

Montalcino



Montalcino lies in Tuscany, in central Italy, about forty kilometers south of the city of Siena, in the hill-lands of an uncontaminated landscape. A land of farms with an ancient history and of rare beauty which, since 2004, is enlisted among the locations of Heritage of mankind by **Unesco**. The territory of Montalcino consists of one tall hill, mostly covered by forests. Farm cultivations are a mix of vineyards, olive groves, and seeded crops, with a large number of stone buildings that are a witness to centuries of cultivations in these lands. Montalcino and its hamlets Castelnuovo dell'Abate, Sant'Angelo, and Torrenieri are small cities of art with an overall population just a little over five thousand inhabitants. The area where the Montalcino wines are made lies within the confines of the Municipality of Montalcino. Montalcino lies 40 km away from the sea in airline, and 100 km from the Apennine Mountains. Its climate is typically Mediterranean and dry, but with occasional continental connotations, given its position midway between the sea and the Central Apennine. Precipitations mostly occur in spring and late autumn (yearly average rainfall: 700 mm). Snowfall is possible during winter at heights above 400 meters. Fog, ice, and late hoarfrost are rare in the medium hill strips, factor in part due to the presence of wind, which provides the best habitat for the healthy growth of vegetation. Mount Amiata down South, with its 1,740 meters of height, towers over and protects the territory of Brunello from weather hazards like rain and hail storms.

The climate is prevalently mild during the entire vegetative phase of the vine, with a high number of clear-

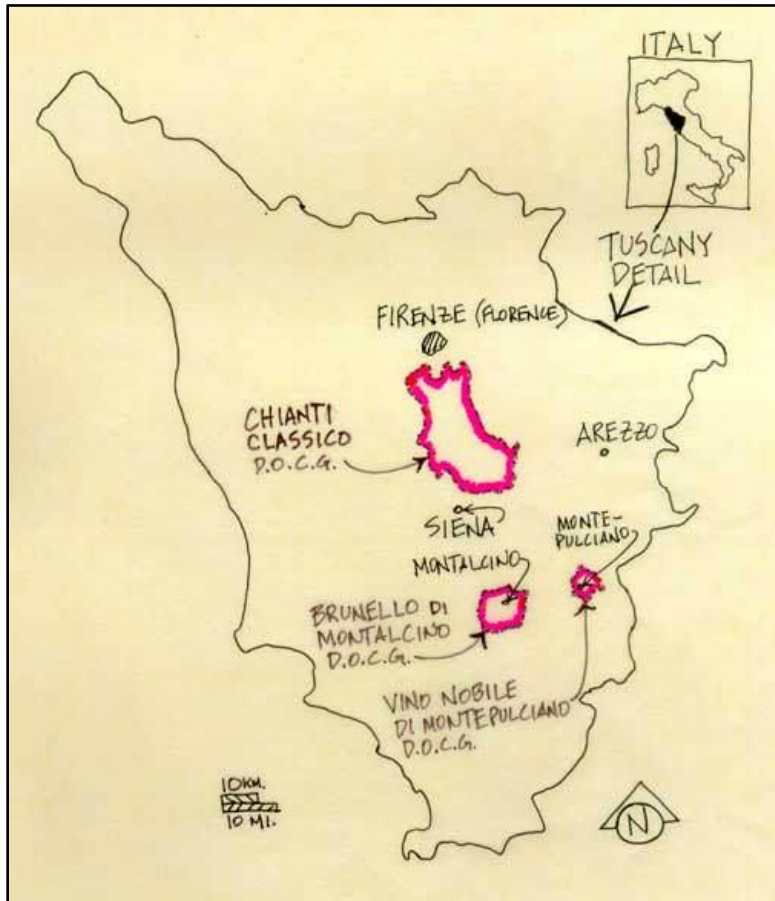


sky days that make for a gradual and full ripening of the clusters.

The most widespread method of cultivation for vines is the spurred cordon, which is obtained by way of a short pruning (double gems) of a variable number of horns per vine. The secret of the quality of the Brunello di Montalcino is treasured in the grapevine: a meticulous labor by hand, from dry pruning to the selection of the most fit offshoots, from the containment of the vegetation to the trimming of the bunches, processes that all share the

goal of reaping and selecting the best fruits. Certain winemakers carry out a second selection at harvest, so that only perfect grapes are sent away to the wine cellar.

