

# Brunello di Montalcino 2009 and 2008 Riserva

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*Brunello di Montalcino is indisputably one of the world's greatest wines. And despite what you may read elsewhere, most of these wines have improved by leaps and bounds in recent years. Even chronic underachieving estates are now producing what are, at the very least, acceptable to very good wines that speak of sangiovese as a unique expression of Montalcino and its varied terroirs. Outside of finite favored areas of Chianti Classico and Chianti Rufina, there is simply no better place in the world to grow sangiovese than Montalcino.*

*In fact, many positive things have happened in Montalcino since 2008, when the Brunellopoli scandal broke out [a few suspiciously dark wines were questioned for not being 100% sangiovese, as the law requires]. Today there are many new faces in the Brunello di Montalcino Consortium, and it's exciting to hear about their goals and ideas. Current President Fabrizio Bindocci, current director Giampiero Pazzaglia (who worked for more than 30 years at Argiano) and Francesco Ripaccioli (whose family owns the outstanding Canalicchio di Sopra estate) are just a few of the new people now on the board who bring a fresh outlook and years of experience to the table. The recent presentation of groundbreaking scientific research on sangiovese's anthocyanins (the pigments present in grape skins and, to a lesser extent, pulp) is but one example. The landmark study by Arapitsas et al. (2012) has offered insight into sangiovese's world as never before, illustrating the comparatively greater anthocyanin endowment of sangiovese grapes grown in the Montalcino zone.*

*Applying science to wine tasting elevates it to more than just an art form and will inevitably allow for a better understanding of the grape variety, its interaction with specific terroirs, and how best to express the unique potential of the Montalcino production zone. In this light, as I have already documented in last year's Brunello report, Bindocci believes a zonation study of Montalcino's complex terroir is also necessary, and he looks forward to implementing one in the future. He understands that cru systems are hard to put in place in as complex a viticultural zone as Montalcino's, made up as it is of many different altitudes, exposures, rootstocks, soils, water regimens, slopes, ventilation gradients and solar radiation angles. For example, unlike Bordeaux or Burgundy, Montalcino's vineyards are located at very different altitudes (from roughly 250 to 500 meters above sea level), and in the area's potentially cool climate even a 50-meter variation makes a huge difference. In comparison, the average altitude in Pauillac is only 15 meters above sea level.*

*Furthermore, there are estates in Montalcino that make their Brunello by blending grapes from very different sites, which complicates recognition of site-specificity in the glass (when not making it downright impossible!). Identifying sub-areas within Montalcino that produce wines that are relatively different from others made within the production zone requires the integration of that tasting data with precise soil analysis of the vineyards where the grapes were grown (for example: mineral contents, AWC or available water capacity, granulometry, depth, percentage of calcium carbonate), rootstocks, pruning and canopy choices, exposures, slope gradients and more. The goal shouldn't be to issue a qualitative hierarchy, but rather a characterization of a territory and the different wines it produces. Though some wine writers seem to think that just tasting wines for a few years is good enough to allow drawing up of his or her favorite sites or crus, that view is simplistic at best.*

*I believe that Brunello di Montalcino has never been better than it is today. Essentially gone are the many truly defective wines of decades ago, plagued by problems such as bad oak, dirty oak, over-extraction or fruit deficiency. Many wines were simply tired and already drying upon release, but this is rarely the case nowadays, even if some laggards remain. The general improvement in Montalcino's wines is also highlighted by the many wonderful examples of Rosso di Montalcino (Brunello's lighter-styled, more accessible and faster-maturing little brother) now being made. But as good as many Rossos are (the improvement of which I have written about before in the IWC), even the best of them (e.g., Poggio di Sotto, Le Potazzine) rarely reach the*

complexity or depth of most Brunellos.

**The 2009 weather and growth cycle.** There were two distinct phases to the 2009 growing season. In the first half of the year, torrential downpours allowed for buildup of water reserves but also brought disease pressure. The rainfall was already heavy in the winter months: in fact, it was Montalcino's rainiest winter of the previous ten years. Unusually for Montalcino, this protracted rainy spell lasted into mid-July.

Conditions changed dramatically in the second part of the season, with a very hot and dry August (not unlike 2003) that caused noteworthy stress in younger vines as well as in those planted on sand-rich soils. But it's necessary to note that the water reserves built up during the winter and spring months allowed even young vines to withstand the scorching August temperatures better than in other dry, hot years, a key factor in explaining why many, though not all, of the 2009s have turned out better than expected.

A sunny harvest season led to potentially very good to outstanding wines with generally fairly high alcohol and noteworthy tannins and polyphenol counts, although untimely September rains made it a very difficult harvest. Most producers had to pick grapes between the rains, and in general those who picked most of their grapes before September 22 had greater success. The difficult growing season led to lower production volumes--for example, Canalicchio di Sopra made only 18,000 bottles of Brunello instead of the usual 40,000, and the estate didn't make a Brunello Riserva at all (normally, this riserva accounts for another 8,000 bottles).

"Nonetheless, I think the quality of the grapes was very high," says Patrizio Cencioni of Capanna, something that Cecilia Leoneschi, winemaker at Castiglion del Bosco, had initially worried might not be the case. "When I think back to 2009," she told me, "the first thing I remember is just how incredibly rainy the winter and spring had been. Of course, considering how hot it got later in the summer, those water reserves ended up being a real blessing. In the end, I don't think water stress was the big problem it might have been otherwise." Lionel Cousin of Cupano added that "Happily, sunlight hours in the fall were such that the tannins matured evenly and the wines are quite smooth." Leoneschi noted that even though August was furnace-like and sugar levels accumulated quickly, the harvest at Castiglion del Bosco only started six days earlier than usual.

Although some critics have panned the 2009 Brunellos, most producers were quite happy with their wines. Stefano Marchetti of Fossacolle pointed out that "the 2009 vintage got a bad rap, but in fact the wines are much better than has generally been written. Yes, they can be somewhat high in alcohol but most have sweet fruit and smooth tannins to buffer that alcohol." Davide Landini, viticultural expert and winemaker at Val di Suga, likes the wines for their "charm and supple nature," and Fabio Ratto, general director and winemaker of Antinori's Pian delle Vigne, agrees. Francesco Leanza of Salicetti describes the 2009s as "lovely, earlier-maturing wines," adding that "judiciously blending grapes from different sites made a big difference." And while most people felt that the 2009 Brunellos are unlike any other recent vintage, Giampiero Pazzaglia said they reminded him of the better 1998s, finding them to be similarly structured and especially well-balanced wines. He told me: "I think that just as the 1998 Brunellos were sort of forgotten in between the '97s and '99s, the same has happened to the '09s, which have been sandwiched between the classic 2008s and the deep, extremely promising '10s."

**My view of the wines.** Vintage characteristics are important in assessing Montalcino's wines. Snow is not at all uncommon in the winter months, and autumns can be cold and rainy; but super-hot summers are not rare either (think of 1997 and 2003). Therefore, just as in Burgundy, there can be poor to great vintages in Montalcino, and consequently a welcome range of drinking choices, from wines with plenty of early appeal to others that are hard as nails in their youth but that develop splendidly in bottle and offer uncommon ageworthiness. The 2009 Brunellos are examples of the former style: although wine quality is somewhat patchy, for the most part the 2009 Brunellos are well balanced, fleshy wines that offer real charm and early accessibility. Wine lovers everywhere will be pleased to find a bevy of delightful 2009s that are ready to drink upon release and for the next decade, while their 2006s and 2001s mature in the cellar. In fact, I can't remember the last time a Brunello vintage offered so many fleshy, ready-to-drink wines as 2009 does.

Typically, the better 2009 Brunellos exude aromas and flavors of red berries, licorice, violet and flint of very good and at times outstanding intensity. The best examples offer a rare combination of perfumed, sweetly spicy aromas and fleshy, ripe, round mouthfeel, admittedly

*with generous alcohol levels. For the most part, the wines are deeply colored, with beautiful sangiovese-accurate red color.*

*However, 2009 was not an easy vintage and there were some less-than-memorable wines made, even by some of the Denominazione's most famous names. Some producers, such as Gaja, chose not to produce their top estate crus at all, and others won't be producing any Riservas. Also, compared to truly great vintages such as 1975, 1990 and 2001, the best 2009s tend to lack the precision and depth that made the best wines from those vintages famous. Less successful 2009 wines are marred by high alcohol, by lack of fruit definition, or by harsh, gritty tannins due to physiological blockage of phenolic maturity resulting from the extreme summer heat.*

*That said, it's hard to find a truly bad Brunello in 2009. For the most part, both famous and up-and-coming estates performed admirably and true duds are rare. Overall, this tasting report confirms 2009 as a good vintage of wines offering early accessibility across the production zone. High notes were hit in all areas of Montalcino, though most of the better wines were made in the cooler northern reaches of the production area. In my view, the 2009s Brunellos are wines to drink up within their first 10 years of life--or 15, in the case of a few specific wines--and the best will prove to be fantastic restaurant items. As most wine lists are made up of relatively young vintages, the 2009 Brunellos will give restaurant-hopping wine lovers the opportunity to indulge in a big red wine that doesn't need years of cellaring to become drinkable.*

*These very engaging and fleshy 2009 Brunellos are polar opposites to the 2008s, which are characterized by very high tannin and acid levels and tend to be quite austere today. Depending on individual taste preferences, both vintages will have their fans. The 2008 Brunello Riservas, also just released this year (and covered in this article) continue where the 2008 entry-level wines left off, offering high acidity and refined personalities but greater depth of fruit and complexity. The best wines also show good to very good aging potential, and will generally appeal to those who prefer a more mineral, austere style of red wine. Although 2008 is not a vintage in the same quality league as 1999 or 2001, it is, just like 2009, a good source of potentially outstanding wines, provided you know where to look.*

*Also recommended: 2009 Bolsignano (85), 2009 Ferrero (86), 2009 Pietranera/Centolani (86), 2009 Poggiotondo (86), 2009 Tenuta del Cero (86), 2008 Riserva La Poderina Poggio Abate (86?). Other wines tasted: 2009 Aldebreddetti, 2009 Bellaria, 2009 Fanti, 2009 Olivare Scopone.*

## Abbadia Ardenga

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Fresh red cherry and red plum aromas are complemented by floral nuances. Fresh and juicy, displaying straightforward red plum and flinty red berry flavors and an almost tart quality. The sweet, clinging, slightly simple finish shows good length. Abbadia Ardenga has become an excellent source for well-made Brunellos that cost a fraction of some of the Denominazione's most famous names. **88**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Piaggia** Bright red. Much deeper, more complex nose than the entry-level Brunello: candied raspberry, red cherry, marzipan and violet are especially obvious. Then soft but very suave, with plenty of juicy sweetness to its red cherry and red berry flavors. Finishes clean and long, with enticing sweetness and a lingering floral nuance. This is probably the best young wine I have ever had from Abbadia Ardenga: a really solid, well-made Brunello with charm, sneaky concentration and very good balance. **92**

