

Decanter

DECANTER – MAGGIO 2020



THE VERDICT

This line-up of top-tier Chianti Classico from 2015 and 2016 impressed our judges, who praised the freshness and accessibility of the wines despite the warm vintages. **Amy Wislocki** reports

Two very warm vintages, and an expectation that 2016 would be the better performer of the two. And indeed, the results seem to

bear this out. All four Outstanding wines are from 2016, and the lion's share of the Highly Recommended wines. 'It's better, and more consistent,' observed Aldo Fiordelli, with Monty Waldin agreeing: '2016 is a better vintage than 2015 for two reasons. Firstly, because it was actually a better vintage. And secondly, because people learned from the mistakes they had made in 2015 and corrected them in 2016. So it's a double-whammy of goodness, if you like!'

Andrew Jefford urged wine drinkers not to overlook 2015 though. 'There was an awful lot to like in this enormous tasting, and the many high scores are testament to the high level of ambition and achievement in these two vintages. And both of them are very good vintages, in different ways. In the end 2016 probably is ahead, but not by a huge margin. What made 2016 stand out was the gorgeous freshness and vivacity of the wines – and we know that freshness is part of the zeitgeist nowadays.'

That freshness can also be affected by the oak ageing, and this still seems to be an issue. 'Many producers are showing a less heavy-handed approach, but some still seem to be from another

era – all about power and concentration, and dark fruits,' said Fiordelli.

'I think Bordeaux has moved away from oak more swiftly and more comprehensively than Tuscany,'

Jefford interjected. 'Quite often in this tasting, the oak was a hurdle to climb over, which it shouldn't be. I don't think any wine needs exaggerated oak in its youth in order to have a successful maturity. I'd like to see less use of new oak, and more use of older oak, earthenware, concrete.' 'I think the trend now is towards larger oak,' said Waldin. 'But it will take a while to filter through. If producers have paid £500 for a barrel, they need to use it.'

The tasters also discussed the shift from using international varieties in the blend. 'There's an increase in the number of 100%-Sangiovese wines, and a move away from using international grapes,' said Fiordelli.

Waldin agreed with Fiordelli that native grapes such as Canaiolo and Colorino work much better. 'I don't get the theory that Merlot softens the Sangiovese in a Chianti Classico – I find often it's very weedy, and it doesn't work for me, even in small percentages. The ancillary grape varieties that are historic in Chianti Classico are much better choices, and work seamlessly. They are far better adapted to the local area.' Jefford commented on how just 10% or 15% of Merlot or Cabernet in the blend can

'What made 2016 stand out was the vivacity and freshness of the wines'

Andrew Jefford

completely change the expression of the wine. 'I'm not against those blends *per se*,' he commented, 'but you do lose the sense of place. Tuscany is probably the best place for Merlot outside Right Bank Bordeaux, but I'd favour keeping it separate from Sangiovese, which is such a fantastic variety – so protean – that it doesn't need the Merlot.'

Gran Selezione isn't a step up from Riserva, agreed the tasters. 'The only substantive difference is that one of them has to come from estate-grown grapes,' explained Waldin. 'Both were outstanding categories, with highs and lows,' added Jefford. And more highs than lows, judging by the scores. 'The good examples were beautiful – no angularity, balletic, with depth and definition,' enthused Waldin. 'Really drinkable now, and with a long drinking window.'

THE SCORES

201 wines tasted
Exceptional 0
Outstanding 4
Highly Recommended 61
Recommended 123
Commended 13
Fair 0
Poor 0
Faulty 0

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their Chianti Classico Riserva and Gran Selezione wines from the 2015 and 2016 vintages, with a maximum of two wines per producer

THE JUDGES

Aldo Fiordelli



A certified sommelier since 2003, Fiordelli is a widely published Italian journalist, wine writer and author, and a DWWA judge. On the editorial board of L'Espresso restaurant and wine guide, he

also writes for *Civiltà del Bere*, Italy's oldest Italian wine magazine. He became a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne in 2017.

Andrew Jefford



Jefford has been writing about wine since the 1980s, authoring numerous books and winning many awards. He is a contributing editor to Decanter magazine, and is one of three

Co-Chairs overseeing judging at the Decanter World Wine Awards. He lives with his family near Montpellier in France.

Monty Waldin



Waldin is a widely published and awarded wine writer, author, broadcaster and consultant with a particular interest in biodynamic, organic and natural wines. A regular contributor

to Decanter and the DWWA Regional Chair for Tuscany, he hosts the Italian Wine Podcast series and publishes www.chateauamonty.com.

