

Italy, Tuscany: Tenuta di Trinoro - Harvesting the Singular Advantages of Oneness

December 31, 2015



Vintner Andrea Franchetti is coming up on the 25th vintage of his landmark wine Tenuta di Trinoro. Once that anniversary is under his belt, he can ask for his own DOC appellation. If his request for the DOC Trinoro is approved, it will be Italy's second single-estate appellation after the DOC Bolgheri Sassicaia denomination that is entirely operated by Tenuta San Guido in coastal Tuscany. The first vintage of Franchetti's wine was released in 1997. That means his estate will qualify for DOC status in 2022.

With that looming anniversary in mind, I sat down with Andrea Franchetti in his beautiful farmhouse in the isolated Sarteano area of Tuscany to take a closer look at some of his back vintages. These are the wines that have fueled momentum for one of the most respected and accomplished estates in Italy.

If I were to attempt to summarize Franchetti's approach to wine, I would settle on the word: "oneness." Here we have a single man, who makes a wine of a single style at the only wine estate that exists in this unexplored region. "If you have only one lifetime to make one wine, you try to make the best wine possible," Franchetti tells me from the rustic living room of his country house that is decorated with modern art and empty bottles of iconic Bordeaux bottles.

Driven by a desire to escape city life, Franchetti chanced upon this dilapidated farmhouse in the 1970s near the town of Sarteano, some 60 kilometers southeast of Siena. Outside of the local farmers who tend to a few rows of grapes to make wine for personal consumption, there are no other commercial wineries in this part of Tuscany. The landscape is lonely and large. Franchetti's farmhouse door opens onto an infinite panorama of rolling hills, vineyards and distant cypress trees. In order to make sense of this solitary existence, Franchetti settled on wine as a primary expression of his new identity.

He did have solid experience in the wine industry first as a student of Bordeaux and second as a wine distributor in New York. He took everything he learned over the years and applied it to his property in Sarteano. Despite not having much vineyard experience, he planted "fairly accurately," he says, and gained almost immediate cult success upon release of his first vintage of the flagship wine, Tenuta di Trinoro.

The general blending formula for the wine consists of equal parts Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot (30 percent each) topped off by four percent Petit Verdot. The Cabernet Franc is the protagonist however and gives the wine its spicy character as well as the overall heft.

In terms of wine style, Franchetti is moving away from the jammy and overripe style that catapulted him to success in the late 1990s. Over the past six or seven years, he estimates, the goal is to move towards sharper and more focused wines. This tendency has been aided by a succession of cooler vintages. His latest release, the 2013 Tenuta di Trinoro, is an exceptional example of this stylistic evolution. He is taking other steps to reach his goal. For example, he has reduced his standard 18-month aging period in barrique and he often tinkers with the blending percentages in order to reach the more streamlined flavor profile he seeks.

Tenuta di Trinoro is a 200-hectare property with 23 hectares of vines planted at a 10,000 plant-per-hectare density. The property is divided into 12 separate single vineyards and Franchetti believes they are now at an age in which they are showing their best results.



We skipped over a few vintages in this vertical tasting, including 2010. Bottle production was much smaller that year (he made just 5,000 bottles of 2010 compared to up to 12,000 in an average year) and what was made has already sold out. Franchetti says that fruit had difficulty ripening in 2010 and making the blend was a challenge. This is not a vintage he is fond of. We also skipped over 2005 and 2006. The 2005 vintage is predominately Merlot and is remembered as a very good year, but perhaps a short-lived one. The 2006 vintage was a disappointment to Franchetti for two reasons. First, he says he encountered issues with his corks and the bottling is less consistent. The 2006 vintage was also harvested overripe, and many bottles appear shutdown and flat today. No Tenute di Trinoro was made in the washout 2002 vintage. All the grapes that year went into the lower-tier wine, Cupole. Nor did we taste the 1997 vintage, which is the first year Tenuta di Trinoro was made.

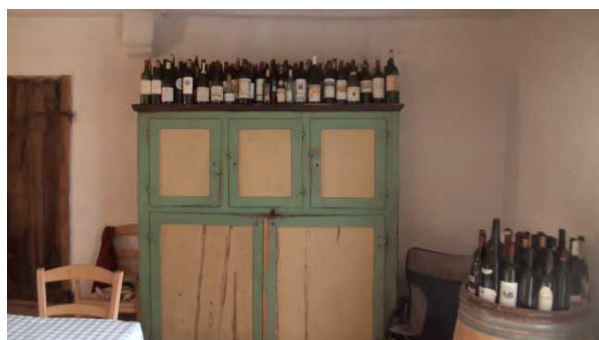
When I visited Sarteano, Franchetti had just finished the 2015 harvest. He said that some of the fruit suffered from the early summer heat. As the temperatures began to cool off, the fruit had difficulty regaining balance. More warm weather from Northern Africa returned to this part of Tuscany just before the harvest in mid-October.

