

2014 Chianti Classico Riserva

Querciabella, Tuscany, Italy

Product details

Vintage:	2014	Type:	
Producer:	Querciabella	Drinking:	
Region:	Tuscany	Alcohol:	
Country:	Italy	Variety:	

About the producer

The name Querciabella and the “beautiful oak” logo are entirely appropriate to this estate in Chianti, in the Tuscan hills, which is surrounded by a sheltering forest of the magnificent trees. They are both providers of the protection that means Querciabella can pursue organic and biodynamic viticulture without contamination and beneficiaries of the respect for nature that is core to the philosophy of this producer of diverse and distinctive wines.

When steel magnate Giuseppe Castiglione bought the rundown estate in Greve in 1974, it had only a single hectare of vines. He set about restoring the property to its former glory, and gradually acquired more and more land, spreading into Panzano, Radda and Gaiole. It was his intention to be able to grow not only Sangiovese, but the international grapes of his beloved Bordeaux and Burgundy wines as well. The estate is now 74 hectares and, indeed, is planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay and Pinot Bianco.

However, for Querciabella’s founder, the estate was essentially a hobby producer. Almost from the start, Sebastiano Castiglioni worked with his father and, when Giuseppe was taken ill in the late 1990s, he took over completely. It has been under Sebastiano that Querciabella has become known as one of Italy’s best wine producers - and a pioneer in biodynamic winemaking, taking his father’s move towards organic viticulture in the 1980s considerably further. He also acquired an additional 32 hectare estate in the Maremma, on the Tuscan coast.

Querciabella’s interpretation of biodynamic agriculture is a very particular one. Like many biodynamic winemakers, Castiglioni does not believe in the mystical aspects of the system, having said he has no time for astrology or “any New Age nonsense”. But, having studied data on the effects of lunar forces on plant development, he is convinced there is scientific proof of its efficacy. He insists, though, that the dogmatic adherence of many practitioners to the strict tenets of biodynamism fails to take into account the needs of the terroir. In fact, Castiglioni points out, the method’s founder, Rudolf Steiner, actually said that his principles should always be adapted to local needs. Castiglioni and his winemaker Manfred Ing tailor the techniques to specific sites within the estates in the Chianti region and the Maremma.

In one way, Castiglioni goes further than biodynamism - in the area of animal welfare. Querciabella is an entirely vegan operation - no animal product, including manure, is used in the process at all. Biodynamic farming calls for “field preparations” and compost to be made by burying specific minerals or plants underground over the winter, sealed inside a cow’s horn. At Querciabella, ceramic horns are used instead. Visitors to the estate are treated to fresh, light and entirely vegan lunch from the estates’ gardens - since 2012, when Armit Wines became Querciabella’s exclusive partner in the UK, it’s always been a relief to eat there after too many Fiorentina steaks in Tuscany.



Querciabella has been active in trying to combat apiary colony collapse disorder, which is causing numbers of honeybees to drop drastically. As well as setting up several colonies in its Maremma vineyards, the producer launched the Bee Biodynamic campaign to persuade other winemakers of the dangers of the decline in pollinators and the effects of pesticides on bees.

Querciabella straddles the divide between Chianti and Super Tuscan but makes the stance look surprisingly comfortable. While some producers in the region have rejected the native grape almost entirely, the main estate here is still planted with around 80 per cent Sangiovese. Querciabella's Chianti Classico is notably savoury and complex expression of the grape, especially in years when the longer-aged Chianti Classico Riserva is produced. Castiglione has talked of releasing single "cru" Chiantis as well - we await those with excitement.

The wine that cemented Querciabella's reputation (judged best wine in Italy, based on aggregated reviews, in 2000) is Camartina - a Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese blend aged in barriques to produce a wine of sumptuous fruit with smoky, toasty layers. However, the winery also produces a 100 per cent Merlot, Palafreno, full of the rich plumminess of the grape but with a spice and perfume that speaks of the terroir. The feted white Batàr - a blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc - is also produced here.

Querciabella's Maremma estate is in an area of outstanding natural beauty on the coast near Grosseto, from where the attractive, supple Mongrana (Sangiovese, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon) hails. The unusual Turpino (Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Merlot) is created from juice of both estates, expressing the elegance of the Chianti region with the darker, more sumptuous flavours of the Maremma.

Since 2012, all Querciabella's wines, from both the Greve and Maremma estates, are available in the UK, exclusively imported by Armit Wines.