(Peter Warren Selections, [www.pwselections.com](http://www.pwselections.com); Alarich Wines, [www.alarichwines.com](http://www.alarichwines.com))

## Agostina Pieri

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$50) Bright red. Red berries, violet and loam on the expressive, forward nose. Then bright and juicy in the mouth, with red berry and floral flavors complicated by a hint of coffee. Finishes moderately persistent and smooth, with an obvious saline nuance. **88(+?)**

(The Rare Wine Company, [www.rarewineco.com](http://www.rarewineco.com))

## Altesino

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$65) Deep red. The very floral nose (violet, jasmine and lavender) is complicated by inky blackberry and loam notes. Rich and dense, offering ripe dark berry and cherry



flavors and a strong note of licorice. Finishes slightly chewy and moderately long. Very-ripe-bordering-on-overripe. **88?**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Montosoli** (\$125) Bright red. Minty redcurrant, gunflint and fresh violet on the enticing, precise nose. Pure and penetrating in the mouth, with lively acidity lifting the creamy-sweet red berry and red cherry flavors. The long finish features smooth tannins, lively acid lift and a whiff of flinty minerality. This is much more refined than the entry-level Brunello; in fact, it's one of the better young Montosolis in my memory. **91(+?)**

(Winebow, [www.winebow.com](http://www.winebow.com))

## Antinori/Pian delle Vigne

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$80) Good medium red. Subdued but fresh aromas of redcurrant and leather, with nuances of strawberry jam and faded flowers. Supple and fine-grained, showing ripe, soft red cherry and tobacco flavors that are just short of overripe. Mounts nicely on the finish, which features soft tannins, a whiff of cracked black pepper, and a suggestion of dried fruits. **88**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Della Ferrovia** (\$130) Deep medium red. Dark red cherry, aromatic flowers and cinnamon on the nose. Very smooth in the mouth, offering an enticing sweetness and very good balance to the ripe red cherry and licorice flavors. This is dangerously close to overripe but has plenty of energy and personality, and spreads out impressively to coat the palate on the rising, creamy finish. Looks to be a very successful vintage for this wine, although those who prefer a more floral, mineral style of Brunello may come away less impressed. **90**

(Ste. Michelle Wine Estate, [www.ste-michelle.com](http://www.ste-michelle.com))

## Argiano

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$70) Bright red. Flinty red berry, spicecake and licorice aromas on the fresh nose. Bright, juicy and suave on the palate, showing lovely sweetness to the red berry and licorice flavors. Finishes long and saline. Very well done. **90**

(Vias Imports, [www.viaswine.com](http://www.viaswine.com))

## Banfi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$65) Bright red. Flinty red berries and violet on the simple, enticing nose. Fresh and juicy in the mouth, with delicate flavors of red berries and underbrush. Lively, harmonious acidity lifts the middle palate and extends the wine's flavors on the fresh, zippy finish. Lovely entry-level Brunello of modest complexity.

**88**

**2009 Poggio Alle Mura Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$85) Bright red. Fresh violet, red cherry and strawberry on the fresh nose. Then smooth and juicy in the mouth, showing very good cut and clarity to the savory sour red cherry and small red berry flavors. Finishes saline and long, with juicy acidity. Very similar to the entry-level Brunello, but with a little more density and depth. I was pleasantly surprised by this wine's bright, fruity personality: it has none of the tarry, inky, peppery nuances that I usually associate with Poggio alle Mura, and it's probably the first-ever Poggio alle Mura Brunello that I actually like. Very well done. **90(+?)**

**2008 Poggio Alle Mura Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$130) Bright red. Graphite and aromatic herbs complement bright red berries on the refined nose. Then very bright and fresh on the palate too, with sneaky concentration to the red berry and cherry flavors. Very long, clean and savory on the back end, with a mounting serious, almost austere finish featuring lingering saline and violet notes. This outstanding Brunello is a paradigm of the 2008 vintage. Montalcino, a completely depressed area back in the 1970s, owes the Mariani family a huge debt of gratitude, and it's wonderful to taste a Poggio alle Mura Brunello Riserva of this quality and floral purity.

**91+**

(Banfi Vintners, [www.banfivintners.com](http://www.banfivintners.com))

## Baricci

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Garnet-tinged pale red. Spicy red cherry, dried herbs and flowers on the rather perfumed nose. Ripe, deep red fruit flavors show a musky quality but also very good cut and clarity thanks to lively acidity. Boasts good stuffing and palate presence and finishes smooth and long. A very traditional Brunello, starting with fairly typical sangiovese color. **91**

(Premier Wine Co., Richmond, CA)

## Barissi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Deep ruby-red; a little too dark for me. Ripe dark cherry and blackberry aromas are lifted by notes of tar, licorice and allspice. Fleshy and broad, in a distinctly weighty style for Brunello, with inky, herbal and licorice notes complementing the dark fruit flavors. Finishes moderately long, with a floral nuance. A newcomer to the Brunello sweepstakes; only 866 bottles were made. **88**

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## Belpoggio

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Dark red. Raspberry, menthol, fresh herbs and spices on the nose, plus a whiff of leather. Juicy and sweet at first, then youthfully tight and lacking in generosity today, with austere red berry, loam and herbal flavors dominating. Finishes just a bit pinched, with some alcoholic heat, but this wine gained in pliancy with a little aeration. **87**  
(Vino Direct, LLC, [www.vino-direct.com](http://www.vino-direct.com); Minu Import, [www.minuimport.com](http://www.minuimport.com))

## Biondi-Santi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$179) Vivid full red. Red cherry, raspberry, violet, minerals and licorice on the pure, captivating nose. Penetrating, savory and sweet, with terrific energy and purity to the sappy red fruit and mineral flavors. The vibrant, pure finish is firm and gripping but not particularly tannic. Tasted four different times since January of this year: I scored one bottle 93, two bottles 92 and one 90, so I'll go with the median score. Another very successful, archetypically pure sangiovese from Biondi-Santi. **92**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$750) Good bright, deep red: textbook pure sangiovese color. Superb precision to the aromas of sour red cherry, raspberry, violet and minerals. Intensely flavored and bracing, with terrific saline energy to the high-acid flavors of flinty red berries, fresh herbs and blood orange. Showing more acidity and less fleshy fruit today than the 2009 Brunello *normale*, leaving the palate tingling on the long, vibrant aftertaste. In fact, the fruit is a little dumb today: I'd forget about this in the cellar for at least another ten years before trying a bottle. **92(+?)**  
(Vision Wine & Spirits, [www.visionwineandspirits.com](http://www.visionwineandspirits.com))

## Bonacchi

**2009 Molin Del Piano Brunello Di Montalcino** Dark red. Peppery dark cherry and blackberry aromas are deepened by notes of licorice and herbs. Tight and wiry in the mouth, showing a tangy, slightly tart edge to its bitter dark cherry and licorice flavors. Closes with modest length but decent clarity and cut, leaving behind an underbrush nuance. This also struck me as being a little alcoholic: I suggest chilling it lightly before serving. I actually liked this producer's 2011 Rosso di Montalcino more than his '09 Brunello. **87**  
([www.bonacchi.it](http://www.bonacchi.it))

## Brunelli (Luca)

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$75) Bright red. Enticing aromas of red berries, candied violet and red cherry syrup. Sweet and fruity, offering knockout ripe red berry and cherry flavors that linger nicely on the smooth finish; just a trace of alcoholic heat at the back. In a slightly warmer, riper style than other Brunellos but its impeccable balance and purity of fruit make this a standout in 2009. **90**  
(August Wine Group/Small Vineyards, [www.enjoysmall.com](http://www.enjoysmall.com))

## Camigliano

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Bright red. Fresh floral red berries and licorice on the nose, complicated by a hint of aromatic herbs. Bright and balanced on the palate, with fresh red berry and saline loamy notes carrying through on the lively, long finish. This estate appears to be improving by leaps and bounds. Camigliano is located in one of the sections of Montalcino that was hardest hit by the fall rains of 2009 but they appear to have selected only the healthiest grapes for their Brunello. **89**  
(Vias Imports, [www.viaswine.com](http://www.viaswine.com))

## Campogiovanni

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$54) Very deep red. Distinctly ripe red cherry and spicy plum aromas

are lifted by fresh herbs and licorice. Fleshy and dense, with superripe lingering flavors of balsamic dark cherry and licorice. This has just enough balance and poise to avoid coming across as over the top. Very obviously made from grapes grown on the southern side of Montalcino, this Brunello will appeal greatly to those who like a richer, fleshier style of wine. **90**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Il Quercione Riserva** (\$124) Very deep red. Coffee and cocoa notes complement saline dark red cherry on the rich nose. Then big and savory on the palate, with dark plum and aromatic herb flavors complicated by spicy notes. Finishes long, but a noticeable touch of alcoholic heat lowered my score. This is a little too ripe and opulent for me.

**89?**

(Martin-Scott Wines, [www.martinscottwines.com](http://www.martinscottwines.com))

## Canalicchio (Franco Pacenti)

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Captivating aromas of ripe red berries, red cherry, marzipan and strawberry jelly, nicely complicated by a fresh violet note. Bright and vibrant on the palate, with suave red fruit flavors lifted by harmonious acidity, which provides wonderful clarity and cut and extends the flavors at the back. The extremely long finish features noteworthy minerality and precision. Outstanding pure Brunello: one of the year's ten best. **93**

(Admiralty Beverage Company, Portland, OR; Siena Imports, [www.sienaimports.com](http://www.sienaimports.com); Superior Wines, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com))

## Canalicchio di Sopra

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$75) Deep red. Bright floral red cherry, raspberry and licorice aromas. Fresh and clean, showing sneaky concentration to its ripe red and black cherry and raspberry fruit flavors. Very refined, long Brunello with lovely density and a lingering red cherry aftertaste complicated by loam and underbrush. This wine is clearly dominated by the fruit coming from the La Casaccia vineyard, located right next to the estate's main building in the Canalicchio area (a smaller percentage of the grapes come from the very famous Montosoli vineyard on the other side of the road). This is another estate that one day may well be able to make single-vineyard wines, as tasting from the barrels before the various lots are assembled shows quite clearly. The talented Francesco Ripaccioli is looking into this possibility, "but not just yet: we still have too many young vines, and removing, for example, the Montosoli grapes to make a vineyard-designated wine would only lower the quality of my Brunello, something I don't want to risk. However, once all the vines have reached roughly 15 years of age we may try small-volume production of single-vineyard lots."

