



Wine Spectator

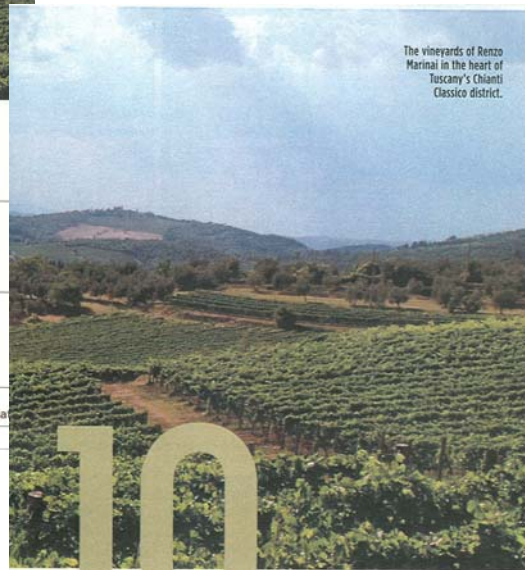
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Italian Wineries to Watch

By James Suckling with Jo Cooke and Rosanne Quaglia

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The vineyards of Renzo Marinali in the heart of Tuscany's Chianti Classico district.

10 producers are helping a deep-rooted industry move forward

Italy has a long history of wine production, and its traditions are deeply rooted. Many of the country's vineyard estates have been passed down through families for centuries. But that hasn't stopped Italian winemaking from evolving, with new wines appearing on the market just about every vintage.

Many of these wines come through *Wine Spectator's* tasting room in Tuscany, where I and tasting coordinator Jo Cooke review nearly 4,000 Italian wines each year. I am always amazed by the diversity and innovation in winemaking in Italy. There is always something new to learn and to taste. That's why I live and work here.

The following pages feature profiles of 10 wineries to watch. Some are new estates, others have recently made significant improvements; all are producing outstanding wines. Geographically they range from the mountains of Alto Adige in the north to the sun-baked fields of Sicily in the south, while their diverse bottlings range from world-renowned wines such as Barolo to emerging varietals such as Nero d'Avola. They are evidence that Italian winemakers are building on generations of experience to create a dynamic future.

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But Damilano believes the best is yet to come. This past spring, the winery took out a 10-year lease on another 20 acres in the central core of Cannubi. According to Damilano, the recent agreement gives them control of over half of that vineyard's total area. Paolo's cousin Guido Damilano helps oversee management of estate-sourced vineyards.

"This means we could soon be producing up to 50,000 bottles of Barolo from the Cannubi vineyard," says Damilano, "which is an exciting prospect but also a responsibility."

The main business of the Damilano family is its Turin-based bottled mineral water company, founded in 1970 and producing 24 million bottles a year under the Sparea label. But Damilano says that there is no comparison between bottling water and producing wine.

"Though 85 percent of wine is water, they are completely different things," says Damilano. "With water, you can simply advertise and get results, but you can't sit around a table and talk about the product as you would wine."
—J.C.

Barolo Cannubi 2004	91/\$88; 750 cases made, 450 cases imported
Barolo Lecinquevigne 2004	88/\$50; 9,500 cases made, 5,400 cases imported
Barolo Liste 2004	91/\$83; 580 cases made, 150 cases imported

PREVIOUS PAGE: TOP: JOHN ANTHONY RIZZO; BOTTOM: MATTHEW WOLCHER; THIS PAGE: JOHN ANTHONY RIZZO

Damilano

Owner Paolo Damilano Winemaker Giuseppe Caviola Annual case production 13,750

Piedmont

Paolo Damilano, 42, took the helm of his family-owned winery in 1998 and started a quality drive that is transforming it into one of the most dynamic Barolo producers in Piedmont. And one of the best values.

"We aimed to place ourselves in the value-for-money bracket right from the start," says Damilano, "and we are always looking for ways to keep the final price to the consumer down, without any compromise on quality."

Damilano's 2001 Barolo (92, \$33 on release), a blend of grapes from various vineyards, offered arguably the best quality/price ratio of any Barolo from the vintage. (With the 2003 vintage, Damilano relabeled the wine as Lecinquevigne.) The winery also produces *cru* Barolos from the family's 5-acre plots in the famous Cannubi and Liste vineyards, along with Barbera and Arneis.

Damilano has worked with "Beppe" Caviola, one of Piedmont's most respected enologists, since 1998. The pair share the conviction that the best wines in Piedmont are its single-variety wines, in particular the Nebbiolo-only Barolo. "We are Barolists," says Damilano. "It's in our DNA and we don't want to distract our clients with things like blends. In the same way, we don't want to pump up our wines with over-extraction or heavy-handed use of oak."



Paolo (left) and Guido Damilano of Damilano in Piedmont