

## Tuscany vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2012 was generally hot in Tuscany, with yields up to 30% below average thanks to uneven flowering caused by rain. A heatwave in August caused some vines to shut down, but overall the quality is holding very good in Chianti and Montalcino, with Bolgheri in the Maremma doing best.

**2011** Yields were 14% lower than 2010, but quality is very promising, with an early harvest brought on by a heatwave in August.

**2010** Overall cooler than usual, although Montalcino looks to have had generally more favourable conditions. Modest in quality.

**2009** Record rainfall at winter followed by lots of heat in the summer, with cool nights to retain aromatic qualities. Some producers suffered dehydration but most were delighted with the quality. Almost – but not quite – akin to the legendary 2004.

**2008** Hail had a big impact on volumes in Montalcino, whilst elsewhere, Merlot suffered thanks to summer drought. Soft tannic structure seems a feature of this vintage.

**2007** Tremendous: high alcohol and good acidity with consistent ripening, after a worryingly erratic budburst. Especially good for Chianti and Montalcino, and for Cabernet Sauvignon in Bolgheri.

**2006** Very promising vintage with a steady, prolonged growing season and well balanced wines.

**2005** Grapes had to be picked before the rain really set in if decent wine was to be made. A notable exception to my five year rule.

**2004** Exceptionally good vintage, central Italy's equivalent of the perfect growing season that France experienced in 2005.

**2003** Very difficult heatwave conditions were felt in all but the highest vineyards of Chianti Classico. Wines generally pretty unbalanced.

**2002** Exceptionally wet summer resulted in rotten grapes, many of which failed to reach full ripeness. A real *annus horribilis*.

**2001** Smallish crop thanks to April frosts. June and July were dry but August and especially September were quite wet with rain threatening vine health as harvest time approached.

**2000** Easy, ripe wines from a very hot, dry vintage which, unless vineyards were extremely well-managed, resulted in wines with a certain hollowness, though no shortage of alcohol.

**1999** Quite exceptionally good quality. A vintage not unlike 1997 but with arguably more finesse and less sheer mass. Warm summer led to an early harvest of healthy grapes.

**1998** Irregular vintage after another hot summer which stressed the vines.

**1997** Hot summer and very ripe grapes that produced wines that seemed unusually luscious at the time even if some could do with a little more freshness.

**1996** Very varied year producing soft, early maturing wines that should have been drunk by now.

**1995** Nail-bitingly late harvest saved by an unusually warm, dry October, although acids are still generally high.

**1994** At last a dry but cool harvest: rich and structured and certainly the best since 1990.

**1993** Survived the rains better than Piemonte, concentration held up, but some picked unripe fruit.

**1992** A big crop of rather light wines to drink young.

**1991** Endless harvest rains so the best were no more than pleasant.

**1990** A hot year and low yields, the ingredients for really good wines, especially in Montalcino.

**1989** Distinctly inferior to Piemonte. Light if not watery, so best to avoid.

**1988** Delightfully smooth wines, balanced and ripe from low yields.

**1985** Initially impressive, then worryingly irregular with some Supertuscans unbalanced.