

Tenuta Monteti, Caburnio 2005 IGT Toscana

23 May 2007 by JR

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Here's another great-value Italian red – and much more sophisticated and rewarding for the medium term than the recently recommended Ciù Ciù. It comes from the southern Maremma inland and south of Grosseto, in country so wild that when I asked the owner Paolo Baratta whether he and his family holidayed there he virtually shuddered, though conceded it was “very tranquil and still”.

He is one of the many prominent Italians who seem recently to have decided to make their mark with wine. A banker, he was also briefly Minister of Public Works and Minister for the Environment in Rome as well as for four years president of the Venice Biennale. See his profile [here](#). “I wanted to leave something more permanent and personal than an archive of memories,” he told me, smiling at his London-based, documentary producer daughter. Carlo Ferrini is consultant oenologist on this estate with 25 hectares (62 acre) of vines.

The first releases were the 2004s and the plan is to continue to produce a robustly priced top wine, **Monteti**, with up to 40% Petit Verdot plus mainly Cabernets, but also this little charmer, **Caburnio**, in which Alicante (Bouschet) plays an important role. The **2005** is even better than the **2004**, very spicy and sweet, full and luscious but dense with a slightly pruney overlay and a certain savouriness that develops in the glass and stops it all being just too sickly. This is a particularly persistent wine that strikes me as more serious than its price suggests. And one very important factor is that the Barattas are very sensitive to sulphur so try to keep SO₂ additions to a practical minimum in their wines.

The blend for the 2005 is Cabernet Sauvignon (68%), Alicante (20%) and Merlot (12%). Alicante has a natural tendency to vigour and over-productivity so needs a lot of attention in summer to restrain it from making wine that is simply too light in flavour. Baratta claims it is more expensive to tend than Cabernet Sauvignon for this reason but reckons it brings particular spice to the blend. (Mouchão in Portugal's Alentejo is another prominent wine dependent on Alicante – see my recent mega [Portuguese tasting](#).) The Alicante is picked late August whereas the Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot may not be picked till October.

Lea & Sandeman shops in London are selling it now for £9.25, a price Baratta claims he is keen to maintain. It certainly seems better value than the slightly more conventional, stricter Monteti at just under £20 to me. The 2005 can be found in Italy for 11 euros a bottle and deserves to be imported into the US and elsewhere. See www.tenutamonteti.it for contact details and more.

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