favorite with its savory tomato aromas and flavors.

Podere 414

Podere 414 was the smallest winery we visited. The name references the plot number designated to this property in the 1960s. It was part of a distribution of land to farmers at that time. Podere means farm and with 49 hectares, the smallest farm in Tuscany.



Podere 414. Photo by Cori Solomon

Podere 414 (<http://www.podere414.it/en>) began producing wine in 1998. Visiting the winery reminded me of the California Garagiste, who make their mark by producing small quantities. At the same time, they establish themselves as cutting age and innovative.

Podere 414 began when Maurizio Castelli, a noted Tuscan enologist, and his grandfather Giuseppe decided to start their own winery. Today Maurizio's son, Simone creates the wine that makes this winery so special.



Simone Castelli, Winemaker Podere 414. Photo by Cori Solomon

The Rosato was my favorite. They call it “flower power,” a befitting name because of the fresh dried herbs and floral aromas present in the wine. The flavors are strawberry, raspberry and peach. The wine also reminded me of sweet candy with a spicy finish.



The Wines of Podere 414: Aleatico Passito and Morellino Di Scansano. Photo by Cori Solomon

Unique to Podere 414 is the Aleatico Passito, a sweet wine made of 100% Aleatico and created from the best lots of different vintages. The wine was a real treat.

Staying in Maremma at Sasseta-Alta

In the hills of Maremma, 3 kilometers from Scansano, sits the quaint stone farmhouses that makes up the guest suites of **Sasseta-Alta** (<http://www.sassetaalta.it/en/>). The rooms are tastefully furnished in a country style. There is a pool and spa. The included breakfast is scrumptious. One evening we were treated to a country-style home cooked meal—a welcomed pleasure after dining out every night.



Sasseta-Alta, an charming Inn in Scansano. Photo by Cori Solomon

Overlooking its own lake, the property exudes the charm of Tuscany. I fell in love with this Tuscan oasis.



The view from Sasseta- Alta. Photo: Cori Solomon

Visit to a Private Cellar in Maremma

Probably the highlight of my trip to Maremma and Scansano was a visit to our driver, Maurizio Bigoni's, private wine cellar. Located in the center of the small village of Scansano, Maurizio's cellar is located in the basement of his home.

I felt as if I had entered a cave made of stone with a very charming appeal. It becomes quite obvious that Maurizio has been collecting for a long time. He served a 1990 and 2000 Morellino Di Scansano, which were wonderful.



Maurizio Bigoni, our driver's Wine Cellar. Photo by Cori Solomon

This visit showed the aging potential of Maremma's Morellino Di Scansano. It also cemented my love of the area. It was the perfect way to end a trip because it not only showed the excellence of the wine but the gracious hospitality of the people who live in Italy's Maremma.

Note: As is common in the travel industry, the writer was provided with accommodations, meals and other compensation for the purpose of review. While it has not influenced this review, the writer believes in full disclosure of all potential conflicts of interest.

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