**92(+?)**

(Vinifera Imports, [www.viniferainports.com](http://www.viniferainports.com))

## Canneta

**2009 Rosso Di Montalcino** Bright red. Ripe red cherry aromas are complicated by strong herbal and pungent floral notes. In the mouth, orange peel, clove and nutmeg notes dominate subdued red fruit flavors. This easygoing midweight finishes long, with smooth tannins but a bit too much heat for my taste.

**88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Full red. Aromas of red cherry, strawberry, licorice and minerals. Juicy and tightly wound but essentially pliant, with smooth if subdued red fruit and licorice flavors complicated by minerals and fresh herbs. The moderately persistent finish features firm tannins that turned increasingly astringent, coating the palate dry. Is there enough fruit here to buffer the tannins?

**88(+?)?**

([www.canneta.com](http://www.canneta.com))

## Capanna

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Vivid red. Bright red berry, mineral and fresh violet aromas on the enticing, pristine nose. Then pure and vibrant in the mouth, with red berry, cedar and herb flavors exploding on the refined palate. Finishes with very smooth tannins and lingering floral perfume. Though I would have liked a little more density for an even higher score, this is an extremely elegant, refined wine that will match well with any number of pasta and meat dishes. And it really screams sangiovese. It's also another impressive 2009 wine from the northern, cooler reaches of Montalcino.

**90**

(Masciarelli Wine Company, [www.masciarelliwine.com](http://www.masciarelliwine.com); Martin-Scott Wines,

[www.martinscottwines.com](http://www.martinscottwines.com); Villa Italia Imports, [www.villaitaliawines.com](http://www.villaitaliawines.com))

## Caparzo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$45) Medium red. Musky coffee, strawberry and tobacco on the nose. Juicy, bright and fresh, with moderately dense red cherry and red raspberry flavors. Finishes supple and a little short.

**88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino La Casa** Deep red. Big, rich and ripe on the nose and palate, offering notes of sweet blackberry syrup, red cherry pie and faded flowers. The ripe fruit flavors linger impressively on the precise, long, smooth finish. Though much more concentrated and precise than the entry-level 2009 Brunello, this is also a distinctly ripe, in-your-face style. A very good La Casa but a good notch below this wine's greatest past vintages, of which there are too many to count. **90** (Craft+Estate/The Vintner Group, [www.craftandestate.com](http://www.craftandestate.com); Vineyard Brands, [www.vineyardbrands.com](http://www.vineyardbrands.com))

## Caprili

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$51) Dark red. Smoky and ripe on the nose, with a raspberry aroma complicated by notes of oak spice, licorice, graphite and tobacco. Full and rich but also bright, with red and dark berry flavors enlivened by juicy acidity and framed by supple tannins. Expansive and long on the back end, with lingering notes of underbrush and coffee. This big, delicious wine is already accessible. **91**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$90) Dark red. Aromas of dark cherry, peppery plum, fresh herbs and tarry oak. Dense and full in the mouth, with sneaky depth to the dark cherry, underbrush and aromatic herb flavors. Finishes vibrant, with fine tannins and very good freshness; this is much more refined than the 2009. **93(+?)** (Vinity Wine Company, [www.vinitywinecompany.com](http://www.vinitywinecompany.com))

## Carillon/Vini Italiani da Sogno

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Perfumed aromas of red berries, mint, violet and black tea. Red cherry and underbrush flavors show good volume and a tarry nuance. Finishes clean, fresh and sweet, with noteworthy persistence.

**88**

([www.brunellocarillon.it](http://www.brunellocarillon.it))

## Casanova di Neri

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$54) Pale red. Red fruits, flowers and spices (cloves, cinnamon) on the clean, bright nose. Juicy, light and on the lean side, but with brisk acidity framing and lifting the red fruit and spice flavors. Finishes with a slightly edgy, flinty quality and somewhat tough tannins, but this is essentially an easygoing wine with early appeal. **89**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Tenuta Nuova** (\$83) Vivid red. Multidimensional nose offers captivating aromas of raspberry, sour red cherry, redcurrant, brown sugar, cinnamon and minerals, lifted by a strong note of fresh citrus fruit. Vibrant flavors of red and black fruits, pink peppercorn and sweet spices are wonderfully pure and juicy. This sneakily concentrated yet refined wine shows a rare blend of power and delicacy and finishes extremely long, with very fine-grained tannins and truly mind-blowing purity of small red fruits and violet. Impeccable balance only adds to its star qualities. One of the best young Tenuta Nuovas I have ever tried and it's also one of the two or three best Brunellos of the vintage. **93**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Cerretalto** (\$275) Dark red. Ripe dark cherry and plum aromas are initially a bit sullen but slowly gain freshness with air, picking up espresso, dark chocolate, tea leaf, clove and flint qualities. Broad and fleshy, offering pungent dark red cherry, candied plum and floral flavors, with bitter chocolate adding grip. Finishes long and gently oaky, with the coffee quality repeating.

**90**

(Dalla Terra, [www.dallaterra.com](http://www.dallaterra.com))

## Casisano Colombaio

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$50) Bright red. Aromatic herb and red berry aromas are nicely lifted



by a floral nuance. Fresh, easygoing red fruit and licorice flavors carry through to a zesty finish. Just a bit more concentration and complexity and this Brunello would have merited an outstanding score. **88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$75) Bright red. Perfumed, precise aromas of red berries, chocolate and mint. Penetrating, fairly concentrated dark cherry and strawberry liqueur flavors are compromised by some streaky acidity and mounting tough tannins. Finishes increasingly tight and austere; I'm not sure time will resolve this. **88?**

(Total Wine & More, [www.totalwine.com](http://www.totalwine.com))

## Castelgiocondo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$75) Dark red. Superripe red cherry and sweet spicy plum jam on the enticing nose. Then smooth and ripe in the mouth, showing outstanding density to the ripe red cherry, plum liqueur and savory herbal flavors. Finishes smooth and long, with a trace of alcoholic heat; the tannins are much smoother and more refined than in some past vintages of this bottling. An extremely successful Castelgiocondo that will appeal most to those who prefer bigger, softer-styled wines. Very well done.

**91**

(Folio Fine Wine Partners, [www.foliowine.com](http://www.foliowine.com))

## Castello Romitorio

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$68) Bright red. Pungent aromas of fresh red berries and flowers. In the mouth, inky dark cherry and berry flavors show a noteworthy saline edge. Rising tannins coat the palate without drying the wine's finish. A refined Brunello, consistent with the high-altitude provenance of the grapes. **89**

(Vinifera Imports, [www.viniferainports.com](http://www.viniferainports.com))

## Castiglion del Bosco

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$49) Medium red. Fresh red fruits, licorice, violet and minerals on the enticing nose. Broad and lush in the mouth, conveying a fuller, weightier impression than recent vintages and less of the musky earthy quality I used to associate with this Brunello. Boasts very good energy and inner-mouth perfume to its red berry and licorice flavors. Finishes with big but sweet tannins and excellent length. Winemaker Cecilia Leoneschi has been steadily improving her wines and I think the turning point was the 2008, the first of the "new course" of Castiglion del Bosco Brunellos, which benefit not just from increasing vine age but also from aging in larger oak barrels and a lower percentage of new oak. The 2010 looks to be even better. **90**

(Maisons Marques & Domaines, [www.mmdusa.net](http://www.mmdusa.net))

## La Cerbaiola (Salvioni)

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$225) Good full red. Complex, scented nose offers pure aromas of redcurrant, truffle, mint, flint and violet. Juicy, silky and sweet, with highly nuanced flavors of aromatic herbs and flowers nicely complementing the crisp, bright red berry flavors. Not hugely dense but wonderfully expressive today, even if its firm tannic spine calls for patience. This is one of the top five wines of the vintage; in fact, I think it's much better, sweeter and more layered than Salvioni's 2008 Brunello. **92(+?)**

(Vias Imports, [www.viaswine.com](http://www.viaswine.com))

## Cerbaiona

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$225) Moderately saturated red. Aromas of black cherry, licorice, menthol and quinine, along with a slightly funky note of faded flowers and tar and underbrush nuances. Dense and chewy but a bit folded in on itself today, with reticent red and darker fruit flavors complemented by a flinty nuance, but there's also a weedy green note I'm not wild about. Finishes with good breadth and youthfully chewy tannins, as well as notes of wet herbal underbrush and raisin. This is usually one of my favorite Brunellos of all, but this 2009 does not strike me as one of the better vintages made by talented owner Diego Molinari. Tasted three different times with similar results. **88(+?)**

(Polaner Selections, [www.polanerselections.com](http://www.polanerselections.com))

## Le Chiusse

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$72) Deep red. Musky aromas of candied red berries, fresh flowers



and underbrush. At once fat and juicy, with harmonious acidity giving the wine's floral and mineral red berry flavors terrific lift. Finishes long and juicy, with a lingering peppery nuance. **90**  
(Frederick Wildman & Sons, [www.frederickwildman.com](http://www.frederickwildman.com))

## Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$57) Bright, deep red. Complex, aromatic nose combines raspberry, red cherry jam, licorice, shoe polish and violet. Luscious and dense, showing a distinctly high pitch to its red fruit flavors. Finishes suave and ripe, with fine tannins and lovely lingering perfume. Thanks to its very good sweetness and creamy depth of flavor, this wine can be enjoyed right now. **90**

**2007 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva Santa Caterina D'Oro Vigna Di Pianrosso** (\$110) Deep red. Coffee and cocoa complicate ripe dark cherry and plum aromas. Enters the mouth sweet and fleshy, with bright red cherry and licorice flavors, but turns austere and astringent, finishing with mounting tannins that coat the palate dry. Better with food, but I wonder about those tannins. **89(+?)**  
(Michael Skurnik Wines, [www.skurnikwines.com](http://www.skurnikwines.com))

## Citille di Sopra

**2008 Vigna Poggio Ronconi Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$80) Deep red with a bright rim. Dark cherry jam and musky floral aromas are complicated by underbrush and tobacco. Sweet blackberry and cherry flavors are big, ripe and soft; in fact, this verges on jammy. Finishes with noteworthy persistence and lingering sweetness, but this is just too ripe and opulent for my taste. **88?**  
Other wines tasted: 2009 Brunello di Montalcino. (Siena Imports, [www.sienaimports.com](http://www.sienaimports.com); Superior Wines, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com))

## Col di Lamo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$70) Bright red. Red berries, licorice and tobacco on the enticing floral nose. On the palate, licorice and savory red berry and tobacco flavors linger nicely through a bright, juicy finish. Noble tannins and lively acidity contribute to making this a very successful Brunello. Owner Gianna Neri is the sister of Giacomo Neri of Casanova di Neri. **90**  
(Vignaioli Selection, [www.vignaioliamerica.com](http://www.vignaioliamerica.com))

