

## Tasting Report: 2006 Brunello (English)

January 15th, 2011

The 2006 vintage for Brunello di Montalcino is the new benchmark for this famous Tuscan appellation and the Sangiovese grape. I can't think of a better expression of Tuscan wines than the best 2006 Brunello di Montalcinos.

What excites me about the wines is their metamorphic character. They seem to change all the time in the glass. First they seem elegant and shy, with delicate enticing aromas of flowers and cherries alongside refined and silky palates, but then with time in the glass, they grow in color, aromatic strength, and sheer power. I have rarely discovered such energy in a Sangiovese.

As I have blogged before, I have only seen great red Burgundy react like that in the glass – and I am talking about grand cru or premiere cru Pinot Noirs from top producers. It's a sign of a great vintage.

Brunello makers agree 2006 is their best effort ever – although 2007 is going to be very close in quality as well. I think the 2007s are a little more fleshy and fruity than the 2006s. But it's the quality of their amazing tannins and their freshness of acidity that makes the 2006 my slight preference. But what's wrong with having two great vintages in a row for Brunello?

"I can't think of two back-to-back great vintages of Brunello," said Sirio Pacenti, whose 2006 Sirio Pacenti Brunello di Montalcino was one of my top wines of the tasting (I scored it 97 points). "It is a very special moment for Brunello di Montalcino."

I gave two Brunellos perfect 100-point scores in my tasting: Casanova di Neri Tenuta Nuova and Luca della Vite Luce. The former is a longtime benchmark for Brunello; its 2001 Tenuta Nuova was **Wine Spectator's** Wine of the Year in 2006. The Luce is a relative newcomer, with 2003 being its first vintage, although the single-vineyard wine comes from the Frescobaldi's Brunello estate of Castelgicondo.

Lamberto Frescobaldi, who oversees all of his family's wine estates in Tuscany, calls his 2006 Luce a perfect expression of Sangiovese, and perhaps the greatest Sangiovese his family has made in over six centuries. That's big praise!

However, I think 2006 is THE greatest modern vintage for Sangiovese, and many of the 2006s are setting a new quality standard for Brunello producers, as well as their region at large.

Most of the wines below need two to four more years of bottle age before drinking, but if you decant them two or three hours before drinking, you can enjoy them now. They will improve with age for decades to come.

#### Il Paradiso di Frassina

- *Country*  
Italy
- *Sub Region*  
Brunello di Montalcino
- *Varietal*  
Sangiovese
- *Vintage*  
2006
- *Score*  
96/100

#### Tasting Notes

I love the decadence and richness here with dark fruits, meat and very ripe plums. Full bodied, with a dense and beautiful palate. Ripe black cherries, with flowers. Such pure fruit. Powerful tannins, yet polished and elegant. Beautiful length. Give it three to four years of bottle age. This is phenomenal and made from organic grapes.