A bit of storia... (from the Consortium) Between the 12th and 16th century, Montalcino was contended in fierce military battles, first waged against Siena and later, after 1260, allied with Siena against Florence. The small but bold town of Montalcino was thought to be an impenetrable stronghold, protected by walls and by a great fortress. This is why, when the inhabitants of Montalcino handed over the keys of the city to the representatives of Cosimo de' Medici in 1559, the town had been the last to survive as an independent municipality in Italy. The territory of Montalcino has a natural vocation for the production of wines of the best quality, which has been renowned for over two thousand years: evidence thereof and that Montalcino was a place where wine was made is given by the many archeological findings that date as far back as the Etruscan age. In the Middle Ages, municipal edicts established the time of year when grapes were to be harvested, while even during the siege of 1553, there was no shortage of wine, and Blaise de Montluc, troubled with the task of fending off attacks to the city walls, would "rub his face to a ruby-red color with red wine" to dissimulate the ordeal. Leandro Alberti (1550-1631) from Bologna states that Montalcino is "much mentioned for the good wines that are reaped from those homely hills". On his visit to Montalcino in 1676-1677, the grand-duke auditor Bartolomeo Gherardini points to the production of 6050 somas of wine, which he describes as a "lively wine, though not abundant". Charles Thompson writes in 1744 that *"Montalcino is not particularly famous, except for the goodness of its wines"*.



A never ending debate

The Brunello zone extends over almost 24,000 hectares, of which a mere 2,100 are under vine. 24,000 hectares is about 100 square miles, or just slightly larger than three times the island of Manhattan. The highest elevation in the zone is principally centered, around the village of Montalcino itself. The wines produced closer to this area are naturally, stylistically different from those produced in other parts of the zone. Many producers argue that this is among the first reasons to subzone. To help the consumers understand the subtle differences between the many wine styles. To allow delineated subzones to become associated with certain styles of Brunello so that the consumer knows what to expect when selecting a wine. There's a North-South divide that is somehow manifested in

a debate over styles. Many of the original Brunello producers are located very close to the town of Montalcino. They have a sense of pride, of purpose, that the Brunello they create is the original and their wines are "true" Brunello. It's been suggested that the creation of a "*Brunello Classico*" area - wines coming from the center of the zone, very near the town of Montalcino itself, might be the first step in a broader sub-zoning project (one look at the Chianti Classico analogy should be enough to convince them of the folly in that).

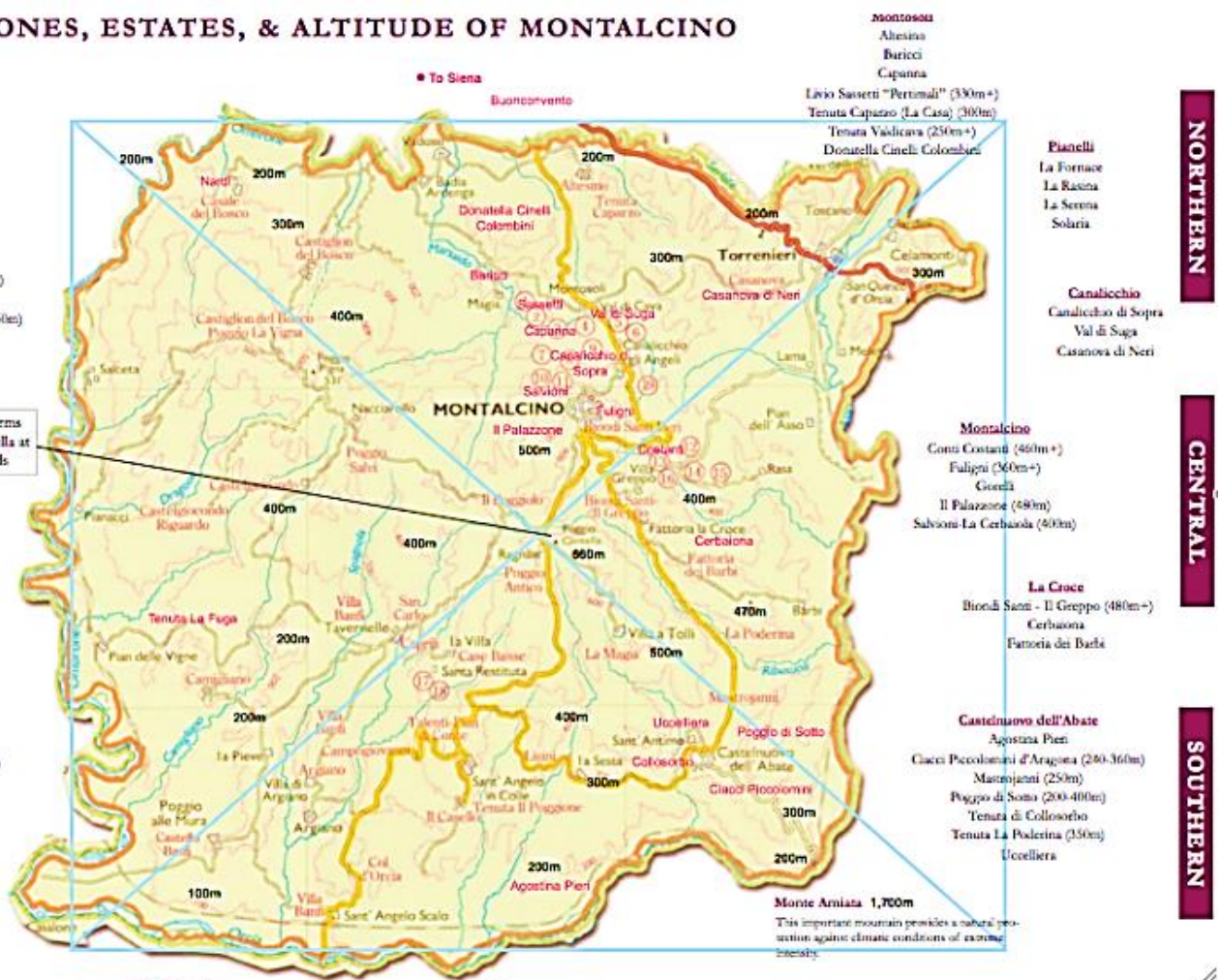
Some producers point of view to the question if sub-zoning is important.