## Col d'Orcia

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$55) Moderately saturated bright red. Pure aromas of red cherry, blueberry, chocolate and licorice, lifted by a violet topnote. Plenty ripe but not heavy, thanks to a juicy herbal underpinning to the fleshy red cherry and tar flavors. Finishes with substantial dusty tannins and a slightly medicinal quality. A very solid entry-level Brunello. **90**  
(Palm Bay International, [www.palmbay.com](http://www.palmbay.com))

## Collelcto

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$45) Moderately saturated medium red. Aromas of redcurrant, licorice, sage and oak are complicated by rather strong notes of flint and herbs. The palate displays moderate complexity to the flavors of red cherry, spices and tobacco. Harmonious acidity and light tannins give the precise, long finish a light touch. This strikes me as having above-average depth of fruit and precision for the vintage, but I'm not wild about the flinty-herbal note on the nose. **88**  
(Montecastelli Selections, [www.montecastelli.com](http://www.montecastelli.com))

## Collemattoni

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$70) Good full red. Redcurrant, plum and black tea on the nose, complemented by sexy oak spices. Broad, lush and sweet, showing an almost exotic high-toned quality to the perfumed flavors of balsamic dark cherry and sweet spices. Very sound acidity gives the wine shape and balance. Finishes impressively sweet, broad and horizontal, with creamy ripe tannins and lingering balsamic perfume. **92**

**2007 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Fontelontano Riserva** (\$85) Good full red. Coffee and herb nuances complicate dark red cherry on the nose and palate. More austere today than the 2009 *classico*, finishing with rising tannins that are just this side of dry on the long, mouthcoating finish. **91(+?)**  
(Vignaioli Selection, [www.vignaioliamerica.com](http://www.vignaioliamerica.com))

## Colleoni

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Dark red. Aromas of red plum and blackberry are dominated by chocolate, incense and flinty licorice. Supple and moderately sweet, showing very good energy to its flavors of dark fruits, tar, chocolate and underbrush. Finishes saline and long, with plenty of dusty, slightly dry tannins. This is a very big, solidly built Brunello with sneaky intensity and nicely integrated acidity, but it's presently dominated by saline, underbrush and tar aromas and flavors that left me wishing for a little more ripe fruit. Forget about this in the cellar for five years and see what happens.

**87(+?)?**

([www.colleonimarino.it](http://www.colleonimarino.it))

## Collosorbo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Sexy, oak-spiced syrupy raspberry and black cherry aromas are accented by flowers and minerals, with a sneaky cinnamon note emerging with air. Lush dark berry flavors are juicy and bright, with tangy minerality adding energy. Impressively bright on the long finish, which features good thrust.

**90**

(North Berkeley Imports, [www.northberkeleyimports.com](http://www.northberkeleyimports.com); A. Bommarito Wines, [www.abommaritowines.com](http://www.abommaritowines.com); Elite Wines, [www.elitewines.net](http://www.elitewines.net))

## La Colombina

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$45) Dark red. Bitter cherry, tobacco and high-toned oak on the nose. Perfumed flavors of ripe red berries, licorice, tobacco and underbrush. Not an especially sweet style but not at all tough. The finish is bright and long, with a persistent peppery nuance. **89** (Michael Skurnik Wines, [www.skurnikwines.com](http://www.skurnikwines.com))

## Cordella

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$49) Dark red. Tobacco and loam notes complicate rich, ripe red cherry on the nose. A sweet, syrupy spiced-plum flavor is complemented by tobacco on the palate. The clean finish displays decent length and slightly gritty tannins. Will a little bottle age soften this wine? I wouldn't bet the house. **87?**

(North Berkeley Imports, [www.northberkeleyimports.com](http://www.northberkeleyimports.com); Sapori Italiani, Mt. Vernon, NY)

## Corte dei Venti

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Dark red. Strongly floral aromas of red cherry, licorice and tobacco. Then pure and fresh in the mouth, with flavors similar to the aromas. The persistent finish shows a clean tannic bite. This wine offers good freshness and ripe fruit but could use a bit more focus and grip.

**88?**

([www.lacortedeiventit.it](http://www.lacortedeiventit.it))

## Costanti

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$85) Deep, bright red color. Aromas of plum, redcurrant and *kirsch* are complicated by soy sauce and flowers. Silky and rather minerally, showing a restrained sweetness and considerable finesse to its moderately ripe middle palate. Finishes with fine-grained tannins and lingering notes of red cherry, minerals, dried flowers and gunflint. A lovely '09. **91**

(Empson U.S.A., [www.empsonusa.com](http://www.empsonusa.com))

## Croce di Mezzo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$75) Bright ruby-red. Floral, scented nose hints at cherry, fresh herbs and licorice. Then supple and spicy in the mouth, with flavors of raspberry, graphite, licorice and tobacco. On the lean side but nicely seamless and sweet. Finishes with youthfully chewy tannins and decent length. **88**

(Aventine Hill, [www.aventinehillwines.com](http://www.aventinehillwines.com); Superior Wines, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com))

## Cupano

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good medium red. Subtle aromas of red plum, red cherry, leather and musky woodsmoke. Sappy, sweet and concentrated, with deep, creamy flavors of raspberry, exotic spices, orange peel and sweet pipe tobacco. For all its velvety texture, this is kept vibrant by brisk

acidity, finishing very long and fresh. **91**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Good deep red. Sexy, complex nose combines spicy red plum, redcurrant, leather, minerals and black tea. Broader and sweeter than the estate's '09 Brunello, showing more primary fruit flavors of redcurrant and raspberry complemented by enticing minerality. Finishes very long and silky, with outstanding stuffing and palate presence. **92(+?)**  
(Fairest Cape Beverage, [www.fairestcape.net](http://www.fairestcape.net))

## Donatella Cinelli Colombini

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Bright red. Very fresh red cherry and sweet spices on the nose and palate. Turns a little austere in the mouth, with a trace of bell-pepper greenness on the moderately persistent finish that limited my enthusiasm.

**88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$80) Bright red. Complex, enticing aromas of dark cherry, tobacco and sassafras. Very deep, rich and dense in the mouth, with creamy red cherry and licorice flavors that turn slightly peppery on the long, smooth finish, which features lingering tobacco and licorice nuances.

**91**

(Banville & Jones Wine Merchants, [www.banvilleandjones.com](http://www.banvilleandjones.com))

## Donna Olga

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Medium red. Wild red berries and smoked meat on the enticing nose. Fleishy and sweet in the mouth, with red cherry and licorice flavors dominating. The peppery, spicy, persistent finish is fresh and nicely balanced, but this Brunello could use a little more density for an outstanding score. **88**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Favorito** Deep red. The nose offers dark red berries, herbs, licorice and a peppery flintiness. Fresh and juicy on the palate, with flavors of red berries and flinty red cherry lingering nicely; I found this to be slightly more concentrated and vibrant than the 2009 entry-level wine. **90**

([www.tenutedonnaolga.it](http://www.tenutedonnaolga.it))

## Fattoi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$62) Bright red. Red berries, plum and flowers on the enticing nose. Fresh in the mouth, showing a slightly austere quality to the saline red berry and floral flavors. Could use a touch more concentration on the moderately long, vibrant finish. **88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Medium ruby-red. Crystallized redcurrant, minerals, tar and mint on the nose. Sweet and fat in the mouth, with flinty redcurrant and chocolate-mint flavors. This shows a more sensual texture than the entry-level 2009 Brunello, finishing with a persistent note of aromatic herbs and big, mounting tannins that spread over the entire palate. Fattoi strikes me as yet another Montalcino estate that has greatly improved its wines in recent years. **90**

(Tricana Imports, [www.tricana.com](http://www.tricana.com))

## Fattoria dei Barbi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$52) Bright red. Fresh aromas of sour red cherry and berries on the floral nose. More floral red berries on the palate, given clarity and cut by harmonious acidity. Finishes moderately long and a little simple, with a peppery bite. Still, this balanced wine is just fine as an entry-level Brunello.

**88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Del Fiore** Bright red. Clean, fresh red berry and licorice aromas and flavors are complicated by a strong saline quality. There's a lovely lingering violet nuance on the aftertaste, which is framed by very suave tannins and nicely extended by harmonious lively acidity. This serious Brunello will require patience; it's one of the best young Vigna del Fiore I recall. **92**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$117) Deep red with a bright rim. Red cherry compote and musky floral aromas are complicated by flint, cardamom, cedar and loam. Still reticent on the palate, with the sweet dark berry and licorice flavors given a refreshing bitter edge by a cherry skin quality that becomes chewier on the back half. Shows very good balance and a rather elegant personality, finishing with good persistence and a touch of austerity. This brooding wine hints at considerable complexity and depth. **91(+?)**



(Frederick Wildman & Sons, [www.frederickwildman.com](http://www.frederickwildman.com))

## Fattoria La Lecciaia

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$37) Bright red. Superripe yet fresh aromas of red cherry and spicy plum. Enters the mouth suave and juicy, then turns austere and increasingly tight toward the back, with peppery tannins supporting the spicy red fruits on the moderately long finish. **88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$40) Good full red. Restrained nose hints at red cherry, smoke and nuts. Sweet and nicely concentrated, with subdued red fruit and herb flavors enlivened by adequate acidity. The tannins turn a little green at the back, and there is also some alcoholic warmth on the moderately persistent finish.

**88(+?)**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Manapetra** (\$38) Good medium red. Expressive aromas of redcurrant, violet, minerals and spiced meats. Clean, fresh and fruity, showing a lightly spicy character to the red fruit flavors. But like the entry-level 2009 Brunello, this wine also turns tight and austere with air. This is more precise and concentrated than the *classico*, but the long, bright finish also betrays a strong whiff of alcohol.

**89**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Manapetra Riserva** Saturated red. Deep aromas of strawberry, raspberry and tobacco. Sweet and fruit-driven; more concentrated than the Vigna Manapetra *normale*. The clean, fresh red fruit and mineral flavors are complemented by aromatic herb nuances on the suave, easygoing finish. **90**

(Siena Imports, [www.sienaimports.com](http://www.sienaimports.com); Monsieur Touton Selection, [www.mtouton.com](http://www.mtouton.com))

## Fattoria La Magia

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Fully saturated red. Sweet spices and ripe red cherry on the enticing nose. Sweet and creamy on entry, showing gently ripe red cherry, underbrush and smoky tobacco flavors, then mounting tannic and tough on the back end, which features repeating notes of underbrush, ripe red cherry and coffee.

