

Chianti Classico annata: New releases in 2024

'What the new annata releases demonstrate across all three vintages tasted this year – 2020, 2021 and 2022 – is a sense of place within the region,' concludes Michaela Morris. Read her report below, including tasting notes and scores for dozens of wines.



Michaela Morris
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Tenuta Casenuove lost nearly 50% of the harvest in 2022. Credit: Michaela Morris / Decanter

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Italy's mid-August public holiday, *Ferragosto* is synonymous with the height of the country's summer break, but in 2022, it also marked a crucial turning point for the vintage.

Following the arid 2021 vintage, 2022 needs new superlatives. With little rain or snow in autumn 2021 and winter 2022, the dusty terrain resembled August when I visited in mid-March.

Chianti Classico 2022 vintage rating

Extreme heat and drought conditions were somewhat alleviated by mid-August storms. An early but long harvest yielded a variable mix of characterful near-term drinking annata with unexpected freshness.

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While beneficial, April showers were nowhere near sufficient to replenish reserves for the parched months that followed. 'Between mid-May and mid-August, we recorded less than 10mm of rain,' said Valentino Davaz at Poggio al Sole.

Then, in late spring, the heat began to soar and didn't relent for most of the summer. 'Average temperatures with maximum peaks over 30°C lasted for more than 80 consecutive days,' relayed Rocca delle Maciè's Thomas Francioni. Tim Schefenacker at Castagnoli added that there were five days in July that reached 43°C.

See the score table for Michaela's tasting notes and scores for 180 new Chianti Classico releases

Welcome relief

'It was as hot as hell,' Sofia Ruhne at Terreno summarised, fearing in July that they wouldn't even harvest anything, such was the vine stress.

The watershed moment, quite literally, arrived during Ferragosto, dousing the region with much needed water. On 18 August, Cigliano di Sopra measured a whopping 100mm in San Casciano, and Castello di Ama in Gaiole recorded a total of 60mm in the second half of the month.



Sofia Ruhne at Terreno. Credit: Michaela Morris / Decanter

‘The ample rainfall was truly effective for the plants to be able to ripen the grapes,’ asserted Poggerino’s Piero Lanza.

Alas, the high-pressure system also brought localised but violent hail which cut a swathe through Panzano, where Tenuta Casenuove reported 50% damage to 10 of the estate’s hectares. Fontodi estimates over 20% loss of total production; Le Cinciole 30%.

Nonetheless, the storms helped moderate the heat (slightly) and were followed by occasional further sprinklings. Balmy temperatures and availability of water kickstarted ripening, leading to an early start to the harvest on 10 September.

While it was protracted and lasted approximately a month, most growers finished before heavier showers at the end of September – or picked around them. ‘Waiting was a risk,’ explained Angela Fronti at Istine, noting that ultimately the rain helped with the final phase of maturation.

At 260,000 hectolitres for the region, yields were not significantly less than average despite losses at individual estates. Grapes arrived at the cellar in healthy condition, mostly characterised by small berries with thick skins. ‘The difficulty in the cellar was to interpret the vintage well,’ shared Matteo Vaccari at Cigliano di Sopra.

Across samplings of almost 50 newly bottled *annata*, it was evident that efforts were valiant. As with 2020, there is some variability, but the 2022s are a studier set.

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and cellar**

How do the 2022s taste?

Despite the heat, 2022 is not overtly rich like 2015. Nor do the wines battle with the compact, drying structure as they did in 2017. In some cases, astringent tannins poke through, however, they remain balanced overall.

Moreover, and most gratifyingly for such a hot vintage, they have preserved remarkable freshness. There is so much juicy crunch in **Jurij Fiore e Figli's Sonocosi**, you wouldn't guess it was from a hot vintage. This speaks to the cool, heady heights of the Lamole district. However, even on the warm western slopes of Castellina, **Castagnoli's** fruit-laden 2022 rings out with purity and succulent acidity. And through the dark fruit and vigour of Panzano, **Il Molino di Grace** has plenty of lift.

Tasted next to the late-release 2021s, 2022 may come across as more superficial in its charms. There simply isn't the same level of aromatic complexity, depth or sophisticated structure. By comparison, 2021 is a treasure trove of over-achievers – such as **Montecalvi**, **Tenuta di Carleone**, as well as **Jurij Fiore e Figlia's 'cru' bottlings** to name just a few.

However, the 2022s are certainly characterful and offer immense drinkability, which is exactly what the category should deliver. Exemplifying this are wines like **Bibbiano**, **Podere Poggio Scalette** and **Montesecondo**.

While the majority will be at their best over the next three to four years, some wines – such as **Poggerino** and **San Giusto a Rentennano** – boast the substance and structure for even longer ageing.

A sense of place

Vintage variation aside, what the new annata releases demonstrate across all three vintages tasted this year – 2020, 2021 and 2022 – is a sense of place within the region. Even though the names of the new UGA (11 official districts) are currently only permitted on **Gran Selezione** labels, the annata wines present a strong argument that they should be granted to all categories.

While different styles, both **Castello di Monsanto 2022** and **Castello della Paneretta 2021** exhibit the perfumed red fruit and firmness of tannins I associate with San Donato in Poggio. **Isole e Olena's** excellent 2021 is all this – with extra tautness.

From San Casciano, **Fattoria San Michele a Torri** and **Collazzi's** 2022s play to the round, soft character of this warm, early ripening district.

Equally affable, **Principe Corsini's 2022 Le Corti**, a perennial value pick, has a bit more chew to it – but certainly not a bite.

By contrast, Radda's cool microclimate is unmistakable in **Podere Terreno alla via della Volpaia's** vertical, pleasantly tart 2022, **L'Erta di Radda's** thrillingly racy 2021, and **Val delle Corti's** elegantly midweight 2020.

This is, of course, just the tip of Chianti Classico's rich diversity, expressing three-dimensional scope of vintage, provenance and individual estate interpretation.