

Oct 29, 2021, 10:59am EDT | 254 views

Five Chianti Classico Estates That Should Be Better Known



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Spirits

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Vineyards and olive trees at Riecine, overlooking Gaiole in Chianti, Chianti Classico PHOTO © TOM HYLAND

Chianti Classico is one of the world’s most famous and well-loved red wines. Given that there are more than 350 producers in this zone, there

are a select few that have achieved great critical and commercial fame, with the result being that their wines are found on restaurant wine lists and retail shelves in dozens of countries throughout the globe.

But there are dozens of Chianti Classico producers that excel, yet are not well-known. Here are five estates that routinely produce excellent wines every vintage and deserve much greater attention.

Riecine (Gaiole in Chianti) - Located in the southern commune of Gaiole in Chianti, Riecine has been producing notable Chianti Classico since the 1970s; today after a few changes in ownership, their wines are as impressive as ever. There are several examples of Chianti Classico made here; the 2019 *annata* is a beauty, with appealing morel cherry and currant aromas backed by very good acidity and supple tannins. The 2018 Chianti Classico *riserva* takes things up a notch, with beautiful floral perfumes of red poppy and notes of rosemary highlighting the aromas; displaying great complexity, this is an outstanding wine! The operative words for the wines at Riecine are harmony, typicity and refinement - these are seductive examples of Chianti Classico. *Complimenti* to enologist Alessandro Campatelli and his team on such precise work!

Le Cinciole (Panzano in Chianti) - The husband and wife team of Luca and Valeria Orsini have realized their dream, and are producing impressively-structured wines at their hillside estate in Panzano, one of the area's most critically praised communes. Their 2020 *rosato*, made entirely from Sangiovese, is very dry and offers impressive character, while their 2018 Chianti Classico displays charming floral and red fruit

aromas with excellent structure and excellent length in the finish. This is well-structured for 5-8 years of drinking pleasure. Even more impressive is their 2016 Gran Selezione named Aluigi, 100% Sangiovese from a single vineyard at the estate. This wine is mouthfilling, yet displays great finesse as well as outstanding overall harmony. This is among the finest examples of Chianti Classico from the 2016 vintage I have tasted; it should be at peak in 12-15 years. *Bravo!*



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Sofia Ruhne, proprietor, Terreno, Greve in Chianti, Chianti Classico PHOTO ©TOM HYLAND

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Terreno (Greve in Chianti) - Swedish native Sofia Ruhne is the proprietor at this small hillside estate in Greve, in the northern area of Chianti Classico. Her wines are elegant and understated with impressive varietal character; the 2019 Chianti Classico is prime evidence of this, as is the 2018 version. Also recommended is the 2018 *riserva* Chianti Classico, with intriguing wild cherry flavors and a hint of dark chocolate in the finish; this wine will peak in 7-10 years. Terreno is definitely an estate to watch in the future.

Cinciano (Poggibonsi) - Ottavia Parre and her daughter Giovanna Beraldo are at the helm of this beautiful hilltop estate. Everything I tasted here was first-rate, from the 2019 Chianti Classico that displays sage and tobacco aromas along with beautifully ripe cherry fruit, to the 2017 Chianti Classico *riserva* that is instantly approachable to the 2016 Gran Selezione that offers notable complexity, layers of fruit and the structure to drink well for 12-15 years. Clearly, this winery has already performed brilliantly, and I believe they should be listed among the very best of all Chianti Classico producers.

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Istine (Radda in Chianti) - The ebullient Angela Fronti is as personable and as warm a person you'll ever meet - and by the way, her wines are just as charming! She produces five different examples of Chianti Classico; an *annata* offering (the current vintage is 2019 and it is lovely), a riserva (2017 is current) and three single vineyard wines: Vigna Istine, Vigna Casanova dell'Aia and Vigna Cavarchione. While each of these wines have their own identifying characteristics (the Casanova dell'Aia has sumptuous aromas of cherry preserves and sweet brown spice; the 2018 is outstanding!), there is the thumbprint of Fronti on display here, as each is focused on purity of fruit backed by round, almost silky tannins. You will hear a great deal about the wines of Istine and Angela Fronti very soon - this is a great Chianti Classico estate.

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I am a Chicago-based wine writer, educator and photographer, with 40 years of experience in the wine industry. For the past 21 years, I have been a freelancer, writing...

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