**88**

(Medallion Global, [www.medallionglobal.com](http://www.medallionglobal.com); Rockwood & Perry Fine Wine & Spirits, [www.rockwoodandperry.com](http://www.rockwoodandperry.com))

## La Fiorita

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Good full red. High-toned aromas of ripe red cherry, licorice, sweet spices, milk chocolate and nutty oak. Rich and deep, with creamy flavors of dark red cherry, licorice and pipe tobacco lifted by a floral quality. Finishes long, with a trace of alcoholic heat but manages to stay relatively graceful and perfumed. I find this to be one of the more floral, fruity La Fiorita's in memory, and less herbal and inky than usual, which is just fine by me, so I'll award it an outstanding score. Guaranteed to be a crowd pleaser over the next five to eight years. **90**

(Chambers & Chambers Wine Merchants, [www.chamberswines.com](http://www.chamberswines.com))

## La Fornace

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Dark red. Deep red and dark berry liqueur aromas, with a strong spicy overtone. Creamy, rich and ripe in the mouth, with blackberry and black cherry flavors complicated by cracked pepper and candied flowers. Then turns austere with air: the mounting drying tannins and disjointed acidity leave an impression of toughness and rough edges on the moderately persistent finish.

**87?**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$80) Vivid ruby-red. Smoky red cherry preserve and floral aromas on the deep nose, complicated by cardamom and cracked pepper. Offers much better balance than the entry-level 2009 Brunello, with deep, ripe, sweet blackberry and cherry flavors joined by subtle olive and spice nuances. The broad finish features gentle tannic grip, a lingering tobacco note and considerable alcoholic punch. **89**

(Vignaioli Selection, [www.vignaioliamerica.com](http://www.vignaioliamerica.com))

## Fornacelle

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright dark red. Red cherry, raspberry and herb aromas are

complemented by licorice and lifted by mint and spice notes. The palate offers good definition if not noteworthy complexity to the brisk red berry and spice flavors. This attractive, easygoing, moderately persistent Brunello closes subtle and dry, with substantial but smooth tannins and attractive finishing perfume. **88**

(www.fornacelle.it)

## Fornacina

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$55) Good medium-deep red. Slight torrefaction notes to the aromas dark red cherry, mocha, tobacco and licorice. Sweeter and fruitier in the mouth, offering moderate complexity but good inner-mouth intensity and lift to the spicy plum and red cherry flavors. Finishes with substantial dusty tannins and good depth, with a hint of sweet marzipan. **89**

(Villa Italia Imports, www.villaitaliawines.com)

## Fossacolle

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$73) Bright, full ruby. Restrained aromas of sour red cherry, redcurrant, licorice and fresh herbs are complemented by a distinctly mineral aspect. Juicy and fresh in the mouth, with very bright flavors of raspberry, redcurrant jelly and licorice pastille. Intense but not particularly sweet, finishing zippy and long, with youthfully chewy tannins giving it a firm quality. Very serious Brunello: don't touch it for another five years. **91(+?)**

(Vias Imports, www.viaswine.com)

## Fuligni

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$88) Bright red. Mesmerizingly pure and intense aromas of raspberry, sour red cherry, minerals, licorice and violet. Sweet, lush and deep, with outstanding clarity and lift to the pure flavors of red cherry, raspberry and flint. Pristine and very long on the vibrant finish, which features extremely sophisticated tannins and superb length. The wine's mineral, flinty quality runs through from nose to aftertaste. A paradigm of cooler-climate Montalcino sangiovese, this is the year's best Brunello, and it will cost you a fraction as much as more famous Brunellos that other wine writers will surely score higher. **94**

(Empson U.S.A., www.empsonusa.com)

## La Gerla

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Red-ruby. Opulent, almost roasted aromas of maraschino cherry, tobacco and chocolate. The ripe, soft, velvety red cherry and tobacco flavors are solid and a bit foursquare, but this wine could use more nuance and definition, not to mention more acidity for better lift. Finishes moderately persistent, with a hint of faded flowers. **87?**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva Vigna Gli Angeli** Good full red. Higher-toned aromas of *kirsch*, sweet spices and licorice. Dense, lush and superripe, with sweet but reasonably fresh red fruit and tobacco flavors that offer considerable early appeal. The persistent finish features ripe tannins. Though this is brighter and deeper than the '09, it lacks the elegance and refinement of the Brunellos made at this estate in cooler vintages. **89**

(Craft+Estate/The Vintner Group, www.craftandestate.com; HG Wine & Spirits, www.hgwineandspirits.com)

## Gianni Brunelli

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good bright red. Musky red cherry, raspberry and mocha on the precise nose. Suave, fine-grained and elegant in spite of its ripe strawberry and mineral flavors and underlying inky richness. The broad, rich, palate-coating finish offers full ripeness with a light touch. One of the few 2009 Brunellos that has the underlying structure to age reasonably well: put it away and don't touch it for at least another five years.

**90(+?)**

(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, www.marcdegrazia.com)

## Lambardi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$59) Bright red. Aromas of fresh red berries, aromatic herbs and licorice. Sweet and ripe, with underbrush and coffee notes complementing the red berry flavors. The finish is smooth, sweet and long. **89**

(Siena Imports, www.sienaimports.com)

## Lisini

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Deep red. Fresh red berry and cherry aromas are complemented by mint and tar. Red cherry and licorice flavors are brightened by a zesty mineral quality and framed by slightly gritty tannins, giving the wine a somewhat lean quality. Finishes pleasantly fresh and focused, with the cherry, tar and licorice notes persisting nicely. **88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Deep ruby. Fresh red cherry and blackcurrant on the nose. Refreshingly bitter cherry and blueberry skin flavors are very bright if a touch reduced at first. Fine-grained tannins add support on the back end, which offers nuances of vanilla and of cracked pepper. **89?**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Ugolaia** Medium red. Sexy nose combines delicate redcurrant, raspberry, dried rose and minerals. Shows an almost candied sweetness in the mouth, but has zippy harmonious acidity behind it. Finishes with powerful smooth tannins and lovely floral persistence. I really like this wine's balance. **91**

(www.lisini.com)

## Loacker/Corte Pavone

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Dark red. Red plum and cherry on the nose, with complicating notes of musky herbs and loam. Taut and linear on the palate, showing a slight hard edge to the red fruit and herbal-pepper flavors. Finishes on a subtly floral note, with good cut, but the wine's earthy, tarry quality is not for me. I'd have liked more sweetness of fruit and smoother tannins. **87**

(Maverick Wine Company, www.maverickwine.com)

## Madonna Nera

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$75) Deep ruby-red. Almost overripe aromas of cherry compote, blackcurrant syrup and pipe tobacco, with vanilla and oaky spices gaining strength with air. Fleshy and broad in the mouth, offering gently sweet dark fruit and vanilla flavors and a strong saline note. Finishes with good tannic grip and lingering spice and ripe dark fruit notes. Plenty of stuffing and energy here, but this very ripe wine is not my favorite style of Brunello. **88**

(Vine Street Imports, www.vsimports.com)

## La Mannella

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright medium ruby-red. Stone fruits, flowers and a hint of licorice on the nose. Silky on entry, then rich and layered in the middle, with red cherry, sweet spice and mineral flavors given definition by lively acidity on the persistent finish. A very pure, floral Brunello whose building tannins remain just this side of dry. **88**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino I Poggiarelli** Bright, saturated red. Aromas and flavors of sour red berries, licorice, quinine and wet stone. Bigger and fresher than the entry-level Brunello, but also with borderline drying tannins on the persistent, rich finish. **88(+?)**

(www.lamannella.it)

## Marchesato Degli Aleramici

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Vibrant, mineral-dominated nose evokes fresh redcurrant, fresh citrus and violet. Racy redcurrant flavors gain flesh with air, picking up juicy red cherry and mineral nuances and finishing with good cut. This chewy wine is not the most concentrated or complex Brunello you'll ever taste, but it's very nicely balanced. Finishes with slightly peppery tannins. **89**

(Siena Imports, www.sienaimports.com)

## Il Marroneto

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$75) Bright red with a garnet rim. Aromas of red cherry, citrus fruit and licorice, along with a loamy nuance. Dense, suave and juicy, displaying very good lift to the red berry and mineral flavors. Finishes pure and very long. **91**

(Montcalm Wine Importers, www.montcalmwines.com)

## Mastrojanni

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Rich nose offers scents of ripe red cherry, spices and



smoke. Dense and suave on the palate, with spicy and peppery nuances to the ripe red cherry, tar and licorice flavors. Finishes long and full, with youthfully chewy tannins. There's a trace of alcoholic warmth attesting to the southeastern Montalcino location of Mastrojanni's vineyards, but this is nonetheless one of the best entry-level Brunellos in some time from this estate. **90**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Loreto** Deep medium red. Subdued, deep aromas of ripe raspberry, licorice and chocolate on the brooding nose. Concentrated and vibrant if a bit less pliant and immediately accessible than the entry-level '09 Brunello, but this shows superb structure and lovely inner-mouth aromatic lift to its dark cherry, violet and leather flavors. Finishes with complex, suave, mounting tannins and noteworthy alcoholic punch. It would be best to leave this one in the cellar for at least six or seven years and hope that the fruit holds up. **90(+?)**

(Selected Estates of Europe, [www.selectedestates.com](http://www.selectedestates.com); Superior Wines, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com))

## Mate

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$65) Good medium red. Expressive nose offers red berries, licorice and smoked meat, plus a pungent floral element. Juicy and classically dry, displaying good peppery lift to the flavors of redcurrant, leather, tobacco and sweet spices. The dusty tannins avoid turning dry on the long finish, which features repeating floral nuances. **88**

(Vinilandia USA, [www.vinilandiausa.com](http://www.vinilandiausa.com))

## Mocali

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$48) Medium red. Black cherry, licorice, lavender and flint on the nose. Slightly medicinal flavors of dark fruits and licorice show moderate nuance but decent sweetness and plumpness of texture, although this seems a little chunky to me. Some tangy red berry notes emerge with aeration on the moderately long finish, providing needed definition and lift. **88**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Delle Raunate** (\$55) Dark red. Expressive aromas of spicy red plum, redcurrant, marzipan, cinnamon and licorice. Sweet, broad and pliant, showing good weight to its red fruit and spicy oak flavors. The persistent, slightly peppery, tannic finish offers lingering notes of leather and spicecake and a trace of alcoholic warmth. Much better than the entry-level 2009 Brunello; in fact I would have scored it even higher had it not been for the slightly gritty tannins and hint of heat. **89(+?)**

(Michael Skurnik Wines, [www.skurnikwines.com](http://www.skurnikwines.com); The Vintner Group, [www.thevintnergroup.com](http://www.thevintnergroup.com))

## Molino Di Sant Antimo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Paovlus** (\$45) Bright red. Red cherry, licorice and underbrush on the nose. Juicy and youthfully tight, with austere flavors of red cherry, plum and flint. The finish features zippy acidity and a repeating underbrush note. Not the last word in complexity but a good midweight Brunello that's ideal for drinking sooner rather than later.

