

2006 Chianti Classico

24 Feb 2009 by Jancis Robinson

From £10.88, Å £11.99, \$19.99, 20.50 Swiss francs, CA \$24.95, Aus \$39.99, HK \$218 a bottle.

[Find the Fonterutoli](#)
[Find the Brolio](#)
[Find the Isola e Olena](#)

Make no mistake about it, 2006 has produced some stunning wines from central Italy, including this beauty, which, as you can see from the number of currencies listed, is exceptionally easy to find. The season was mild with no aggressive heat spikes and rain at just the right times.

Wine-searcher.com currently lists scores of stockists around the world for **Fonterutoli 2006 Chianti Classico**, which I first tasted in this extensive look at [Chianti Classico - some great current buys last July](#). I was already struck by this wine, although my colleague Richard Hemming found it a bit too tightly furled for his taste when looking at a selection of [Gems from The Wine Society](#) last October. See, for example, this [vertical of Siepi](#). Fonterutoli's blend of Sangiovese with Merlot. I tasted the 2005 recently and found it so concentrated at this point that the bitterness was just too pronounced. It will certainly soften with age, even if I cannot imagine myself paying Å £55 for a bottle of it.

I think the Fonterutoli 2006 Chianti Classico, however, is looking just delightful now. A blend of 90% Sangiovese, 5% Malvasia Nera with Colorino and 5% Merlot, it is an appetising 13.5% alcohol with a really attractive and already complex nose - pure Tuscany with just a tad extra flesh from that Merlot component.

Absolute purists might eschew this French interloper and prefer a wine such as the all- Sangiovese and much more 'agricultural' smelling **Brolio 2006 Chianti Classico**, which can be found at a slightly lower price, but the Mazzei family at Fonterutoli - or perhaps their oenologist Carlo Ferrini - is awfully clever at giving Fonterutoli wines a lightly modern polish without overdoing it. I tasted both these Chianti Classicos alongside each other and at first thought that the Fonterutoli was more 'international' than the Brolio, but on retasting, I really appreciated the extra- vibrant fruit, lovely brightness and yet expressive fruit of the Fonterutoli with just that slightly bitter finish that is so characteristic of Italian reds in general and Sangiovese in particular. I reckon the Fonterutoli should drink well over the next four or five years. But do not attempt to drink it without food - shavings of parmesan are the very least you should attempt with this wine but it will improve in a decanter through a full- scale meal.

If you're looking for a really delicious 2006 classical Chianti Classico with wonderful transparency, almost delicacy, and without a hint of any non- Tuscan grapes, head straight for **Isola e Olena 2006 Chianti Classico**, which is 85% Sangiovese with almost 15% of the gentle, local, light- bodied Canaiolo in which Paolo De Marchi believes so sincerely for adding grace to his Chianti Classico. His regular Chianti Classico also contains a few per cent of Syrah, a practice that dates from the 1980s when most people were blending in a bit of Cabernet. He felt it didn't really work all that well with the Sangiovese he was producing at Isola, according to UK importer David Gleabe, but he did think that the spiciness of Syrah would complement the spiciness of the Sangiovese he produced. He has used varying amounts over the years - from 0-5%, depending on the year.

This wonderfully pure, non flashy wine is the truest expression of Sangiovese grown in the hills of Tuscany. I saw Paolo De Marchi recently on his way back from a tour of the US. He told me that at one point his American customers were rather unimpressed by the lack of noise created by this 2006. 'But then I reminded them that music doesn't have to be loud to be good and they understood', he grinned. 'As I get older, I find that more and more this is the sort of wine I want to drink.'

Good old wine-searcher.com reveals some pricing anomalies. In the UK, Isola e Olena is the most expensive and Brolio the cheapest. In the US, on the other hand, you can find Isola e Olena at lower prices than the Fonterutoli, from as little as \$15.99 - which is a real steal. The prices I have given above are for the easiest of these three wines to find, the Fonterutoli. But I would make your choice more on the style of Chianti Classico you appreciate than on price. The Fonterutoli is the most polished, the Brolio is a pretty concentrated rendition of 100% Sangiovese, while the Isola e Olena is beautifully balanced but no attention- grabber.