



Arlequin One-Bottle Club

June 2018

Gianni Brunelli Le Chiuse di Sotto Brunello di Montalcino 2012

Tuscany, Italy

Varietal: 100% Brunello (a local clone of Sangiovese)

Winemaker Gianni Brunelli, a man of many interests, established the acclaimed *Osteria Le Logge* (one of Siena's top restaurants) in 1977. In 1987, he fulfilled a long-cherished dream of returning to Montalcino, where he grew up, and purchasing the family estate his father Dino had been forced to sell. Called 'Le Chiuse di Sotto,' the idyllic farm is home to two acres of Sanigovese Grosso, as well as two acres of olive groves, and sits at an elevation of 650 feet above sea level in Montalcino's northeast corner. After Gianni passed away in 2008, his wife Laura and her brother Adriano assumed the reins of the estate and purchased the 'Podernovone' vineyard, a 10 acre property with magnificent views of Monte Amiata, located further south in Montalcino. Podernovone is a warmer site, with soils composed of light-and-heat-reflecting calcareous marl and schist. Paolo Vagaggini, one of Tuscany's leading Sangiovese experts, is the winemaker.

Vintage The 2012 vintage in Brunello is replete with wines we love. As critic James Suckling notes, the wines show "beautiful aromas, vibrant fruit, lively acidity and ultra-fine tannins. These Sangioveses are much more precise and finer than the bolder and riper 2011s. They have more in common with the legendary 2010 vintage and are most like the 2004s, a harmonious and gorgeous year for Brunellos."

Vineyard The Brunelli family's two distinctive vineyards allow them to source from a colder northerly site and a warmer

terroir in Montalcino's southern end. 'Le Chiuse de Sotto' the Brunelli's original 5 acre plot, is cool and airy, yielding high-toned fruit that brings brightness and freshness to this wine, while Poldernovone adds richness and fruity depth. According to Laura Brunelli, the estate has been farmed organically since the beginning. The family replanted most of the estate in 1989, but left untouched a small, precious plot of older vines dating back to Gianni's father's original 1947 plantings. As an alternative to pesticides, natural methods of pest control are used. In late July, a green harvest of unripe fruit is performed, in order to drastically limit yields to just 7 or 8 bunches of grapes per vine. This step concentrates flavors and sugars in the remaining fruit and helps encourage ripening. The vineyards are worked manually throughout the growing cycle – each hectare of vines (about 2.4 acres) requires over 400 hours of painstaking hand work.

Winemaking Following harvest, the grapes from each vineyard site are fermented and aged separately. They spend 24-30 months in Slavonian oak casks, and are not blended until just prior to bottling, enabling Brunelli wines to achieve wonderful balance, regardless of the challenges specific vintages may present. Selected yeasts are used for fermentation; malolactic occurs naturally.

Tasting Notes There's a plummy rich heart to this Brunello that makes this wine immediately appealing. Aromas of blackberry and plums have a savory edge reminiscent of leather and spice – notes that are echoed and amplified across the medium-bodied palate. The warm, dry growing season shows in this wine's dark plummy depth.

Food Pairing Take a cue from Tuscans' fondness for beef, and serve this meaty red with thick-cut steak topped simply with sliced tomatoes, and a shower of arugula dressed only with olive oil and salt and pepper. Alternatively, lamb burger skewers will play well against the wine's ripe fruit.