- *"It's mostly recognizing the reality and bringing all the producers together behind a common product. Informing consumers as to the great diversity that can be found in Montalcino. And when I say recognizing the reality, I also refer to the rule in the discipline of Brunello that allows producers to name their Brunello after the vineyard where it is produced. The "Vigna" denomination recognizes single vineyards and is really a starting point of zoning."*
- *"Montalcino's terroir is so diverse that almost every producer could make realistic claims to be in a separate subzone. The possible micro-terroirs that have been outlined still lump together some very different areas and don't fully consider the effects of altitude. And then there are the producers like us and many others who blend wine from different subzones."*

- Ezio Rivella, who was Castello Banfi's Chief winemaker for almost 25 years told me simply, "Even within single parts of a smaller area, the portion of a vineyard that sits at a slightly lower altitude will give wines of deeper color that are richer in tannins than wines made from grapes from higher altitudes. Furthermore, you have to realize that a large number of producers are deliberately blending Brunello wines from different zones and varying altitudes. The reason for this is obvious. In this way they obtain more complete Brunellos than if they used grapes from a single zone only."
- One Brunello producer gave a different perspective on the issue: **"Italians typically don't want to lead. They want to be lead. In this fashion, they are free to criticize the leader."** (sigh...)

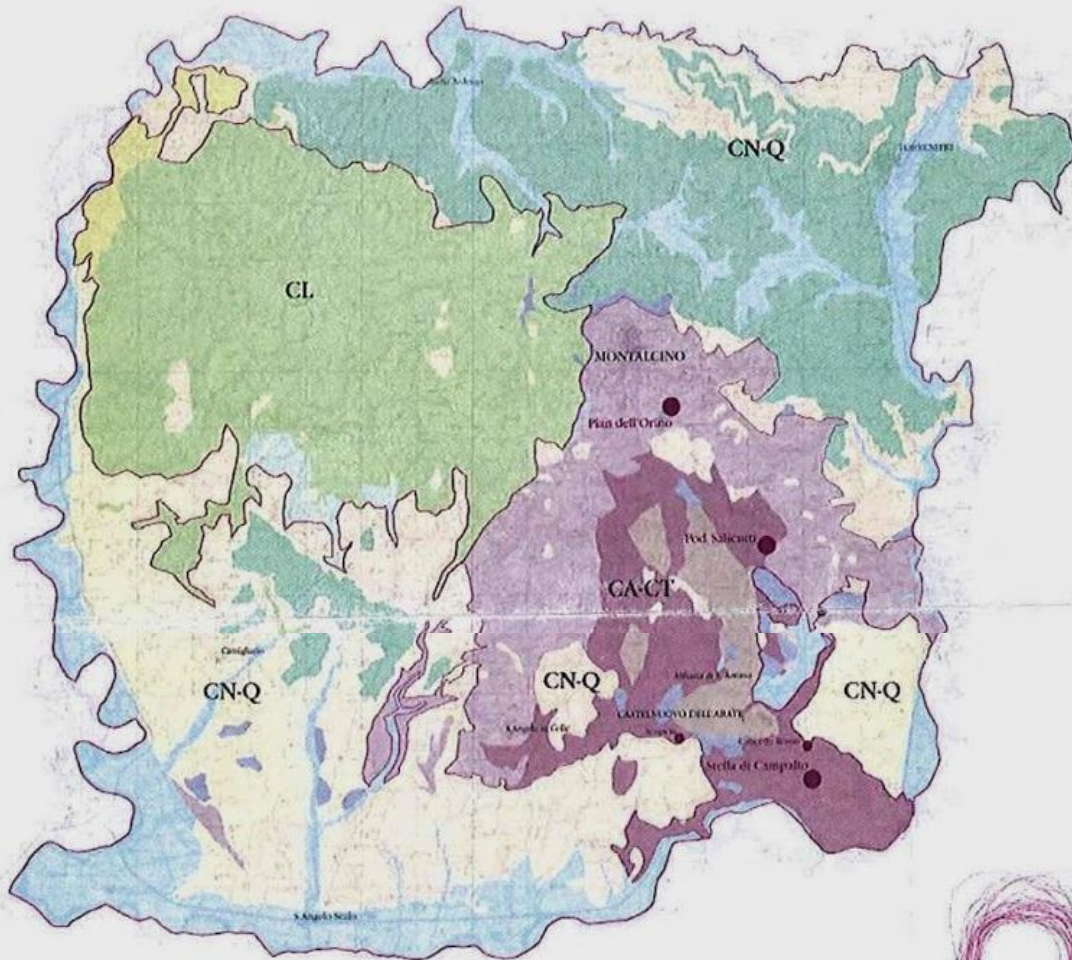
The apex of the four triangles forms the highest point at Poggio Civitella at 661 meters and descends outwards

