



# CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA

## WINEMAKING AT VOLPAIA *(page 1 of 2)*

Winemaking at Volpaia has always been intent on preserving the region's traditions and respecting the terroir — long before such trends in returning to the past emerged. In 1980, Volpaia was one of the first wineries to produce what later became known as a Super-Tuscan (the Coltassala). By the late 1990s, when other producers were moving toward wines in the “international style” and Super-Tuscans were in great fashion, Volpaia returned to producing its flagship, Coltassala, as a Chianti Classico Riserva.

### THE VENDEMMIA

The “vendemmia,” or “harvest,” begins in late July to early August with a green harvest when pickers move through the vines to remove excess clusters. This ensures concentration and ripeness in the remaining clusters, which remain on the vine until they are fully matured.

The first varieties to ripen on the Volpaia estate are Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, usually in early September. Later in September, pickers move onto Merlot and Syrah, then finish Sangiovese and Cabernet Sauvignon by the first half of October.

Because Volpaia's vineyards are planted between 450 and 600 meters (1,300 and 2,130 feet) — the highest in the region — the pickers are able to harvest later in the season, as well as later in the day, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Each vineyard is hand-picked twice to allow those clusters that had not yet achieved perfect ripeness more time to do so. In an effort to get the fruit to the cellars in optimum condition, the grapes are carried in boxes that never exceed 15 to 20 kilograms (33 to 44 pounds) each. Using the containers also makes it easier to select which grapes will go into the Riserva. The containers are loaded onto a specially designed, five-tire trailer and delivered to the cellars within 10 minutes.



Volpaia's specialized tanks are divided into two separate parts. Once enough color and flavor have been extracted from the grapes in the top portion of the tank (pictured above the catwalk), the juice is separated from the must by gravity, and goes into the bottom part of the tank (below the catwalk) to finish fermentation.

### BACK AT THE WINERY

As soon as the grapes arrive at the winery, they are sorted and destemmed. After destemming, the grapes are then delicately pressed, just to break the skins, and this must is immediately transferred to temperature-controlled, stainless-steel vats that hold 60 to 120 hectoliters (1,585 to 3,170) gallons. These specialized vats are divided into two separate tanks stacked on top of one another. The top tank is the first stop for the grapes — they are chilled down to eight degrees Celsius (46 degrees Fahrenheit) for a two-day cold soak, and natural fermentation begins gently, as the temperature rises after the cold soak. (The gradual increase in temperature results in more complex flavors in the finished wine.) The top tank is also equipped with pistons to gently punch down the cap from above. Once enough color and flavor have been extracted, the juice is separated from the must by gravity, and goes to the bottom tank to finish fermentation.

### MOVING AND AGING

Once initial fermentation is complete, the wine is moved to the barrel cellars, all of which are located in historic buildings throughout the village and are diverse in shape and size. In keeping with its efforts to protect the original structures, Castello di Volpaia created an underground “wineduct” — a labyrinth of



Volpaia's “wineduct” located beneath the village's streets transports the wine delicately from tank to barrel.

stainless-steel pipes hidden far beneath the streets of Volpaia — which transports wine delicately from tank to barrel. Depending on the wine, malolactic fermentation and aging occur in either 30-hectoliter (800-gallon) Slovenian or French oak casks or in 225-liter (60-gallon) French oak barrels. The percentage of new oak depends on the vintage and intensity of fruit at harvest. The French casks are produced by Filippo Gamba, the French barriques by Seguin Moreau; both are medium toasted.

CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA  
*Radda in Chianti*

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This process takes 12 to 24 months depending on the wine:

**Chianti Classico:** 12 to 16 months in Slovenian oak casks, plus three months in bottle.

**Chianti Classico Riserva:** 24 months in oaks casks (Slovenian, French) and French barriques (in a proportion that ranges from 80/20 to 50/50 depending on the vintage), plus six months in bottle.

**Balifico and Coltassala:** 24 months in French barriques, plus six months in bottle.



Barriques aging in one of the winery's many cellars located beneath the original buildings of Volpaia.

The wine is aged in cellars located beneath the village's ancient buildings — in the Church of San Lorenzo, the Commenda and the Via Castellana. These cellars offer the perfect temperatures and humidity levels to allow the wine to evolve with great elegance and complexity. Once the wines have finished aging, they are lightly fined, filtered and bottled on Volpaia's state-of-the-art bottling line that was completely renovated in 2005. The bottles are left to rest in the cellars below Palazzo Canigiani where, in the dark and at a controlled temperature, the wine blends and develops its distinct characteristics.

### HOUSE STYLE

Many factors contribute to the Castello di Volpaia style — high altitude, sandy soil, mixed hardwood and riparian forests, climate, southerly exposure of the vineyards and more. Volpaia Sangioveses are soft, round and fresh — the winery strives to avoid overripe characteristics in all of its wines and doesn't mask the quality of the fruit with too much new oak. The wines are meant to be enjoyed with food, and bright acidity wrapped in wild cherries is their hallmark. The wines possess a floral component and red fruits on the nose, bright acidity on the palate to preserve freshness as well as fine-grain tannins, and lively cherries and tannins on the finish. The winery aims to capture the true characteristics of Sangiovese using the

latest, quality winemaking methods while paying homage to this distinctive site where wines have been crafted since the 12th century. Winemaker Lorenzo Regoli seeks harmony and balance in healthy grapes to achieve graceful yet powerful wines. Consulting winemaker Riccardo Cotarella brings technical innovation and new ideas, as well as suggestions during the final blending process.

### ORGANICS

Volpaia is also committed to organic farming practices in all of its vineyards and complies with all the organic viticulture legislation (European community legislation, reg. CEE 2091/91; EU certification body, Q.C. & I. International Services) for the production of wine. Castello di Volpaia began practicing organic viticulture in the late 1990s, and the wines have been certified organic since the 2004 vintage.



The Trebbiano and Malvasia grapes that go into the Vinsanto are hung from chains tied to rafters in the Vinsantaia and dried for approximately five months.

### VINSANTO

Since the Middle Ages, "Vin Santo," or "holy wine," has been an important part of Tuscan wine history, and it is still produced using the same labor-intensive process that was used hundreds of years ago. Toward the end of the growing season, before Volpaia harvests its white grapes, the winery picks the best bunches of Trebbiano and Malvasia Bianca del Chianti to go into the Vinsanto. The grapes are taken to the winery's Vinsantaia, a special attic where the bunches are hung from chains tied to the rafters and dried. The grapes are never touched during the maturation process. In the February following harvest, once the grapes' sugar levels are high enough, they are pressed and the juice is put through a natural process of clarification. The highly-concentrated must is then fermented in small caratelli oak barrels already containing "madre," or "mother" in Italian — a remnant of the thick residue left over from Vinsanto that has already been bottled — for at least five years.

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