**89**

(Massanois Imports, [www.massanois.com](http://www.massanois.com))

## Palagetto Podere Bellarina

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Very dark ruby: I prefer my Brunellos lighter in color than this. Aromas of dark red cherry, mocha, leather and licorice are complicated by spicy oak. Enters the mouth supple and sweet but turns a little lean, with modest dark fruit flavors currently dominated by inky, herbal and tarry notes. Building wood tannins give the moderately persistent finish a dusty quality. **87**

(Angelini Wine Selection, [www.angeliniwine.com](http://www.angeliniwine.com))

## Il Palazzone

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$90) Good bright red. Slightly medicinal aromas of red cherry, crushed blueberry, licorice and mint. Extremely fresh but not hard, showing a pliant texture to the nicely delineated flavors of minty red fruits, licorice and flowers. Finishes with good length and a touch of heat. **88(+?)**

(Domenico Valentino Selections, [www.domenicovalentino.com](http://www.domenicovalentino.com))

## Il Paradiso di Frassina

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Amber-tinged red. Deep aromas of dark plum, spicy soy sauce and violet. Dense and juicy, with gently spicy flavors of dark cherry and underbrush. The long finish features chewy tannins and a slightly musky quality.

**90**

(Superior Wines, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com); Tanaro River Imports, [www.tanarowineimports.com](http://www.tanarowineimports.com))

## Piancornello

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Deep medium red. Crystallized redcurrant, licorice and minerals on the nose. Round and ripe but not thick or heavy: this wine speaks clearly of grapes grown in a southeastern Montalcino location. At once creamy and juicy, with good breadth to the supple flavors of bitter cherry, red licorice, herbs and spices. Expands nicely on the back half, finishing with youthfully chewy tannins. Owner Claudio Monaci is a shy, soft-spoken man and one of the most down-to-earth producers in Montalcino, but he's also one of the very best. His Brunellos are benchmarks of the production zone and age spectacularly well (just try the 1995 *riserva* for a real treat). **91**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$80) Good deep red. Captivating nose combines red cherry, licorice, gunflint and earth, complicated by a hint of chocolate truffle. The palate offers compelling sweetness but with a vibrant spine of acidity giving outstanding clarity and cut to the flinty red berry, chocolate and earth notes. This stellar, very long wine offers an uncanny combination of structure, easy sweetness and multilayered aromas and flavors. **93**

(Superior Wines, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com))

## Pian dell' Orino

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$95) Good bright medium red. Captivating aromas of red cherry, violet, licorice and tobacco are complicated by a note of gunflint. Lush and sweet but with outstanding definition and lift to the flavors of raspberry, red cherry jelly, minerals and mocha. The juicy, long finish features smooth, sweet tannins that expand with air and repeating notes of red cherry and flint. A fleshier than usual style of Brunello for owners Jan Erbach and Caroline Pobizer, but this creamy, ripe wine is once again one of the handful of top wines of the Denominazione. In fact, Erbach told me he much prefers this wine to the wonderful '08 he made last year. **93**

(Polaner Selections, [www.polanerselections.com](http://www.polanerselections.com))

## Pietroso

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$55) Good deep red. Rather wild aromas of red cherry, flint, marzipan and minerals. Very dry but vibrant and powerful, with enticing red berry and mineral flavors lingering impressively on the bright, long finish. Few Montalcino estates have improved more than Pietroso has in the last five years. **90**

(Enotria Wine Imports, [www.enotria-wine.com](http://www.enotria-wine.com))

## Pieve Santa Restituta (Gaja)

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Pieve Di Santa Restituta** (\$90) Medium red. Fresh, expressive aromas of redcurrant, spices and flinty herbs. Bright, juicy and soil-driven, with ripe red cherry and botanical herb flavors nicely framed by harmonious acidity. Finishes with polished tannins and sneaky persistence. An excellent entry-level Brunello; in 2009, Gaja chose not to produce his top crus, Rennina and Sugarille. **90**

(Terlato Wines International, [www.terlatowines.com](http://www.terlatowines.com))

## Pinino

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Bright medium red. Clean, fresh aromas of red berries and licorice. Slightly austere on the palate, showing no easy sweetness to its red fruit and herb flavors, but I like this wine's delivery of pure sangiovese fruit. Finishes with a persistent steely nuance. My guess is that drinkers who prefer somewhat riper wines will think this example could use more flesh. **89**

(Total Beverage Solution, [www.totalbeveragesolution.com](http://www.totalbeveragesolution.com))

## Podere Brizio

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good full, deep red. Fresh aromas of dark cherry, smoky plum, tar,

licorice and pepper. Supple and sweet but serious too, with a slightly medicinal cast to the flavors of dark cherry, tobacco leaf and leather. Supple tannins pick up a peppery bite on the long, slightly warm finish. Made in a fleshy style, but the high-octane finish may leave some wine lovers nonplussed. **89?**

(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, [www.marcdegrazia.com](http://www.marcdegrazia.com))

## Poggio Antico

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$80) Ruby-red. Fresh, inviting aromas of plum, red cherry, redcurrant, tobacco and spices. Rich, silky and suave, with mellow flavors of redcurrant, plum, tobacco and minerals. This pure, layered, stylish wine finishes with substantial but lush tannins and subtle floral persistence. **91**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Altero** (\$95) Bright ruby-red. Aromas of bitter cherry, plum, licorice, minty dark chocolate and smoke. Juicy, sappy and fruity, with red berry, mineral, licorice, and fresh herb flavors enlivened by harmonious acidity. Though the fruit is superripe, this wine manages to remain light on its feet. Ripe and flavorful, finishing with fine tannins and lovely verve. **91(+?)**

(The Sorting Table, [www.thesortingtable.com](http://www.thesortingtable.com))

## Poggio dell'Aquila

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright medium red. High-pitched aromas of red cherry, redcurrant, menthol, licorice and fresh herbs. Juicy, spicy and on the lean side, with slightly tart acidity enlivening the flavors of red cherry, licorice and menthol. Relies as much on its acids as on its light tannins for structure. Not an especially dense or complex wine, but lively and downright quaffable. **88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Good medium red. Very clean, sangiovese-accurate aromas of redcurrant, strawberry, violet and licorice. Savory, saline wine with good concentration and a tightly coiled spring to its red fruit and floral flavors. Finishes juicy, ripe and persistent, with a firm tannic spine and very bright acidity. Lovely Brunello. **90**

([www.poggiodelaquila.it](http://www.poggiodelaquila.it))

## Poggio San Polo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$80) Bright red. Penetrating perfume of sour red cherry, redcurrant, violet and spicy minerals. Bright and very juicy, with high acidity lifting the floral red berry and cherry flavors, but leaving an almost tart impression. Finishes firm and saline, with lovely length, but could use a little more flesh and sweetness. This lovely, pure sangiovese really needs food to pick up volume and flesh.

**89(+?)?**

(Winebow, [www.winebow.com](http://www.winebow.com))

## Poggio di Sotto

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good bright medium red. Rich aromas of raspberry, red cherry, licorice, sweet pipe tobacco and violet. Rich, layered and sweet, boasting superb definition and depth to its fleshy but vibrant red berry, sweet spice and licorice flavors. This big, broad, perfumed wine finishes with excellent clarity and floral lift. Another standout Brunello from this producer and easily one of the year's best. I'd enjoy it within the next ten years, but I suspect it has the structure to age for longer than that. **93**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Bright, pale red. Red cherry, fresh herbs, lavender, violet and a hint of spicy orange peel on the very floral nose. Fresh and precise on entry, then tight and bound-up in the middle, folded in on itself today in spite of its fine-grained, suave texture. Finishes with high but harmonious acidity, noble tannins and echoing notes of violet and orange peel. This strikes me as the lightest-bodied Riserva ever made by Poggio di Sotto; balanced and very bright, it's more about flowers than sweet fruit. **91(+?)**

(Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, [www.kermitlynch.com](http://www.kermitlynch.com))

## Poggio Nardone

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$50) Good deep red. Crushed raspberry and black cherry aromas are complemented by loam and spice nuances. Tactile, sappy and fresh, with savory and minty qualities to the soft red fruit flavors. The vibrant finish displays sneaky persistence. **88**

(Kysela Pere et Fils, [www.kysela.com](http://www.kysela.com))



## Il Poggione

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$85) Bright red. Aromas of ripe red cherry, aromatic herbs and licorice. At once fat and juicy, with soft, ripe red cherry, strawberry jam and mocha flavors dominating. Thick, broad and full, with harmonious acidity giving the wine shape and providing necessary lift. Finishes long and a little oaky, with plenty of easy sweetness, soft tannins and a note of balsamic chocolate. This 2009 from Il Poggione strikes me as bigger and richer than usual for this wine, and is very emblematic of the Brunellos made in the southwestern sector of the Montalcino hill in 2009. **90**

(Terlato Wines International, [www.terlatowines.com](http://www.terlatowines.com))

## Le Potazzine (Gorelli)

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good full red. Wonderful floral lift to the expressive aromas of redcurrant, raspberry, violet and minerals. Suave on entry, then plush and silky in the middle, with enticing inner-mouth perfume and lively acidity giving lift and shape to the sweet red fruit flavors. Silky and seamless Brunello, with a vibrant finish featuring sweet tannins and outstanding length. Yet another knockout Brunello from Le Potazzine: considering that this estate's Rosso is also one of the best in the Denominazione, you can understand why I think that owners Giuseppe and Gigliola Gorelli's estate is one of the top ten in Montalcino. **92**

(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, [www.marcdegrazia.com](http://www.marcdegrazia.com))

## Querce Bettina

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$89) Good bright red. Very ripe, slightly high-toned aromas of raspberry and red cherry, with a suggestion of licorice and sweet spices, all lifted by a welcome, bright, floral quality. Ripe, supple and dense but also airy and classically dry, with raspberry, cherry compote and sweet spice flavors dominating. Finishes long, with a light touch and lingering red cherry notes. Though it's not the most graceful Brunello you'll ever try, there's so much sweet creamy fruit that you'll find it hard to put the glass back down: I especially like this wine's balance: despite its creamy red fruit, it manages to stay relatively light and lively. Very well done. **90**

(Wine Symphony, [www.winesymphonyinc.com](http://www.winesymphonyinc.com))

## Le Ragnaie

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$80) Good full red. Very ripe aromas of *kirsch* and chocolate; this needs more time to absorb its oaky torrefaction. Creamy-rich and dense in the mouth, with very good underlying structure to the ripe red cherry and mocha flavors. Finishes ripe and powerful, with building tongue-coating tannins. I'm not sure that full phenolic ripeness was achieved in the heat of 2009, but nobody will notice when this wine is paired with food. **88**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Ragnaie V.V.** (\$125) Bright ruby-red. Vibrant aromas of red cherry and redcurrant lifted by a violet topnote. Suave and sexy wine, at once plush and light on its feet, showing excellent definition and intensity to its scented flavors of red berries, flint and licorice. Finishes perfumed and long, with fine-grained tannins. Not surprisingly, given the cooler '08 growing season, this is much more refined and fresh than the entry-level 2009 Brunello. **91(+?)**

(Vine Street Imports, [www.vsimports.com](http://www.vsimports.com))

## La Rasina

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright medium ruby-red. Highly aromatic nose offers smoky plum, minerals, vanilla and coffee. At once fat and juicy, with firm-edged bitter red cherry and spicy dark plum flavors showing very good grip and persistence. Finishes big, fat and flinty, with strong inky and tarry nuances. Though it is accessible now, this is another 2009 Brunello that will be best after another five years in the cellar. **90**

(Montecastelli Selections, [www.montecastelli.com](http://www.montecastelli.com); Regal Wine Imports, [www.regalwine.com](http://www.regalwine.com))

## Ridolfi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$60) Good full, deep. Deep aromas of redcurrant, red cherry, camphor, dried flowers and black pepper. Broad and sweet but with lovely vinosity framing the flavors of redcurrant, sweet spices, camphor and tar. This sneakily concentrated Brunello is already quite suave, with zippy acidity nicely extending the flavors at the back.

