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SIXTH SENSE OF PLACE

AT RODNEY STRONG VINEYARDS,
JUSTIN SEIDENFELD IS
STEWARDED A NEW ERA

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Strong Vineyards.*



Sangiovese Stylist

THIRD-GENERATION WINEMAKER
TOMMASO CORTONESI CAPTURES THE
ETHEREAL ESSENCE OF BRUNELLO

by Meridith May




Tommaso Cortonesi.

"I AM A LUCKY MAN," claims Tommaso Cortonesi, third-generation winemaker for his family's business in Montalcino, Italy. "I am able to live and work in my homeland. While many others have to move from small Italian villages and find careers in the cities, I can do what I love where I love to live."

Expressing the terroir through single-vineyard

wines is key for Tommaso, who, with his father, was able to understand the specific soil compositions of their two prestigious vineyards: Poggiarelli's rock marl and La Mannella's clay and limestone. The Cortonesi winery has been producing single-vineyard Brunello and Rosso di Montalcino since 2012. In 2017, Tommaso, who has been recognized for his techniques that balance tradition with modern innovation, was appointed as vice president of the Consorzio del Vino Brunello di Montalcino, an influential position from which to help guide the region's future.

I met up with Tommaso in Chandler, Arizona, where he was visiting to show the latest releases of his beautiful, inspirational Brunellos to the trade. The wines are imported and marketed by Quintessential. 

Poggiarelli Vineyard is a Grand Cru site.



Cortonesi 2022 Lèonis Toscana IGT, Italy (\$20)

A single block in a vineyard planted 20–25 years ago in the northeastern part of Montalcino produces the grapes for this stunning blend of 85% Sangiovese with small amounts of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Petit Verdot. With its billowy mouthfeel and silky tannins, it's an overachiever at its price point. White pepper, Morrello cherries, and rose petals deliver a most approachable Super Tuscan, or as Tommaso Cortonesi refers to it, Super Montalcino. **94**

Cortonesi 2022 La Mannella Rosso di Montalcino, Toscana, Italy (\$32)

La Mannella was the original name of the winery before the family changed it to Cortonesi in 2012. This wine is 100% Sangiovese, culled from the youngest vineyard in the cooler northern end of Montalcino and aged 12 months in large-format Slavonian oak. "This is my business-card wine," notes Tommaso. "We are building a personal identification for our Rosso di Montalcino and won't refer to it as a 'baby Brunello.' It takes on a unique character from its single-site expression."

Bright, fruity, and in possession of the coveted trio of balance, finesse, and elegance (which we noticed in all the Cortonesi wines we tasted), it also shows freshness derived from startling acidity that links to salty raspberry, cherry, and red tea leaves. "This is the future of Montalcino," predicts Tommaso. **95**



Cortonesi 2019 La Mannella Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Toscana, Italy (\$80)

Sangiovese from a 1,000-foot hill to the north and an even higher elevation of 1,150 feet on the region's coolest southeastern side spawned this luxurious red. Lightly veiled without density or edge, notes of coffee, cocoa, roses, and peonies are captured and refreshed by the acid structure of the wine, which spent 36 months in large, tightly grained Slavonian oak. Its accessibility for drinking now is remarkable, yet its longevity is undeniable. **98**

Cortonesi 2018 Poggiarelli Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Toscana, Italy (\$115)

At 1,400 feet in elevation on the southeastern side of Montalcino, Poggiarelli is a Grand Cru site (monopole) with sandy, rocky limestone soils and great sun exposure. The aromas of this wine, which spent two years in 500-liter French casks, are deep and dark, including cardamom, white pepper, and soy sauce. Black plum saturates the palate, layered with fig, black cherry, and graphite. The relative warmth of Poggiarelli shows in the ripe profile of the wine, which possesses no tannic aggression but does have a savory, earthy, umami nature. Says Tommaso, "We know that 2018 was an underrated vintage, but this wine has incredible aging potential." **96**