In addition to the vertical of Tenuta di Trinoro, I tasted Franchetti's newest wines that will be released for the first time in April 2016. As a way of celebrating Cabernet Franc, he has created three single vineyard expressions. They are Campo di Magnacosta, Campo di Tenaglia and Campo di Camagi, and the first vintage of each is 2014.

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This single vineyard approach mirrors the Contrada cru wines that Franchetti makes at his Mount Etna estate, Passopisciaro. You can see my reviews of his excellent Sicilian wines here ([A Volcano on the Verge](#)). In addition to Sarteano and Etna, Franchetti is now exploring his winemaking options in Russia's Stavropol wine region where he is looking to buy land for vineyards. An important agricultural region, Stavropol is home to some Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon, among other grapes. Franchetti has a great appreciation for the indigenous grapes of the area and is already involved in projects to further develop this up-and-coming region and its wine identity.

Watch my video of the Tenuta di Trinoro vertical now:



2014 Tenuta di Trinoro Campo di Camagi

RATING: 95 points
PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro
FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy
VARIETY: Cabernet Franc
DRINK: 2018 - 2030
ESTIMATED COST: \$0
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

The 2014 Campo di Camagi is the most complete wine among the three single vineyard expressions of Cabernet Franc now being highlighted by vintner Andrea Franchetti. Fruit yields from this two-hectare vineyard are lower in Campo di Camagi with six clusters per vine compared to eight to ten clusters per vine in the other plots. The site shows blue clay under the surface with gravel and small stones at the top. This soil composition makes it very difficult for the plant's root system to penetrate. As Franchetti puts it: "This wine is made from very stressed fruit." Of course, in wine speak, this is a very good thing, resulting in a wine that shows bigger density, opulence and overall concentration. This Cabernet Franc opens to a blackish color and thick aromas that raise heavily and slowly from the glass. The vines are 25-years-old. Balckberry and dried cherry segues to sassy spice and tobacco. This is a wine for the cellar.

Importer(s):

T. Edward Wines, 66 West Broadway #406, New York, NY 10007, (212) 233-1504 ,
www.tedwardwines.com

-Monica Larner

2014 Tenuta di Trinoro Campo di Magnacosta

RATING: (91) points
PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro
FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy
VARIETY: Cabernet Franc
DRINK: 2017 - 2027
ESTIMATED COST: \$0
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

You could characterize this as the lightest of the three single vineyard Cabernet Francs now being introduced by Tenuta di Trinoro. Of course, the word "light" is relative considering the healthy robustness of this profoundly dense pedigree grape. The 2014 Campo di Magnacosta comes from a vineyard plot with alluvial soils and round river stones. The wine opens to deep concentration, but its dark hue is slightly less saturated compared to the other two Cabernet Franc-based wines in production. The difficult 2014 vintage has taken its toll with lower temperatures and an abundance of rain. Franchetti says he was forced to do frenetic work in this vineyard. The bouquet offers pretty tones of pressed rose petal and dried lavender bud. Spice, leather and tar appear on the close. This wine will be released in April 2016.

2014 Tenuta di Trinoro Campo di Tenaglia

RATING: 93 points
PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro
FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy
VARIETY: Cabernet Franc
DRINK: 2017 - 2030
ESTIMATED COST: \$0
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

The 2014 Campo di Tenaglia is born in a one-hectare vineyard with sandy limestone soils. This is a very expressive Cabernet Franc that stands apart from the other two wines in this series. The wine's strong suit regards the purity and the intensity of the bouquet. Seamless aromas of dark fruit, red rose, spice, tobacco and grilled herb lift from the glass. The aromatic profile is finely etched and very pronounced. In the mouth, Campo di Tenaglia shows firm tannins and generous concentration despite a more linear and streamlined overall approach. This wine promises a long cellar evolution ahead.

2013 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 95 points
PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro
FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy
VARIETY: Proprietary Blend
DRINK: 2016 - 2030
ESTIMATED COST: \$0
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

This newest release comes from a significantly cooler vintage. Summer highs only reached 26 degrees Celsius, compared to 40 degrees on an average year. As a result, the 2013 Tenuta di Trinoro is symbolic of a revisited and fresher style that Andrea Franchetti hopes to achieve with this landmark wine. This wine definitely stands apart from the others thanks to its tight lines and detailed fruit nuances. Blackberry, dried cherry and red currant is backed by leather, spice and chewing tobacco. The cool growing season meant that fruit was harvested very late (at the beginning of November) and the acidity is indeed more pronounced. The wine was slow to open when I tasted it. Despite its initial shyness, this 2013 vintage is shaping up to be a wine of enormous beauty and elegance. It delivers the confidence and character to withstand a longer drinking window than most.