**90**

(Medallion Global, [www.medallionglobal.com](http://www.medallionglobal.com))

## Le Ripi

**2008 Lupi E Sirene Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Bright ruby-red. Fresh red cherry, blackberry and incense on the nose, with a penetrating flinty mineral note adding lift. Silky, sweet and focused on entry, then the exotic dark red cherry and flinty red berry flavors develop an almost steely quality with aeration. Closes with enticing floral perfume, noteworthy energy, dusty tannins and a touch of bitter cherry pit. This very promising wine should age well; I especially liked its delivery of pure red fruit flavors. **91(+?)**

(www.podereleripi.it)

## Salicutti

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Tre Vigne** (\$82) Bright dark red. Enticing aromas of redcurrant, iron and mocha are complicated by a strong violet topnote. Supple red fruit and iron flavors are lifted by a peppery element and complemented by suggestions of fresh citrus fruits. Nicely plump and gently tannic Brunello with outstanding length. This is a first-ever bottling for owner Francesco Leanza: rather than produce his usual single-vineyard Piaggione Brunello, Leanza opted to blend the sangiovese grapes from all three of his vineyards. Leanza decided that the unusually low yield of Piaggione and the high production of the Sorgente vineyard, as well as the latter's quality (Sorgente has always been the grape source of Salicutti's Rosso di Montalcino, at least up until the 2009 vintage), was an ideal opportunity to see what the Sorgente grapes could deliver--or add--in a Brunello blend. Much as his friends Jan Erbach and Caroline Pobizer are doing at Pian dell'Orino, Leanza is closely evaluating his single vineyards of sangiovese in an effort to one day produce mainly vineyard-designated Brunellos, each with a different story to tell. **91**

(Polaner Selections, www.polanerselections.com)

## San Carlo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$75) Bright medium red. Aromas of red berry syrup, licorice, cardamom and herbs. Sweet, deep and ripe, showing an almost porty quality to the chocolatey fruit. Finishes persistent, with harmonious acidity and substantial tannins providing good structural support. This will appeal more to those who like ripe, fleshier Brunellos. **88**

(Corquete Imports, www.corquete.com)

## San Filippo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good medium red. Red cherry, blueberry, herbs and milk chocolate on the nose, along with a hint of exotic oak. Then smooth and classically dry, showing decent lift to its ripe, fleshy flavors of red cherry and sweet spices. This solid midweight finishes with noteworthy but polished tannins and a trace of alcoholic heat, but lacks the dimension for a higher score.

**88**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Le Lucere** (\$50) Medium red. Redcurrant, violet and licorice on the nose. Bright and juicy on entry, then tight in the middle, showing a flinty nuance to its redcurrant and herbal flavors. Finishes sappy, savory and a youthfully dry, with noble tannins and very good length. **89(+?)**

(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, www.marcdegrazia.com)

## San Giacomo

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright medium red. Aromas and flavors of ripe red cherry, crystallized redcurrant and milk chocolate-covered plum. Penetrating fruit flavors carry through on the long, lively, peppery finish. Excellent stuff. **90**

(www.poderesangiacomo.it)

## San Lorenzo

**2009 Bramante Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright full red. Red cherry, spicy raspberry jam and a whiff of alcohol on the nose. Then clean and fresh on the palate, with ripe red cherry and delicate herb flavors that linger nicely. This strikes me as a slightly riper-styled San Lorenzo Brunello than usual, and is a very good example of the charming style of the 2009 Brunellos. **90**

(V.O.S. Selections, www.vosselections.com; Votto Vines Importing, www.vottovines.com; Total Wine & More, www.totalwine.com)

## Sassodisole

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$50) Good deep red. Medicinal red cherry, licorice and fresh herb aromas are complemented by oak spices. Enters the mouth juicy and fresh, with steely red berry and flint flavors, but turns a little oaky at the back. The finish is lively, tannic and long. Though not the last word in complexity, this is a nice middle-of-the-road Brunello offering easy drinkability; a couple of years in the cellar may help smooth out its oakier edges. **89(+?)**  
(Supreme Wines, [www.supremewines.net](http://www.supremewines.net))

## Scopetone

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Clean, fresh, perfumed red berries and sour red cherries on the enticing, precise nose. Then also fresh and vibrant in the mouth, with very juicy, pure red berry and cherry flavors complicated by flinty minerality and lifted by harmonious lively acidity. The lingering floral aftertaste lasts and lasts. Outstanding, pure Brunello. **91**  
(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, [www.marcdegrazia.com](http://www.marcdegrazia.com))

## Scopone

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$70) Medium red. Dark cherry, tar and spices on the nose. Perfumed if a bit lean in the mouth, offering good cut to the dark cherry, tobacco and herbal flavors but finishing only moderately long, with some dry tannins. A wine of very good but not outstanding concentration. As the '08 was also better than some other past vintages, my hope is that Scopone is starting to hit its stride.  
**88(+?)**  
(Superior Wines, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com))

## La Serena

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$48) Medium red. Reduced aromas of dark red fruits, anise, underbrush and tobacco. Spicy, musky flavors of dark red cherry, spicy plum, pepper and herbs show limited definition. The slightly dry, medium-long finish offers lingering notes of underbrush, coffee and herbs. A broad-shouldered wine but a bit tough going. **87?**  
(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, [www.marcdegrazia.com](http://www.marcdegrazia.com))

## Sesti

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright medium red. Musky redcurrant, red cherry, tobacco and graphite on the ripe nose. Then juicy and tightly wound in the mouth, with firm, spicy flavors of strawberry, tobacco and minerals. Finishes with ripe tannins but only moderate persistence.  
**88?**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Phenomena Riserva** Good medium red. Knockout nose melds red fruits, dried flowers, cinnamon and marzipan. Juicy, pure and delineated, with bright acidity giving cut and penetration to the red cherry, raspberry and violet flavors. Very refined and long, this is much better than the '09 entry-level Brunello. Delicious today, but like most of the better '08s, this can improve in bottle for another 15 years. **92**  
(Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, [www.kermitlynch.com](http://www.kermitlynch.com))

## Sesti di Sopra

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Full red. High-toned aromas of dark red cherry, spicecake, mocha and licorice, with hints of pepper and herbs. Supple, dense and sweet, but presently displays monolithic, one-dimensional redcurrant and mocha flavors. A note of oaky torrefaction gives the firmly tannic finish an austere edge, but the moderately long finish shows good energy and persistence. I was a little disappointed by this wine.  
**88**  
Other wines tasted: 2008 Brunello di Montalcino Riserva. ([www.sestadisopra.it](http://www.sestadisopra.it))

## Siro Pacenti

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$50) Dark red. Redcurrant, cedar, graphite, violet and nutty oak on the nose. Juicy flavors of redcurrant and spicy oak show a restrained sweetness but only moderate flesh; in a rather clenched style, turning tougher with aeration. Finishes austere, with dusty, flinty, oak-influenced tannins. My hope is that this will gain in sweetness and volume with aging.  
**88(+?)?**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Ps** (\$85) Medium red. Deep, slightly liqueur-like aromas of red cherry,



raspberry, strawberry, camphor and licorice. Silky on entry, then rich and sweet in the middle, offering lovely inner-mouth energy and lift. Finishes with excellent length and dusty, building tannins that coat the palate dry. This still-brooding, very young Brunello will require patience: I would have liked a little more sweet fleshy fruit for a higher score, but it may yet get there with five or six years of cellaring. **90(+?)**

(Michael Skurnik Wines, [www.skurnikwines.com](http://www.skurnikwines.com))

## Solaria

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Medium red. Red cherry, strawberry, and dried violet on the enticing nose. Then silky and pliant in the mouth, with nicely harmonious acidity framing the sweet red fruit flavors. The tannins are substantial but broad and sweet. I like this wine's youthful fruit character but I was looking for a little more complexity, too. **89**

([www.solariacencioni.com](http://www.solariacencioni.com))

## Stella di Campalto

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Deep, bright red. Crushed raspberry, candied red cherry, sweet spices and violet on the perfumed nose. Densely packed Brunello with terrific floral lift to its sharply delineated dark red cherry and red berry flavors. For all its richness and flesh, it also conveys great energy and class. Finishes with big but noble tannins and outstanding vibrating persistence. Should turn out to be one of the best wines of the vintage. **92**

(Polaner Selections, [www.polanerselections.com](http://www.polanerselections.com))

## Talenti

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$55) Saturated, bright red. Subdued aromas of ripe red cherry, blueberry and chestnut. Then more impressive on the palate, with sweet, intense flavors of red cherry and faded flowers and no shortage of energy or precision. Finishes classically dry and broad, with the depth of material to support its fairly substantial but smooth tannins. **89**

(HP Selections, [www.hpselections.com](http://www.hpselections.com))

## Tassi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright, full red. Subdued but pure nose offers scents of red cherry, violet and licorice, plus a whiff of menthol. Juicy, suave and smooth but quite dry and austere; not at all a fleshy style of Brunello, but this minerally midweight is bright and refined and finishes with noteworthy length. **89**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Franci** Good full red. Sexy aromas of ripe raspberry, sweet spices, tobacco and quinine, plus mineral and truffle nuances. Fresh and vibrant on the palate, with a strong spine of acids and tannins nicely supporting the wine's underlying rich, ripe red-fruit sweetness. Finishes with excellent length and balance. **90**

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** Dark red. Aromatically compressed on the nose, hinting at subdued red cherry, licorice and herbs. Enters the mouth rich, dense and suave, but turns austere in the middle, with tart, almost disjointed acidity that doesn't quite succeed in lifting the wine's overripe red fruit flavors. Finishes moderately persistent, with soft tannins.

