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Hearty Italian Reds for Winter

This post first appeared on the daily wine blog Terroirist.

I don't spend nearly enough time with Italian wine, and every time I sit down to an Italian tasting, I think the same thing: Why don't I buy and collect more Italian bottles? Sicily, Veneto, of course Tuscany, there are so many exciting wines and only one lifetime.

But now that it's cold outside and dark by afternoon, and I find myself at home cooking a lot of hearty fall fare, vino rosso is a no-brainer.

This grab bag report focuses on a few interesting reds from Sicily, Tuscany and Veneto. All these wines were received as trade samples and tasted sighted.

2009 Donnafugata Contessa Entellina "Tancredi" - Italy, Sicily, Contessa Entellina

SRP: \$45

Bold purple color. Big-time aromatic display: dark cherries, blueberries and blackberries, laced with smoke and cocoa powder and anise. Sturdy tannins and medium- acid, but the complexity is impressive. Blueberries and black cherries covered in pepper, cocoa powder, loamy soil and roasted chestnuts. Finishes with anise and a flavor that reminds me of an herbal liqueur. Very young, this needs a few years before it settles down. A blend of Cabernet, Nero d'Avola and Tannat. **(90 points)**

2008 Donnafugata Contessa Entellina "Mille e una notte" - Italy, Sicily, Contessa Entellina

SRP: \$89

Beautiful purple-ruby color. Black cherries, plums and blackberries on the nose, dusted with loamy soil, charcoal, grilled steak and cedar notes. Medium+ bodied with sturdy tannins, medium acid. The currant and blackberry fruit is concentrated but not jammy, and it's laced with lots of earth, charcoal, graphite, some balsamic glaze, chewing tobacco and sawdust notes. Cedar and mocha accents linger on the finish. Quite dry and tannic, but it smooths out a bit with some air. Aged in French oak for 14 months, then two years in bottle, this is a beautiful wine but it needs time, probably two years and will hold for many more. 13% alcohol, made from Nero d'Avola. **(91 points)**

2011 Avignonesi Rosso di Montepulciano - Italy, Tuscany, Montepulciano, Rosso di Montepulciano

SRP: \$20

A kind of ruby-auburn color. Fresh and juicy on the nose (cranberry, raspberry, wild cherry) along with some tobacco, rose hips and pine resin complexities. Tangy acid and fine tannins provide a silky setting for the red cherry and raspberry fruit. I like the rhubarb, white pepper and rose hip notes, which add a pleasant amount of spiciness. Fresh, approachable, but enough structure. **(87 points)**



Amarone on a cold night - good call.

2011 Avignonesi Vino Nobile di Montepulciano - *Italy, Tuscany, Montepulciano, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*

SRP: \$30

Bright ruby colored. Lovely bright red berry fruit on the nose, laced with lavender, some sweet pipe tobacco and cedar. Fresh and vibrant on the palate, with medium tannins and acid. The strawberry and cherry fruit is tangy but round at the same time. I like the secondary flavors of roses, tobacco, cedar and charcoal. The oak adds some spice and coffee elements, but I don't find them bothersome at all. Well-integrated, tasty stuff. **(88 points)**

2011 Ruffino Modus Toscana IGT - *Italy, Tuscany, Toscana IGT*

SRP: \$26

A ruby-violet color. Spicy berries on the nose, with notes of cedar, violets and wet leaves. Fresh and juicy on the palate with chewy tannins. Fleshy black cherries mix with notes of cedar, wet leaves, tobacco and sweet spice. Crowd-pleasing stuff, a blend of 50% Sangiovese, 25% Cabernet and 25% Merlot. **(87 points)**

2011 Brancaia Tre Toscana IGT - *Italy, Tuscany, Toscana IGT*

SRP: \$24

Nose of red currants, plum skin, tobacco and cedar, some violets. Loving the nose. Smooth and silky on the palate with velvety tannins and medium+ acid. Juicy red and black currants and cherries blend with notes of rosemary, tobacco and cedar. A forward and ripe wine, but it's also very food friendly. 80% Sanviovese with Merlot and Cabernet mixed in. **(87 points)**

2011 Perticaia Montefalco Rosso - *Italy, Umbria, Montefalco, Montefalco Rosso*

SRP: \$19

Clear light ruby color. On the nose I get blackberries and raspberries, some charcoal, green herbs and some bright red floral tones. Bright acid on the palate, some moderate and dusty tannins, a fresh and food-friendly approach. Bright raspberries and tart blueberries mix with rose petals, incense sticks, tobacco and radish elements. A tangy blend of 70% Sangiovese, 15% Sagrantino and 15% Colorino, this shows quite a bit of complexity and could probably improve over the next three years or so. **(87 points)**

2009 Rocca Sveva Ripasso della Valpolicella Superiore - *Italy, Veneto, Valpolicella, Ripasso della Valpolicella Superiore*

SRP: \$22

Bright ruby color. Nose of cherries, plum sauce, violets, coffee, tobacco and anise. On the palate, good structure, fleshy but firm, with juicy red and black fruit. Accents of kirsch, coffee grounds, candied raspberry, earth and mocha. Some baking spice and vanilla on the finish. 75% Corvina, 25% Rondinella and 5% Molinara. Drinking well now but could improve. **(87 points)**

2008 Rocca Sveva Amarone della Valpolicella - *Italy, Veneto, Valpolicella, Amarone della Valpolicella*

SRP: \$60

Rich purple color. Dark and plummy on the nose, smells to me like some sort of mix of kirsch, yogurt-covered raisins, fig cookies and vanilla. Full bodied, fresh acid and fine tannins combines in a chewy texture. Elements of vanilla and root beer accent the black cherry and saucy plum fruit. Notes of anise, sweet cola, cherry pits and roasted chestnut. Velvety, rich, yet fresh with a long finish. Very pretty stuff that would be worth cellaring for a few years. 70% Corvina, 25% Rondinella, 5% Molinara. **(90 points)**

2010 Masi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Costasera - *Italy, Veneto, Valpolicella, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico*

SRP: \$63

Deep ruby color. High concentration on the nose, black cherry jam, blackberry pie, red currants, very earthy, dried flowers, incense, some anise cookies. On the palate, full-bodied with solid structure to the tannins but some freshness as well. Blackberries, red and black currants, add in some charcoal and graphite, balsamic glaze, roasted figs. Lots of complexity this wine takes a bold and high-octane approach, but so deep and full of life as well. One to bury for 15 years or so, if we'll all still be around then. Aged 24 months in 40% new Slavonian oak. **(91 points)**

Posted by [Isaac James Baker](#) at 7:36 AM