2012 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 93 points
PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro
FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy
VARIETY: Proprietary Blend
DRINK: 2016 - 2025
ESTIMATED COST: \$200-\$250
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

The 2012 Tenuta di Trinoro travels one gear lower compared to the excellent 2011 vintage that precedes it. Andrea Franchetti says the vines were stressed by the summer heat and by overproduction following the exceptional fruit in 2011. Of the varieties used in the blend, the Cabernet Sauvignon showed the best results and that grape plays a bigger role in this blend. In fact, of all the wines tasted in this vertical, 2012 has the biggest Cabernet Sauvignon presence. This is a large-boned and thickly structured red wine that delivers ample muscle and power. Some of the finer nuances are lost, but the wine delivers impressive intensity nonetheless.

2011 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 96 points
PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro
FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy
VARIETY: Proprietary Blend
DRINK: 2015 - 2030
ESTIMATED COST: \$185-\$213
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

Here is a very successful interpretation of Trinoro's signature wine style. The 2011 Tenuta di Trinoro is mostly Cabernet Franc (90%) with Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot in reduced background roles. This very warm vintage saw no Merlot used in the blend. This wine truly stands out. It is expressive and endowed with an important sense of drama and darkness. The fruit comes forth in ripe, chewy and slightly sweet waves of intensity with blackberry preserves, cherry compote, spice and pipe tobacco. The wine shows great density and structure. The tannins are thick and broad in formation.

2009 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 99 points

PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro

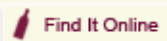
FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy

VARIETY: Proprietary Blend

DRINK: 2015 - 2030

ESTIMATED COST: \$161-\$240

SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015



If you ask Andrea Franchetti to name his two favorite vintages of the past, they are 2001 and 2009. The 2009 Tenuta di Trinoro is indeed an outstanding blend of 40% Cabernet Franc, 30% Merlot, 26% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot. The wine is showing beautifully right now and promises more excellence to carry it forward over the years. At the moment, it is seamless and infinite with a superior sense of balance and dark fruit integrity. It speaks in a loud, clear and articulate voice. The wine's appearance shows a dark, impenetrable color that underlines the ideal growing conditions of the vintage and the slow fruit-ripening. The aromas are stunning and perfectly balanced, showing both elegance and power. The tannins deliver dimension and a firmly unyielding quality that bodes very well for the future evolution of this stunning wine.

2008 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 91 points

PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro

FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy

VARIETY: Proprietary Blend

DRINK: 2015 - 2020

ESTIMATED COST: \$197-\$229

SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015



The 2008 Tenuta di Trinoro is a weaker link in this exceptional succession of delicious wines. The growing season was characterized by heavy rains and soggy conditions. Despite the cooler year, fruit ripeness is pushed forward to its maximum to offer big inner warmth and opulence. However, the wine delivers less complexity and fewer of the fine nuances of the other vintages in this vertical (most particularly the delicious 2009 vintage that I tasted immediately before this sample). Although this edition is slightly more simple and monolithic in definition, it does offer plushness and dark fruit richness that extends generously to all the senses, both the nose and the mouth. Because there are some signs of premature oxidation, I will suggest a more conservative drinking window.

2007 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 94 points

PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro

FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy

VARIETY: Proprietary Blend

DRINK: 2015 - 2026

ESTIMATED COST: \$225-\$266

SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015



The 2007 Tenuta di Trinoro delivers impressive results despite the challenging, drought-driven growing season. Andrea Franchetti remembers walking through the vineyards and hearing the crackling sound of leaves as they disintegrated in the dry weather. Under those conditions, it's not hard to imagine the dark berry concentration, textural density and general ripeness on display in this wine. This edition sees Cabernet Franc in the driver's seat (at 55% of the blend) because, as Franchetti puts it, "Cabernet Franc ripens on a sweet side, not a sour side." The wine is fleshy, opulent and packed tight with blackberry preserves, cherry compote, spice, leather and grilled herb. The tannins are dry and polished, but they make a great contrast against the sweetness of the wine's berry flavors.

