

So much has been achieved since the 1970s! (Azienda Fongoli)



# Montefalco

## A wine region of untold diversity

*Located in Umbria – in the centre of Italy – this is the only Italian region with no access to the sea. What it does have, however, are some genuine vinous treasures which are clearly worth going out of your way for. Gilbert & Gaillard spent 5 days here sifting through the extensive array of wines to find the most interesting Sagrantino reds and many more...*

By Sylvain Patard - Photographs Gilbert & Gaillard - Pier Paolo Metelli and Donatella Tavaglione

**M**ontefalco is a very pretty fortified town perched on a promontory which overlooks the entire region. Its history as a wine producer is fairly recent because it was only in the 1960s that Sagrantino retrieved its pedigree and once again became Montefalco's leading grape variety. It first secured DOC status in 1979, going on to become a DOCG in 1992. We toured the hillsides of Umbria for five days, tasting wines from numerous producers and waking up to the incredible diversity of styles on offer. In addition to single varietal Montefalco Sagrantino, the region also produces red wines, mostly under the Montefalco Rosso label, often from blends of Sangiovese, Sagrantino, Merlot and even Cabernet.

# ITALY

– UMBRIA –



Campioni: Blind tasting the 2016 Montefalco Sagrantino

For the 2016 Montefalco Sagrantino featured at the Anteprema, we published our ranking online in February. Here is a brief reminder of the top 6:

In the number one spot is Vignabaldo, managed by a very dynamic young trio who produce extremely contemporary wines, including this amazing 2016 – it is dark and deep, with an elegant nose of black fruits and liquorice. On the palate it is mouth-filling with incredible quality tannins. This is classic Sagrantino in terms of structure, but with such a modern spirit. Next comes Lungarotti, the celebrated Umbrian firm, which also produces some outstanding wines offering up crunchy, ripe fruit, a robust palate with a great backbone, it is chewy with incredible harmony. The third place goes to the captivating, delicate Scacciadiavoli, with its silky texture, racy tannins and substantial length. Fourth is Colle Ciocco and its amazing ambassador, Lamberto Spachetti – it is vibrant with a precise nose that is lushly styled yet not excessive. It has a harmonious palate with a beautiful fresh edge. This is a very palatable wine. In fifth place, Montioni, which is located at the foot of the mediaeval town of Montefalco, was a new find. It shows great volume on the palate, it is chewy with tannins and aromas still in their youth. A very endearing wine for the future. Lastly, ranking sixth, is Tenute Castelbuono with its amazing tortoise-shell-shaped building. The wine delivers cassis and liquorice notes on the nose, it has a very youthful, fresh, dense palate with liqueur notes and fruit that is still shy but shows promise.

In addition to the 2016 Sagrantino tastings, here are a few of the gems we found at the various wineries we visited. Montioni has an outstanding 2015 Sagrantino Ma.Gia with notes of caramel, coconut and sweet spices, excellent texture and real complexity. Terre di Trinci, a Cantina located in Foligno, caught our attention with a powerful, generous 2009 Ugolino (Montefalco Sagrantino) offering up lots of liqueur-like flavours and intense spice aromas. The style is simple yet effective.

Lungarotti produces some real treasures and choosing was a tall order, but on top of the remarkable 2016 Sagrantino, the 2013 Rubesco (Torgiano Rosso Riserva DOC) Vigneta Monticchio stood out for its elegant mouthfeel and outstanding complexity coupled with impressive length. This is an absolute masterpiece and probably one of Italy's finest wines.

Vignabaldo and its striking trio provided surprises across



The incredible building at Castelbuono, nicknamed the Carapace like one of the wines in the range

# ITALY

– UMBRIA –



The winning trio at Vignabaldo, whose wines we found particularly appealing. From left to right: winemaker Luca Masconi; administrator Mattia Casini; and agronomist Andrea Sansoni



At Arnaldo Caprai, Salvatore expertly handles the truffles and the parmesan, both of which make marvellous partners for the Montefalco Sagrantino



Marco Caprai runs the firm of the same name



Paolo Montioni produces wines showing great precision and real complexity

the range with a 2018 Grechetto (white) that is fresh and rich with lots of character and length; a ripe, fruity, spicy and truffle-like 2016 Montefalco Rosso (Sangiovese + Sagrantino + Merlot) with notes of cinnamon, liquorice and jammy fruits. Words fail us when it comes to the 2014 and 2012 Sagrantino, with their monumental structure, aromas and complexity! Bravo chaps, keep up the good work! At Colle Ciocco our favourite picks were the plump and very classic 2015 Montefalco Sagrantino and the 2012 passito, perfectly reined in with freshness. Adanti also deserves a mention for its entire range – very classic in a robust, balanced style. So too does Arnaldo Caprai, whose wines are matched only by chef Salvatore's cuisine – they are chiselled, complex and brimming with aroma. A special mention goes to Fongoli and its organic wines, teetering on the brink of biodynamic, which are clean, fruity and very pure with great aromatic precision across the range.

Not only is this a wine region off the beaten track, it also produces some truly incredible wines, white and red. There is no doubting that we will be hearing more about it in coming years, and all good.