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## Anteprime Toscana 2019: PrimAnteprima kicks off the Marathon at Fortezza da Basso

Feb 27: The 9-day Grand Tuscan Marathon always starts with PrimAnteprima at the massive 100,000 square metres, 14th Century Fortezza da Basso, in the Cavaniglia Pavilion and this year was no different with 10 appellations outside the Chianti and Chianti Classico regions showcasing their wines to the journalists and professional visitors on February 9. Our Correspondent John Salvi MW was at hand to assess and report the current 2018 vintage as always

Photo Credit- David Bowden



The Councillor for Agriculture for the Tuscany Region greeted the Press and wished us all a fruitful stay in Tuscany where, "culture, art and tradition have been walking together for centuries".

PrimAnteprima is the event at which the Consorzi outside those of Chianti and Chianti Classico make their presentations. These are the following 10:

1. Consorzio del Vino Orcia
2. Consorzio di Tutela Vini DOC Bianco di Pitigliano e Sovana
3. Consorzio Vini della Maremma Toscana
4. Consorzio Tutela Vini di Carmignano
5. Consorzio Tutela Vini Montecucco
6. Consorzio Tutela Vini DOC Val di Cornia
7. Consorzio Vini delle Colline Lucchesi
8. Consorzio Vini DOC Montecarlo
9. Consorzio Vini DOC Valdarno di Sopra
10. Consorzio Vini Terre di Pisa

**Carmignano** is the smallest DOC in Italy with only 200 hectares. **Consorzio Vini Terre di Pisa** is the most recent, having only been established at the end of last year (2018), whilst the DOC was awarded in 2011. **Consorzio Tutela Vini Montecucco** obtained DOCG status in 2011 and is known as **Amiata Sangiovese** -The new Promise of Tuscan Wine.

Some of the new white wines of the 2018 vintage were also being presented. For the Red wines a multitude of 2017s, 16s and 15s, but also vintages going as far back as Sant'Agnese 2009 were showcased.

My task was to assess the 2018 vintage and see what sort of vintage it was and why? Every vintage is a product of the weather conditions from bud-break to vintage, so let us look at the weather in 2018.

### Vintage 2018

The White Wines are delicious, having been picked during fine vintage weather with optimum health, ripeness and acidity. They are fresh, crisp, fruity and aromatic. They did not suffer from the problems that the Red Wines suffered from and emerged unscathed. Of course, they are only a very small percentage of the production of the 10 consortia, but well worth the attention this year of those looking for white wines in Tuscany and Italy as a whole.

There was one major problem with all the Red Wines throughout Tuscany and therefore with red wines from all the 10 Consortia here today. This was the fact that the intense heat and serious drought during the summer of 2017 had stressed the vines so much that they went into the 2018 vegetative cycle in a weakened state and unable to give of their best.

The result was a weakening of the wine that they produced in 2018. The yield was reduced by some 20%, the structure was weakened, and the alcoholic strength reduced. Some have a pronounced acidity due to the difficulty in ripening fully and the tannins are hard and not fully ripe. The modest alcohol levels are perhaps not a bad thing, as the wines are light, crisp, fresh and will be ready for early drinking and therefore commercial. However, they are not wines to age or to lay down.

Winter was wet and rainy with some snow in February. March and May were very wet. **Beatrice Contini Bonacossi** of **Villa di Capezzano** in **Carmignano**, told me that they had a frost of -4.0°C AFTER bud-break, but damage, surprisingly, was not extensive. This vineyard is both high and inland and most vineyards did not have this frost. **Moreno Petrini** of **Tenuta Valgiano** from the **Colline Lucchese**, and on the coast, said that they never got anywhere near a frost. **Maremma** certainly did not!

This shows clearly the danger of generalisation for 10 different Consortia with vineyards at different heights, different orientations and close or far from the moderating factor of the sea. From the end of May until September it was dry and hot, but this year neither TOO dry nor TOO hot and there was little or no hydric stress. Flowering took place under good conditions end May/begin June, as did colour change later. The third week of August was the hottest week of the summer. A lot of Merlot and Syrah was ripe and ready and was picked from the beginning of September. Sangiovese was picked from the middle of September to the middle of October. September had some rain, which allowed the later ripening Cabernet and Trebbiano grapes to profit from it and to swell.

If we leave the overly-hot, over-dry, highly stressed and somewhat arid 2017 out of the equation, the 2018 yield was some 20-30% less than the excellent 2016. There are some very good wines and a few very fine ones. A famous grower, who shall remain nameless, summed it up for me: "2016 too hot, 2017 too dry, 2018 well balanced. But 2015 remains the greatest vintage of recent years".

It was a full day. As well as the massive tastings at the tables of the Consortia there were 2 tutored tastings by **Signor Valentino Tesi**, a qualified Sommelier from the AIS.

### 2015- A Tuscan Trip Inside a Great Vintage

**2013 Red and 2017 White.** Focus on Tuscany from Various Angles. Expressions of Typicality.

I feel obliged to add that I do wish so many sommeliers and other experts would not search so hard to find so many fruits, flowers, herbs and spices, not to mention even more outlandish products, in each and every wine. It might be worthwhile remembering that wine is, "the freshly fermented juice of the GRAPE!"

At Midday the event was officially opened with long and important speeches, by numerous authorities, without any translation for the many international wine writers attending. This was followed by a buffet lunch of typical and classical Tuscan cuisine.

The organisers are to be congratulated on a successful, well organised and well-run event. Tuscany at its best!

**John Salvi Master of Wine**

Photo Credit- David Bowden



Wine sampling PrimAnteprime di Toscana Fortezza da Basso-Cavaniglia