2004 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 92 points

PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro

FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy

VARIETY: Proprietary Blend

DRINK: 2015 - 2022

ESTIMATED COST: \$135-\$170

SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015



The 2004 Tenuta di Trinoro is almost all Merlot enhanced by bright scintillas of the other grapes (Petit Verdot and Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc) that make up this celebrated Tuscan red. Of the wines tasted in this vertical, the 2004 is most indicative of that trademark Andrea Franchetti style that sees Baroque-style opulence in terms of the wine's ripeness, curvaceousness and softness. This vintage saw a warm summer that accelerated ripening, followed by a cooler period before the harvest that helped to finalize aromas and structure. The Merlot is planted on clay and red alluvial soils, and these conditions have also contributed to the overall heft and power of this bold expression. A very critical palate may note an oxidative tone of dried cherry skin within all that ripe fruit. The wine is evolving fast and I have shortened the drinking window estimate as a result.

2003 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 90+ points

PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro

FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy

VARIETY: Proprietary Blend

DRINK: 2015 - 2022

ESTIMATED COST: \$0

SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

The 2003 Tenuta di Trinoro is the wine that surprised me most. Given the decadently overripe style that Andrea Franchetti pursued during these years, and the scorching heat of this infamous vintage, I frankly expected a massive, amorphous fruit bomb. Instead, this wine shows a much higher level of definition and focus than I would have ever imagined. This proves the old adage that the best winemakers should be judged in the worst vintages. Specifically, this blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot reveals a refined mineral personality with granite stone and flint that keep the wine's aromatic parameters firm and tonic. Franchetti says the secret is in the high density planting. With vineyard rows so close to one another, the grapes were kept in the shade during the hottest part of the day. Clay soils absorbed enough moisture to keep the vines from going into heat stress, he says. The wine delivers moderate complexity and the finish is not as long as some of the other vintages. But if you are expecting an evolved and flat wine, you would be wrong. The 2003 vintage has much more life and vitality than the other great Tuscan reds produced in this difficult vintage.

2001 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 97 points

PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro

FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy

VARIETY: Proprietary Blend

DRINK: 2015 - 2026

ESTIMATED COST: \$0

SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

Here's the wine that put the unknown town of Sarteano on the enological map of Tuscany. Andrea Franchetti's break-out success comes thanks to the profoundly delicious 2001 Tenuta di Trinoro. Similar to the equally impressive 2009 vintage, this wine shows classic lines and immense pedigree. The Cabernet Franc element weighs in at almost 50% and the other grapes, in descending order of importance, are Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. What stands out to me is the excellent sense of proportion. The wine offers a harmonious flow of dark berry nuances with wet earth, white truffle, licorice, tar and grilled earth. The bouquet is fluid and ever-changing. That same sense of balance hits the palate, where the wine delivers a twofold punch of firm tannins and crisp freshness that add to the overall textural richness. On a side note, I can't help but point out that this is one of the only Italian wines in the Wine Advocate database that has been tasted and scored by five separate staff reviewers. In a sense, this is a benchmark wine against which I can calibrate my own palate with those of my colleagues. If you are curious to know: Lisa Perrotti-Brown gave it 96 points; Antonio Galloni gave it 96 points; Daniel Thomases gave it 95 points on release; and Robert M. Parker, Jr. gave it a 91-94 range when the wine was still in barrel. To conclude, either I am one point more generous or the wine is improving with age. I believe the latter to be true. This is a drop-dead gorgeous Tuscan wine made with Bordeaux grapes. It shows no sign of slowing down.

1998 Tenuta di Trinoro Tenuta di Trinoro

RATING: 93 points

PRODUCER: Tenuta di Trinoro


FROM: Italy Toscana,
Tuscany, Italy

VARIETY: Proprietary Blend

DRINK: 2015 - 2022

ESTIMATED COST: \$158

SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#222
Dec 2015

 Find It Online

The second vintage produced is the 1998 Tenuta di Trinoro. You'd have to imagine that Andrea Franchetti was standing on unsure footing during this period given his lack of experience making wine in this unknown corner of Tuscany. This is not the case. He brought his winemaking experience and inspiration from Bordeaux, and the signs are immediately evident in 1998. Production was limited to nine barriques. Almost 20 years later, this wine shows elegant aromas of pressed flower, rose potpourri, dried fruit, licorice and tar. The growing season was very warm and the vines were still very young at this point. As a result, you get a wine with slightly less structure but more fragrant intensity. At least, that's how the wine appears today at this delicate stage in its overall evolution. Reading back to notes written closer to the wine's release date suggest that it was once much richer and thicker in density. It has evidently lost all of its baby fat over the course of the past two decades. What's left is streamlined and elegant.