



EWS Tastings

2000 Super Tuscans

EWS Blind Tasting - March 2, 2004

The popularity of Super Tuscans continues unabated, as evidenced by the fact that this tasting sold out quickly, was expanded to accommodate 20 more people, and then sold out again with a long wait list. And 2000 wasn't even a "Vintage of the Century" candidate, merely another very good vintage in Tuscany. Evidently, it was good enough to attract a large crowd for a tasting of thirteen of the most highly rated 2000 Super Tuscans.

In terms of deliciousity, our own word for "the measure of a wine's deliciousness," all thirteen wines scored well, with virtually every wine having its fans. Only a few were real knockouts, the rest simply very good. But the primary focus of conversation centered on the question: Are these wines Italian or do they merely come from Italy? This is an important issue because the globalization of wine seems to be flourishing in Tuscany where there are no traditions, boundaries or formulas for the trans-regional wines we call Super Tuscans. Tasting the 2000s gave us a strong sense that Super Tuscans are 95% about being "Super" and 5% about being "Tuscan," the latter percentage offered only for the good acidity these wines displayed, a prominent feature of well-made Tuscan reds.

To be sure, the 2000 Super Tuscans had to be evaluated in the context of high-end style of "garage wines" which have been emerging all over the globe for the past 15 years. Frankly, if we had tasted these wines double-blind, we'd be hard-pressed to connect them to Tuscan soil. But those who would say "let them drink Chianti if they want traditional Tuscan wine" have a valid point. The bottom line is that while we may criticize the globalized style of Super Tuscans, they sure are enjoyable, as this tasting proved.

One other important issue was raised, revolving around the price one must pay for Super Tuscans. We all agreed that they are overpriced, sometimes absurdly so. But this is hardly news.

The following are consensus tasting notes, written to share commentary and convey the overall impression the group had for the wine. All wines were poured from numbered bags (1 - 13). They are listed in the order they were poured. Participants were asked to vote (by number) for their three favorite wines. We award three points for every first place vote, two for every second place vote, and one point for every third, allowing for ties. Price listed represents approximate retail. Ratings represent the way these particular bottles of 2000 Super Tuscans were drinking on March 2, 2004 in New York.

#	Wine (53 voters)	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place	Total Points
6	Nardo (Montepeloso)	12	7	2	52
12	Siepi (Fonterutoli)	10	3	13	49
9	Guado al Tasso (Antinori)	8	9	2	44
10	Giusto di Notri (Tua Rita)	6	6	5	35
8	Ardingo (Calbello)	2	7	3	23
3	Solengo (Argiano)	2	5	5	21
1	Magari (Ca'Marcanda)	2	6	1	19
2	Saffredi (Le Pupille)	3	2	1	14
7	Tignanello (Antinori)	3	2	1	14
13	Solaia (Antinori)	2	0	8	14
11	Ornellaia (Tenuta dell'Ornellaia)	0	4	5	13
5	Sassicaia (Tenuta San Guido)	1	2	5	12
4	Vigna d'Alceo (Castello dei Rampolla)	2	2	0	10

• More for this Region

1) Magari (Ca'Marcanda) - \$60 - 19 points (two 1st, six 2nd, one 3rd) - 91 rating Fairly deeply colored. Open, attractive fruit-filled nose with prominent wood notes, smoke, tobacco and leather. Well-structured on the palate with a tannic bite and lively acidity. The sweet, ripe fruit is also very much in evidence. Everything is well-integrated and the wine appears to be youthful and seductive. But it also offers only modest weight and complexity, preventing it from getting a higher score.

2) Saffredi (Le Pupille) - \$90 - 14 points (three 1st, two 2nd, one 3rd) - 90 rating Medium-saturated color. Tight nose at first, but it opens to reveal nice cherry-like fruit. On the palate the wine seems well-rounded, displaying sweet, ripe fruit and good acidity. Elegant, balanced, and a little austere right now, this wine seems more in the finesse style than the powerhouse, flamboyant style that characterized many others in this tasting. Long, persistent finish.

3) Solengo (Argiano) - \$90 - 21 points (two 1st, five 2nd, five 3rd) - 93 rating Deep color. Gorgeous nose, sexy and exotic with lots of wood and tobacco; hauntingly beautiful fruit. This character follows through beautifully on the palate as the sweet, ripe fruit dances with the tannins to the beat of lively acidity; a perfectly balanced wine. Tremendous concentration and extract. Long finish with tannins showing prominently. Overall, a most impressive wine, delicious now, with a bright future. Note that one bottle (of three) was off, so point total would have been higher had this not been the case.

4) Vigna d'Alceo (Castello dei Rampolla) - \$175 - 10 points (two 1st, two 2nd) - 89 rating Deeply colored. Quite closed in the nose, this big, rich, brooding wine showed an off-putting barnyard note at first, but it blew off in time. Big and concentrated on the palate with really good grip and plenty of black fruit character. But the fruit in this wine seems less sweet than others and the wine comes across as relatively bitter. Nice, creamy finish though. Overall, not a crowd pleaser right now, a bit awkward and funky. Will it improve? It's not worth \$175 to find out.

5) Sassicaia (Tenuta San Guido) - \$160 - 12 points (one 1st, two 2nd, five 3rd) - 90 rating Fairly deep color. Very smoky nose with nice fruit as well; open and expansive. Leathery, chewy on the palate but the wood comes on strong -- arguably too strong. There are also notes of tar, smoke, and chocolate. Good acidity ties it all together. We wish the wine had a bit more richness, complexity, and depth of flavor. A very good wine for sure, but a pure rip-off for \$160; should come with dinner and a show at that price.

6) Nardo (Montepeloso) - \$70 - 52 points (twelve 1st, seven 2nd, two 3rd) - 95 rating Fairly deep color. Simply beautiful nose; open, expansive, and filled with attractive ripe fruit. More medium-weight on the palate than a powerhouse, this wine continues to seduce tasters with its velvety texture, perfectly ripe fruit, and a Yin/Yang balance of structure, fruit and acidity. Very, very long and consistent finish. Sure, this wine was as "globalized" in style as any in the tasting. But they sure got it right! A real crowd pleaser.

7) Tignanello (Antinori) - \$60 - 14 points (three 1st, two 2nd, one 3rd) - 90 rating Very deeply colored. Youthfully tight nose never revealed much; what was there seemed a bit odd, hard to describe. Big on the palate yet restrained, with lots of extract, tannins, concentration, and depth; lots of oak too. The fruit seems quite dry compared to other wines. There was tartness in the finish. This is a huge wine, blunt in style, that will probably benefit from five years plus of cellaring.

8) Ardingo (Calbello) - \$50 - 23 points (two 1st, seven 2nd, three 3rd) - 92 rating Opaque; the darkest color so far. Expressive nose displays richness of fruit, complexity, coffee, a little bit of stink, and fumes from high alcohol. Really big on the palate with terrific