Sant'Angelo
Argiano (250m)
Banfi (130m+)
Campogiovanni (San Felice) (250m)
Collenattoni
Lisini (150-370m)
Talemi - Pian di Conte
Tenuta Col d'Orcia (115-300m)
Tenuta Il Poggione (440m)



The Hill of Montalcino has several pedological environments, owing to its formation over different geological ages. The lowest areas are made up of relatively loose soils, which originated in the Quaternary due to the flow of debris with a deep, active layer. As one moves up, the soil becomes dense with rock formations, while the active stratum thins out, since these are soils formed by the decomposition of original rocks, namely marl and limestone.

Montalcino Soil Map



The soil map produced by Jan-Hendrik Erbach of Pian dell'Orto, Stella di Campalto and Francesco Leanza of Salicutti.

The soils of Montalcino

Galestri (Clay with calcareous Palombini) - clay and silty clay and marl, fine flaky, of changing dark grey to brown colour, interspersed by calcareous layers; gauge less than a meter and of grey colour; sometimes there are intercalations of quaternary sandstones (Tortonico - Cretaceo)

(continental deposits of rivers and lakes) - Deposits constituted by changing levels of crossing stratifications of sandy lime and clayey lime; sometimes intercalations of pebbly layers (Olocene).

Clay and sandy clay - sedimentary deposits constituted by clay and sandy clay

(Sand, sandy clay, conglomerates and breccias) - continental sediments constituted by sands, sandy clay, conglomerates and breccias (Miocene - sup.)

