Walter Speller's classification of Chianti Classico on Jancis Robinson.com 25/2/2021

25 February 2021 Walter writes *Now that the presentation of the new Chianti Classico vintage in Florence has been postponed indefinitely, my annual report will take longer to piece together. My, some would say controversial, classification of Chianti Classico's best, and today's Throwback Thursday, is a little reminder of how the wines featured below represent some of the best value in Italy today. This year the comprehensive Florence event would have highlighted the potentially very good 2019 vintage, so do pay them proper attention when they arrive in your market.*

29 April 2020 *Where angels, and the Consorzio, have feared to tread, Walter bravely stomps in, with a ranking of the best Chianti Classico producers. See also The case for Chianti Classico 2018 and 2017 and Great 2017 and 2016 Chianti Classico Riservas.*

….In my recent article on the 2018 and 2017 vintages of Chianti Classico I also mentioned that in spite of many unworkable ideas and concepts emanating from the Consorzio, **an unofficial classification of producers based purely on their proven track record of excellence has started to emerge**. Founded on a shared belief in Sangiovese, sometimes in combination with other indigenous red varieties but eschewing international ones, these producers' transparently expressive wines are some of the best in the whole of Italy and the world.

I had been playing with setting up a classification of these estates and producers but it was Jancis who gave me a nudge to publish it.

Because of the fact that **the following classification (see the table below) is explicitly not based on terroir, but on merit**, the Consorzio can surely have few arguments against it. Among many colleagues, importers and sommeliers, the classification below is pretty much undisputed, but I am aware that I am opening a can of worms.

I have taken as an inspiration the classification of St-Émilion rather than the 1855 classification of left bank châteaux shown above because it is revised every so often. This of course leads to huge controversy and disputes, which in my opinion is inherent in this type of exercise. However, with all its flaws and failures, it keeps producers on their toes and it is dynamic rather than

inert, giving everyone, in theory, a fair chance to excel and be recognised. I hope readers are willing to see my classification in that light.

I have added an additional, very personal, category, *fuori concorso*, or *hors concours,* for a specific wine rather than a producer, Villa del Cigliano Riserva 2016 Chianti Classico, in honour of Niccolò Montecchi, who in January 2019 at the age of 43 died far too early, having turned round his family's estate in a spectacular fashion.

The selection of the producers in categories A and B is, of course, my own and hence subjective. However, all have a track record of excellence, which can be verified by checking the roughly 2,500 tasting notes on Chianti Classico our tasting notes database.

In this classification only producers working with Sangiovese and other local varieties up to the allowed 20% of the final blend are included. The inclusion of international varieties, however minute, disqualifies producers from being eligible. I can understand that some might disagree, but I for one cannot imagine a classification of St-Émilion in which Italian varieties would be allowed. I especially struggle to understand why minute quantities of international grape varieties are considered so propitious by the producers who add them. It just makes me want to see their skills in a 100% Sangiovese wine.

Several wines in this classification are labelled IGT rather than Chianti Classico. Some producers, such as Il Borghetto, have in the past labelled their wines as Chianti Classico but have recently seen them thrown out time and again by the official control system and so have switched to IGT.

I hope, but don't expect, the Consorzio will fully appreciate the non-terroir approach of this classification system. It is not an attempt to scandalise but to offer an alternative to the current politics of promoting a set style to the benefit of the few, an alternative based on uniqueness and originality. We need an independent tool to counteract the biased power that determines who is considered to produce quality and replace it with a much more transparent system, which must also include an adaptation of or change to the current control system. This classification is aiming at that.

Unless otherwise stated, the wines in the table below are 100% Sangiovese.

Chianti Classico Grand Cru 2020

Classifica A

VILLAGE (N TO S)	PRODUCER	WINES
Castelnuovo Berardenga	**Castell'in Villa**	Poggio delle Rose Riserva Chianti Classico
		Chianti Classico
		Riserva Chianti Classico
Radda in Chianti	**Montevertine**	Le Pergole Torte IGT Toscana
Barberino Tavarnelle	**Isole & Olena**	Cepparello

Fuori concorso

VILLAGE	PRODUCER	WINES
San Casciano in Val di Pesa	**Villa del Cigliano**	Riserva 2016 Chianti Classico

Classifica B

VILLAGE (N TO S)	PRODUCER	WINES

San Casciano in Val di Pesa	**Il Borghetto**	Clante IGP Toscana
		Bilaccio IGP Toscana
		Montigiano IGP Toscana
		Monte de Sassi IGP Toscana
		Paz IGP Toscana
	Montesecondo	Montesecondo IGT Toscana
		Chianti Classico
		Tïn IGT Toscana
Barberino Tavarnelle	**Ormanni**	Chianti Classico
		Chianti Classico Gran Selezione
		Riserva Borro del Diavolo Chianti Classico
	Castello di Monsanto	Il Poggio Chianti Classico Gran Selezione (95% Sangiovese, 5% Colorino and Canaiolo)

Greve in Chianti	**Querciabella**	Chianti Classico
		Riserva Querciabella
Panzano	**Fontodi**	Vigna del Sorbo Chianti Classico Gran Selezione
		Chianti Classico
		Flaccianello della Pieve IGT Colli Toscana Centrale
	Monte Bernardi	Riserva Chianti Classico (95% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo)
		Riserva Sa'etta Chianti Classico
		Retromarcia Chianti Classico
	Vallone di Cecione	Chianti Classico (90% Sangiovese, 10% Canaiolo)
	Vecchie Terre di Montefili	Anfiteatro IGT Toscana
		Chianti Classico Gran Selezione
		Vigna Vecchia Chianti Classico Gran Selezione

Lamole	**Fontodi**	Filetta di Lamole Chianti Classico
Radda in Chianti	**L'Erta di Radda**	Chianti Classico (95% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo)
	Monteraponi	Chianti Classico (95% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo)
		Riserva Il Campitello Chianti Classico (90% Sangiovese, 7% Canaiolo, 3% Colorino)
	Poggerino	Chianti Classico
		Riserva Bugialla
		(N)Uovo Chianti Classico
	Tenuta Carleone	Chianti Classico
	Val delle Corti	Chianti Classico (95% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo)
		Riserva Chianti Classico
Gaiole in Chianti	**Badia a Coltibuono**	Chianti Classico (90% Sangiovese, 10% Canaiolo, Colorino, Ciliegiolo)
		Riserva Chianti Classico (90% Sangiovese, 10% Canaiolo, Colorino, Ciliegiolo)

	Fattoria San Giusto a Rentennano	Chianti Classico (95% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo)
		Riserva Le Baròncole Chianti Classico (97% Sangiovese, 3% Canaiolo)
	Le Miccine	Chianti Classico (95% Sangiovese, 5% Colorino)
		Riserva Chianti Classico
	Maurizio Alongi	Riserva Vigna Barbischio Chianti Classico (94% Sangiovese, 4% Malvasia Nera, 2% Canaiolo)
	Podere il Palazzino	Argenina Chianti Classico
		Grosso Sanese Chianti Classico Gran Selezione
	Rocca di Montegrossi	Chianti Classico (90% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo, 5% Colorino)
		Vigneto San Marcellino Chianti Classico Gran Selezione (95% Sangiovese, 5% Pugnitello)
Castellina in Chianti	**Castagnoli**	Chianti Classico
		Terrazze Riserva Chianti Classico

Castelnuovo Berardenga	**Castello di Bossi**	Riserva Berardo Chianti Classico
	Felsina	Riserva Rancia Chianti Classico
		Colonia Chianti Classico Gran Selezione