

A scenic view of a Tuscan hillside. In the foreground, there's a vineyard with green leaves. Several tall, slender cypress trees stand prominently. Behind them, a stone house with a tiled roof is partially visible. The background shows rolling hills covered in dense green forest, with a small cluster of buildings on a distant ridge. The lighting suggests late afternoon or early morning, with soft shadows and a warm glow.

Montemaggio

Vineyards

Presented by **Katarina** Host of Grapevine Adventures



Montemaggio
is a small
but very
dynamic
winery,

Montemaggio is a winery in Radda in Chianti in the heart of the Chianti Classico district. It is close to Panzano, Greve, also in Chianti, and Lamole, to just name a few of the well-known places in Tuscany. The winery produces wine within the Chianti Classico denomination and belongs to the Consortium of Chianti Classico. The owners of [Montemaggio](#) are Valeria Zavadnikova and her family, while Ilaria Anichini is the manager of the winery. Valeria is originally from Vladivostok, Russia, however she has lived in many different places such as Moscow, London, and Monaco. She has a law degree from the UK, but then decided soon after to dedicate herself to the family winery full-time. Ilaria, on the other hand, was born and bred in

Florence where she studied agronomy at the university. Thereafter, she traveled around a bit to Australia and France, in order to get practical experience in winemaking. The winery has a particular logo picturing an Etruscan woman with a basket full of grapes. Russian artist Andrey Remnev created the original painting, and his wife, who is a designer, then created a logo and wine label with the painting as a model.

Montemaggio is a small but very dynamic winery, which looks to the future and tries to be innovative. This might also be due to the fact that the owner and manager are young and full of fresh ideas. Therefore, in this article I will also tell you about my personal relationship to the winery, as I have gotten to

which
looks
to the
future.



know them more and more during the last few months.

Meeting Montemaggio Winery

The first time I got up close with the Montemaggio winery was when my friend, Nadia Padrin, told me a year or two ago about what a wonderful place it is and how much she had enjoyed getting to know Ilaria, the manager. Nadia informed me that we just had to go there sometime to visit them. Of course, I said yes, but did not think much about it after that. In February, the month of

all the *Anteprime* (sneak peeks) of the new wine vintages, I was with Nadia at the **Anteprima del Chianti Classico**. We were tasting our way through the different wines being presented by the Chianti Classico producers and also passed by the Montemaggio winery's booth. Nadia presented me to Ilaria and while tasting their Rosé, Chianti Classico Annata, and Chianti Classico Riserva, I asked her if she would like to participate in my wine blab. So Ilaria was a guest at my #WinesOfItaly blab in mid-March and since then I have visited the winery several times, learning more about them and about wine-making in general.

More about Montemaggio

The estate today is located where there used to be a tower above the old Roman road connecting Florence to Siena back in the 14th century. Montemaggio was also already marked out on the map of *Capitani di parte Guelfa* as early as in 1560. The name Montemaggio means 'big mountain' and has probably to do with the high altitude, 600 m.a.s.l., on which it is situated.

The estate comprises 190 acres of vineyards, olive groves, and woods, while the vineyards only extend over 22 acres of the property. The winery is, furthermore, organically certified and it applies the green manure method both in the vineyards and in the olive groves. This year they have planted French honeysuckle in the olive grove while, for example, barley is growing in the vineyards.

This way you have natural fertilizers easy at hand. The honey-suckle brings nitrogen to the soil at the same time as its flowering period attracts insects, which makes it good for biodiversity. Barley, on the other hand, does not provide as much nitrogen as rather the bulk of the organic matter to the soil. It can have a lot of beneficial functions for the soil, such as increasing important micro-organisms, giving a habitat for insects, stabilizing the soil against erosion, and much more.

Apart from Sangiovese, grape varieties such as Merlot, Pugnitello, and Chardonnay are also cultivated at the estate, even though in much smaller quantities. As you can notice, we are here in the center of the Sangiovese territory. When it comes to winemaking in Radda, Roberto Bianchi, the owner of Val delle Corti winery, told me that up until the 1980s it was not an easy task to bottle a quality wine in Radda due to the rough and hard soil and long periods of maturation. This was especially true for mostly the northern parts of the vineyards facing east. As a result of the

climate change, this eastern exposure has turned out to be a positive factor for winemaking during recent years.

The Wines

Being summer, let's start with the **Rosé di Montemaggio**, which is a 100% Sangiovese wine. The grapes are harvested prematurely in order to get a fresh wine with higher acidity. The grape juice then remains in contact with the skins for about 12 hours, after which the juice is separated from the skins and fermented in steel vats. It is a fresh, mineral, sapid, and fruity wine, perfect for a barbecue in the summer or cheese and cold cuts, for example. The **Chardonnay di Montemaggio IGT Toscana** is a 100% Chardonnay wine, which is fermented and aged in tonneaux. It is a fresh wine with notes of tropical fruits

and flowers, and has a smooth and buttery taste.