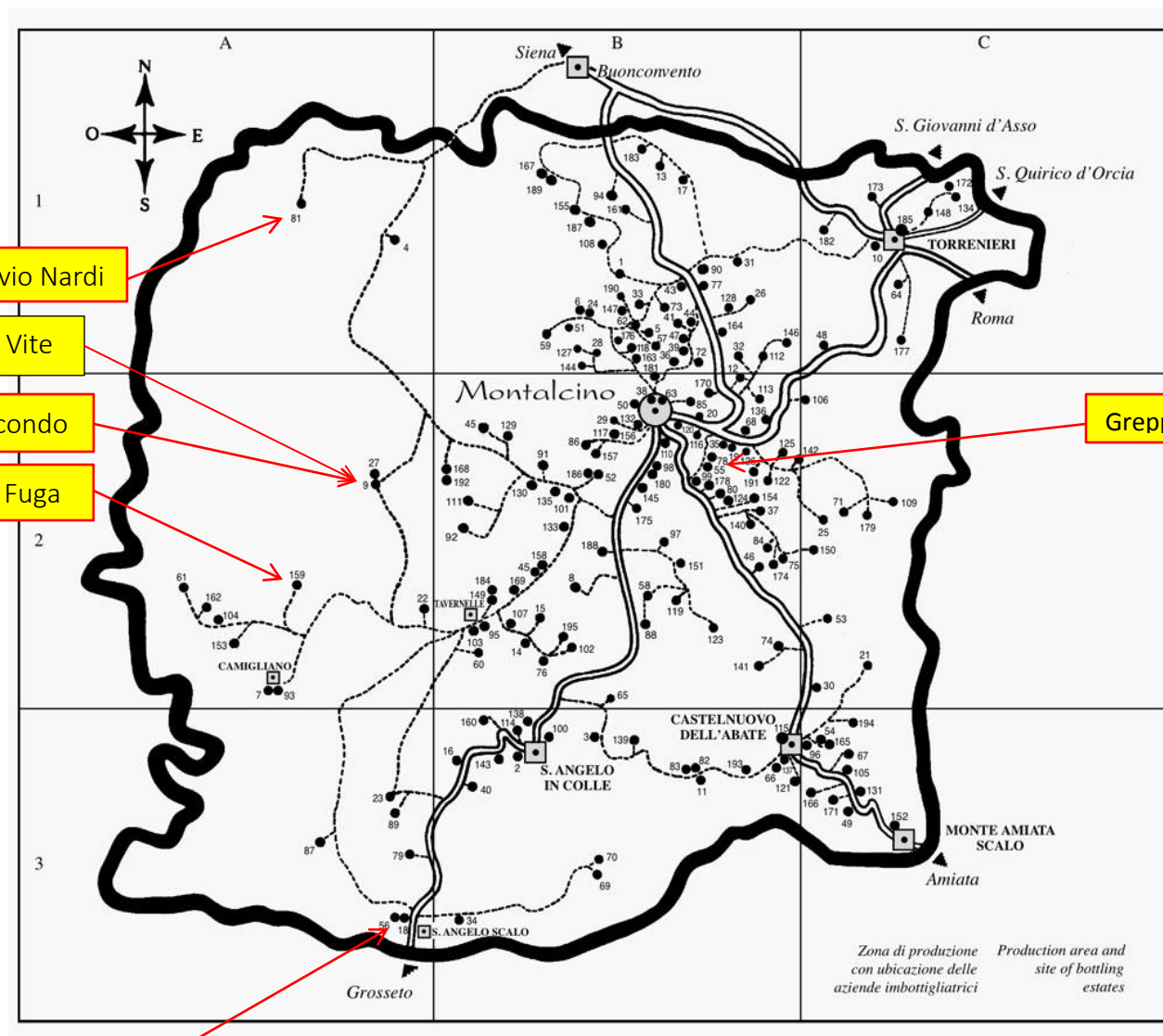
(Sand and clayey sands) - sedimentary deposits constituted by sand, clayey sand with inclusions of conglomerates (Pliocene).

(Formation of Santa Fiora) - Calcarene gradate, fine sandstones and silt, calcareous marlstone and marl (Cretaceo sup. - Paleocene inf.)

(Formation of the clay and limestone) - soils are constituted by clayey slate and foliated silt with intercalations of limestones (Eocene medio - Paleocene)

(Macigno del Chianti) - Deposits of arenite, layers of flysch of a fine and medium structure with inclusions of clayey - silty layers of different gauges (Miocene inf. - Oligocene sup.).

Where the producers are



Le GRANDI Annate (The best vintages - 5 stars rated)

1945 - 1955 - 1961 - 1964 - 1970 - 1975 - 1985 - 1988 - 1990

1995 - 1997 - 2004 - 2006 - 2007 - 2010 - 2012

Le nostre selezioni



Frescobaldi "Castel Giocondo" Brunello di Montalcino 2008 12pk	93JS
Frescobaldi "Castel Giocondo" Brunello di Montalcino 2010 6pk	97JS
Frescobaldi "Castel Giocondo" Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2006 6pk	
Ruffino "Greppone Mazzi" Brunello di Montalcino 2008 6pk	
Tenuta La Fuga Brunello di Montalcino 2009 6pk	92WA
Castello Banfi Brunello di Montalcino 2009 6pk	91WA
Castello Banfi Brunello di Montalcino 2010 6pk	95JS
Castello Banfi "Poggio alle Mura" Brunello di Montalcino 2010 6pk	97JS
Silvio Nardi Brunello di Montalcino 2009 6pk	90WA
Silvio Nardi "Manachiara" Brunello di Montalcino 2006 6pk	92WS
Luce della Vite Brunello di Montalcino 2010 3pk	100JS

A video about the 2010 vintage <http://www.jamessuckling.com/brunello-2010---the-vintage-of-a-lifetime---castello-banfi-i-.html>

All the above Brunellos listed in **RED** won't be available till the spring.