Panel tasting

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Continued) 90–94pts



Cecchi, Valore di Famiglia, Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2016 91 AF 96 AJ 88 MW 89

£20 Vinexus
Packed with shiny pomegranate and cherry fruits, fragrant violet and rose notes; lifted and crisp character with tight-knit, velvety tannins. Drink 2020–2024 Alc 13.5%



Il Molino di Grace, Chianti Classico Riserva 2016 91 AF 95 AJ 91 MW 88

£25.81 Mondial Wine
Dense and concentrated with appealing red fruit and a dusting of vanilla oak, supported by a sustained red apple acidity. Drink 2020–2025 Alc 14%



Il Palagio di Panzano, Le Bambole, Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2015 91 AF 92 AJ 91 MW 89

N/A UK www.palagiodipanzano.com
A winning combination of sweet, voluptuous fruit and warming, nutty toast characters; mouthfilling and round with crunchy ripe tannins. Drink 2020–2026 Alc 14%



Le Filigare, Lorenzo, Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2015 91 AF 90 AJ 92 MW 91

N/A UK www.lefigare.it
A brooding, dark enticement of sumptuous plum, damson and raspberry fruit with lavish earthy spice notes and a long, toasty finish. Drink 2020–2027 Alc 14.5%

‘The good wines were beautiful: no angularity, balletic, with depth and definition’ Monty Waldin



Luiano, Chianti Classico Riserva 2016 91 AF 90 AJ 93 MW 91

N/A UK www.luiano.it
Pure, deep and searching with multiple layers of bramble fruit, pomegranate, cherry and complex herbal notes; full, round and complete. Drink 2020–2027 Alc 14%



Marchesi Antinori, Tenuta Tignanello Chianti Classico Riserva 2016 91 AF 94 AJ 89 MW 89

£37.13 The Drink Shop
Opulent sweet red fruits with lots of appealing toasty vanilla oak. Concentrated and silky with a sappy, juicy texture. Drink 2020–2026 Alc 14%



Monteraioni, Chianti Classico Riserva 2016 91 AF 95 AJ 85 MW 92

£33 Justerini & Brooks
Intense smoky woodland characters infused with liquorice and vibrant cranberries; ripe with velvety tannins and a long, refreshing finish. Delicious. Drink 2020–2021 Alc 13.5%



Poggio Torselli, Chianti Classico Riserva 2016 91 AF 90 AJ 93 MW 91

N/A UK www.poggiotorselli.it
Has ample, sweet rich plum fruits and succulent mellow cherries supported by sleek, restrained oak and silky soft tannins. Lush and full. Drink 2020–2025 Alc 15%



Savignola, Paolina, Chianti Classico Riserva 2015 91 AF 91 AJ 90 MW 91

N/A UK www.savignolapaolina.it
Glowing cherry fruit and enticing savoury characters with a lovely creamy, smooth texture and a compact, firm structure. Drink 2020–2024 Alc 14%



Villa Calcinaia, Vigna La Fornace, Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2016 91 AF 88 AJ 91 MW 93

N/A UK www.conticapponi.it
Blueberry rich Sangiovese character with plenty of bright jammy cherries, a nip of crushed thyme and a generous tannic core. Drink 2020–2024 Alc 14.5%



Viticcio, Prunaio, Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2015 91 AF 87 AJ 92 MW 93

£48.50 Castelnau Wine Agencies
Energetic plum and cherry lead the charge and are melded nicely with soft, sweet spice notes and stylish tannins. Drink 2020–2026 Alc 14%

Chianti Classico Riserva and Gran Selezione 2015 & 2016

RECOMMENDED (Continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	AF	AJ	MW	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Castellinuzza, Chianti Classico Riserva 2015	88	84	89	92	Opulent floral characters intermingled with intense cherries; smooth and lively with a toasty finish.	13.5%	2020–2025	N/A UK	www.castellinuzza.it
Castello di Meleto, Vigna Casi, Chianti Classico Riserva 2016	88	90	86	88	Beguiling red cherries and raspberry yoghurt with grainy tannins and an attractive liquorice finish.	13.5%	2020–2024	N/A UK	www.castellomeletoshop.it
Castelvecchi, Lodolaio, Chianti Classico Riserva 2016	88	89	86	88	Super-ripe, Porty and jammy cassis notes with lush, velvety tannins.	14%	2020–2024	N/A UK	www.chianticastelvecchi.it
Cecchi, Villa Rosa, Chianti Classico Gran Selezione 2016	88	87	89	87	Well-rounded, concentrated fruit with sweet, toasty vanilla flavours. Warming and harmonious.	14%	2020–2025	£25	Vinexus