**88?**

([www.tassimontalcino.com](http://www.tassimontalcino.com))

## Tenuta Friggiali

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright ruby-red. Floral, scented aromas of red cherry, graphite and cocoa. A fresh, spicy midweight with clean flavors of raspberry, graphite, licorice and tobacco. On the lean side but nicely seamless, finishing with lingering juiciness and a light dusting of tannins. **88**

([www.tenutafriggialiepietranera.it](http://www.tenutafriggialiepietranera.it))

## Tenuta La Fuga

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$67) Bright ruby-red. Superripe aromas of smoky red fruits, raspberry liqueur, minerals and maple syrup. Fat, plump and sweet, offering very good concentration of fruit and a silky texture. Finishes quite soft but long, with noticeable alcohol but an impression of balance. This suave, very deep, complex wine strikes me as the best La Fuga ever. **92**

(Kobrand, [www.kobrandwineandspirits.com](http://www.kobrandwineandspirits.com))

## Tenuta di Sesta

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Pale red color. Very pure sour red cherry and redcurrant jelly aromas are complicated by powdered minerals and violet. Broad, fresh and floral on the palate, with a lively red cherry flavor extended by vibrant acidity on the back. The smooth, long finish features a repeating floral quality.

**91**

(Monsieur Touton Selection, [www.mtouton.com](http://www.mtouton.com); K & L Wine Merchants, [www.klwines.com](http://www.klwines.com))

## Tenute Silvio Nardi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$70) Bright red. Perfumed aromas of red cherry, blueberry, bitter chocolate, earth and violet. Not quite as dense as some other 2009 Brunellos, but boasts excellent thrust and energy to its flavors of red fruits, licorice and herbs. The big, sweet tannins arrive quite late. This appears to be a slightly more concentrated than usual entry-level Brunello for Silvio Nardi.

**90**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigneto Manachiara** (\$107) Bright red. Multidimensional nose combines raspberry, clove, licorice, marzipan and leather. Silky on entry, then earthy and powerful but seamless in the middle, with soft red cherry and strawberry jelly flavors dominating. Finishes with high alcohol, ripe tannins and very good length, without coming off as heavy. **91**

(Kobrand, [www.kobrandwineandspirits.com](http://www.kobrandwineandspirits.com))

## Tenuta Vitanza

**2008 Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva** (\$99) Deep red. Pungent red cherry and dark berry aromas are lifted by subtle peppery and licorice notes, but there's a noticeable whiff of alcohol too. Broad and fleshy on the palate, offering ripe dark cherry and plum flavors complicated by a strong saline nuance. Finishes with herbal notes, decent persistence, a touch of alcoholic heat, and slightly hard tannins. This will benefit from a couple of years in the cellar. **88**

(Kysela Pere et Fils, [www.kysela.com](http://www.kysela.com))

## Terralsole

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$59) Saturated red. Superripe aromas of raspberry, spices and vanillin oak. Red cherry, wild herb and dark chocolate flavors show compelling sweetness and intensity, but also lots of alcohol and oak tannins. Not bad, but hardly the most graceful or nuanced 2009 Brunello. **88**

(Terralsole USA, [www.terralsole.com](http://www.terralsole.com))

## Terre Nere/Campigli Vallone

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$42) Medium red. Raspberry, pomegranate and sexy oak notes on the nose. Clean, fresh and layered in the mouth, covered by a vibrant wave of red fruit (apple, pomegranate, cherry). Very attractive wine--fresher than most 2009s--but I would have liked a little more concentration for an outstanding score. **89**

(Monsieur Touton Selection, [www.mtouton.com](http://www.mtouton.com))

## La Togata

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red-ruby. Minty, balsamic aromas of red berries, cassis leaf, chocolate and mint. Penetrating, fairly concentrated dark red berry and strawberry liqueur flavors are compromised by some streaky acidity and building tannins. Finishes moderately long, with a pungent minty nuance. Not a particularly elegant style of Brunello.

**89**

([www.brunellolatogata.com](http://www.brunellolatogata.com))

## Tornesi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Deep red. Fresh, clean red cherry and blackcurrant on the nose. Refreshingly bitter red cherry and berry skin flavors turn weightier and riper on the back end, where fine-grained tannins add support. The clean red cherry note is joined by a late kick of cracked pepper. **88**

([www.brunellotornesi.it](http://www.brunellotornesi.it))

## La Torre

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$65) Bright red. Redcurrant jelly, sour red cherry and licorice on the enticing nose. Then clean, fresh and lively on the palate, showing wonderful cut and clarity to the flavors of red fruits and gingery sweet spices. The finish is long, smooth and penetratingly pure. One of the better young entry-level Brunellos I can recall from this estate.

**91**

(Rosenthal Wine Merchant, [www.madrose.com](http://www.madrose.com))

## Uccelliera

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good deep red. Luscious aromas of blueberry syrup, red cherry jam, licorice and sweet pipe tobacco. Ripe, lush, deep and quite suave, but also with very good lift to the red cherry, licorice and balsamic spice flavors. Softly structured and superripe but conveys a sense of balance and manages to remain this side of over the top. Very rich and long on the aftertaste.

**91**

(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, [www.marcdegrazia.com](http://www.marcdegrazia.com))

## Val di Suga (Tenimenti Angelini)

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Medium red. Strawberry, herbs and smoked meat on the nose. Juicy, precise red berry flavors come off a bit dilute, but tangy spice and herb qualities provide good lift. Shows decent sweetness on the moderately persistent finish, which features a note of bitter cherry skin. A competently made wine, but really too simple: I would have liked more sweetness and concentration here. **87**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Spuntali** Bright red. Expressive aromas of red plum, ripe red cherry, mocha, loam and leather. Sweet, broad and pliant, with good weight to its very ripe red fruit and spice flavors. The persistent, ripely tannic finish offers lingering notes of coffee and orange peel complicated by repeating nuances of loam and sweet spices. A very forward style of Brunello that is utterly irresistible; the Spuntali vineyard is located in Montalcino's southeastern sector not far from Sant'Angelo in Colle, and this wine is very faithful both to that specific production area and to the many outstanding older Spuntali wines. I should note that for all of its easygoing charm and ripe delivery of fruit, Spuntali Brunellos age remarkably well: for example, the 1998 and 2000 (neither one a memorable vintage in Montalcino), though full of easy-drinking charm, still have a long life ahead. **91**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Vigna Del Lago** Bright deep red; darker than the other two single-vineyard Brunellos from Val di Suga. Knockout nose combines redcurrant, black cherry, flint and licorice aromas, complicated by an intense floral quality. The palate offers an uncanny combination of sweetness and penetrating power, with brisk acidity nicely framing and lifting the fine-grained flavors of dark red fruits, mint and fresh spices. At once energetic and refined, with a very long, slowly mounting finish conveying an impression of purity and precision. This is likely to enjoy a graceful evolution in bottle, in contrast to most 2009 Brunellos. Vigna del Lago is a vineyard located in Montalcino's cooler northern reaches; it's my favorite 2009 Brunello from Val di Suga but it will likely appeal more to more experienced Brunello drinkers with traditional tastes. **92(+?)**

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Poggio Al Granchio** Bright deep red. Aromas of ripe dark cherry, cocoa, aromatic herbs and violet. Then rich, ripe and suave, with very appealing fleshy flavors of ripe dark cherry, tobacco and licorice. Finishes long and smooth. Much sweeter and fleshier in texture than the other two single vineyard Brunellos made this year at Val di Suga, but though it has the most upfront personality, I find it less interesting and nuanced than the others. **90(+?)**

([www.tenimentiangelini.it](http://www.tenimentiangelini.it))

## Il Valentiano

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino Campo Di Marzo** Bright, deep red. Enticing aromas of raspberry and fresh flowers are lifted by a steely mineral note. Fresh, vibrant and nicely delineated, showing sneaky concentration and energy. Has the backbone for a graceful evolution in bottle but this wine is hard to resist now. **89**

([www.ilvalentiano.it](http://www.ilvalentiano.it))

## La Velona

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Bright red. Clean, fresh aromas of strawberry, red cherry and violet

are complemented by a strong dose of sexy oak spice. Then juicy and intense but quite suave in the mouth, with lovely lift to the flavors of ripe red berries, aromatic spices and loam. A silky-sweet wine with lovely aromatic persistence and a touch of finishing heat. La Velona is one of numerous Montalcino estates that are now making better Brunellos than ever before. **89**  
(Superior Wine Selections, [www.superiorwineselections.com](http://www.superiorwineselections.com); K&L Wine Merchants, [www.klwines.com](http://www.klwines.com))

## Verbena

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Good bright red. Lively, penetrating aromas of red cherry, blueberry, flint, minerals and violet. Juicy and fresh but quite broad too, with enticing fresh minerality energizing the deep middle palate. The wine's dark fruit flavors are complicated by an almost pungent floral element. Finishes perfumed and very long, with fine-grained tannins and vibrant, highly spicy nuances. Verbena is yet another Montalcino estate making better Brunellos than ever before. **91**  
([www.aziendaverbena.it](http://www.aziendaverbena.it))

## Villa Le Prata

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** (\$59) Bright ruby-red. Black cherry, licorice, leather and a loamy nuance on the nose. Densely structured and tannic, with flavors of dark red fruits, leather, tobacco leaf and herbs, this serious Brunello begs for food. With its rather strict personality but good breadth and restrained sweetness, this wine will drink well relatively early but it will likely benefit from another two or three years in the cellar. Though the finish is only moderately long and a tad hot, this strikes me as one of the better entry-level Brunellos made by this estate in some time. **88**  
(Artisan Wines, [www.artisanwinesinc.com](http://www.artisanwinesinc.com))

## Villa Poggio Salvi

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Deep, bright red. Highly expressive nose of redcurrant and tobacco, with sexy floral and spice nuances. Lively red and dark fruit flavors gain an exotic floral quality with air and become spicier on the back end. Nicely vibrant Brunello with good finishing clarity and lingering hints of tobacco. **88**  
([www.villapoggiosalvi.it](http://www.villapoggiosalvi.it))

## Voliero (Cortonesi)

**2009 Brunello Di Montalcino** Deep red-ruby. Aromas of balsamic red cherry, blueberry, licorice, dried flowers and sweet oak. Suave and rather soft on entry, then nicely stuffed with energetic red fruit and sweet spice flavors in the middle. The broad finish features smooth oak tannins and a ripe fleshy mouthfeel. Made from a vineyard at higher altitude than those from which owner Andrea Cortonesi makes his standout Uccelliera Brunellos: in the warmer weather conditions of 2009 it's richer and riper than usual. **91(+?)**  
(A Marc de Grazia Selection-De Grazia Imports, [www.marcdegrazia.com](http://www.marcdegrazia.com))

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