The Chianti Classico

Annata is a wine made with mostly Sangiovese grapes and a small percentage of Merlot. However, you do not really perceive much of the Merlot because it has amalgamated with and adopted the typical traits of the terroir in Radda. Still, it helps to make this Sangiovese wine a bit smoother. The **Chianti Classico Riserva** is a wine made with Sangiovese grapes selected from the oldest vineyards on the estate. It is a full-bodied and structured wine with both floral and fruity aromas, and elegant tannins. **Torre di Montemaggio IGT Toscana** is a 100% Merlot. The fermentation takes place in steel or cement vats and thereafter it is aged 15-18 months in barrels of French oak. It is a very interesting Merlot wine with clear notes of berries where, just as in the Chianti Classico Annata, the Tuscan soil has had a strong influence. Just as in the case of the Tempranillo discovered and cultivated by Pietro Beconcini winery in San Miniato, where it is now a Tempranillo with clear Tuscan connotations, the Merlot of Montemaggio winery also has clear Tuscan undertones.

Quinta Essentia di Montemaggio IGT

Toscana is a wine that was originally developed as a gift to the husband of Valeria for their wedding. Now it is part of the selection of wines offered by Montemaggio winery. It is a blend of 60% Merlot and 40% Sangiovese where the Merlot is aged in oak barrels and the Sangiovese is aged





in tonneaux. Thereafter, they are mixed together and aged further in bottle for one year. It is a wine with notes of red fruit, mineral, and earthy influences. It has a smooth and persistent taste as well as refined tannins. Another wine that they recently have launched is the **Ilaia IGT Toscana**, which is a 100% Pugnitello. The pugnitello grape is an indigenous grape variety in Tuscany, which is a sort of mix between Pinot Noir and Sangiovese. The grape bunch is quite small and the yield is fairly low, while the grape itself has a very thick skin and produces a wine with an intense violet color. The name Pugnitello probably derives from the fact that the grape bunch looks like a fist (pugno

in Italian means fist). This wine from Montemaggio is a very fruity wine with a buttery and smooth taste.

Visit the Winery

The winery is situated close to both Radda in Chianti and Panzano; so if you are passing through Tuscany and would like to visit a winery you can write or call them. On a sunny day, you will have a stunning view of the hills around Radda from the main building of the winery, while you sip on a glass of Chianti Classico red. They organize visits of their winery as well as wine tastings and lunches upon request. Even if you are not able to visit, you can find their wines on the website and order them directly.

Language revision by [Susie Holman](http://www.female-exec.com/s.html)



changing my career path by using my second degree in languages and becoming a freelance translator. My interest in wine has been running as a connective thought all through these years, leading me to become a sommelier.

My Wine Story

My interest in wine has always been there throughout my years in Italy, however it was only roughly 5 years ago that I decided to try out a sommelier course. I had seen an advertisement on Facebook about the local Fisar course in the center of Florence, and I thought it sounded very exciting. (Fisar is one of the Italian sommelier associations and they organize courses where you get accredited as a sommelier.) Therefore, I convinced a friend to come with me, even though she actually didn't drink much and still does not. This turned out to be one of the best ideas I have had in recent years, as it brought us to discover a new and fascinating world of oenology, wine history, wine tastings, and much more. It all led us to continue the course, attending all three levels in one sweep. For about three years now, I have been a sommelier and it is a genuinely fulfilling passion where you learn something new and meet interesting people

told me that he, apart from Europe, now exports to New York, Oregon and Los Angeles in the US, as well as to Japan.

Language revision by [Susie Holman](http://www.female-exec.com/s.html)

From Sweden to Chianti

From a small town in southern Sweden to the heart of Chianti and Florence in Italy, my journey started in Ystad, which used to be known as a smugglers nest during the Hanseatic Era, while today it is the place where the police inspector Wallander solves crimes. It is an idyllic small town by the seaside. My journey thus started in Sweden, bringing me to Florence a bit more than 15 years ago to do a Ph.D in history at the research institute of the European Union. After receiving my Ph.D. and teaching Modern History at the university for a couple of years, I decided to stay in Florence,

in the Italian wine world almost every day. Fresh as a sommelier, I started elaborating my idea about combining wine and translation. Together with some fellow sommeliers from Fisar and a British translator colleague, we developed the concept **Words & Wine**. This one-day seminar on wine terminology in Italian and English was held in Florence nearly 3 years ago. I continued to develop this wine and terminology concept to better fit a translator-





dominated audience together with a couple of translator colleagues, changing the course name to **Words at the Winery**. The first of these seminars was held at the wine estate Il Borro (near Arezzo) in June 2014. In the autumn of 2014, we organized another **Words at the Winery** seminar at the winery Feudi di San Gregorio, near Avelino. During last year, I held smaller informal mini-courses about wine in Tuscany and a wine tasting every now and then together with my fellow sommelier, Nadia Padrin, and for Fisar Firenze. At the moment, I am working on putting together a new seminar on wine terminology in English for translators and people in the wine and tourism sector.

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