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Vintage	Wines	RP
2009	Petrolo Galatrona	98
2013	Petrolo Galatrona	97+
2004	Petrolo Galatrona	97
2004	Il Borro	95
2013	Il Borro	95

Valdarno di Sopra (also written Val d'Arno di Sopra) is one of the four historic wine regions in Tuscany that just closed celebrations marking its 300th birthday as an official wine region. On September 24, 1716, the Grand Duke of Tuscany Cosimo III de' Medici signed a decree that established the geographic boundaries for Chianti (today identified as Chianti Classico), Pomino/Chianti Rufina, Carmignano and Valdarno di Sopra. As a way of celebrating this important anniversary, I have written separate articles for each of the four appellations. Three of these have already been published, and this article on Valdarno di Sopra is the last of the series.

If you would like to read my coverage on the other regions, check out my Chianti Classico Part One and Part Two, Chianti Rufina and Carmignano articles.

Of these four appellations, Valdarno di Sopra is perhaps the least known. It is for sure the smallest if measured by the number of active producers. I have identified just four producers to highlight from the region (and there aren't many more than these): the Ferragamo family's Il Borro, the dynamic estate Il Carnasciale (with its own grape variety called Caberlot), Luca Sanjust's Petrolo that makes a world-class Merlot called Galatrona, and Tenuta Sette Ponti owned by yet another important Italian wine protagonist Antonio Moretti. As you will see from my reviews, I also focused my efforts on back vintages. Included in my coverage are retrospectives of Il Borro's top wine Il Borro (a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Petit Verdot) as well as Petrolo's Galatrona going back to the excellent 1997 vintage.



Ravioli stuffed with smoked ricotta and topped with butter and sage make a delightful pairing partner to Il Carnasciale's Cabernet Franc and Merlot biotype Caberlot.

Valdarno di Sopra may be tiny in terms of its producer population, but its physical geographic area is not much smaller than Chianti Classico. It covers much of Arezzo province and in fact, the wine region was previously grouped under the amorphous generic term "Chianti." It was later identified as the Chianti sub-zone "Colli Aretini." Only in 2011 did the region regain its official geographic-specific name along with its own DOC status.



The 1997, 2004 and 2009 vintages are a few standouts in a retrospective of the all-Merlot wine Galatrona.

Valdarno di Sopra occupies the Western and Eastern slopes of the Arno River Valley between Arezzo and the Colli Fiorentini south of Florence. The Apennine foothills with sloping hills and valleys characterize the region. Soil profiles are similar to what you find in the neighboring Chianti Classico region. This includes sandstone with marl and quartz. Average temperatures are a few degrees warmer than Chianti Classico and fruit ripens faster in Valdarno di Sopra. The region's vineyards see an important component of international grapes Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. But it is also home to a thriving indigenous grape population with Sangiovese (once called Vermiglio), Pugnello, Foglia Tonda and Malvasia. The white grape Trebbiano enjoys a long history here as a base for Vin Santo sweet wines. Valdarno has been a prolific grape grower since the 1700s, and the Arno River provided the transportation necessary to make Valdarno an economic hub for wine trade and commerce. Today, Valdarno di Sopra is on the cusp of becoming an all-organic-farming appellation.

A brief vintage report for Valdarno di Sopra mirrors Chianti Classico and the other main grape-growing regions of central Italy. The 2016 vintage is shaping up to be an iconic year and 2015 was almost as good, albeit slightly hotter. The 2013 vintage is excellent thanks to cooler temperatures and bright sunlight throughout summer, and 2012 saw heat accumulate into severe spikes at the height of summer. This caused accelerated ripening. Luca Sanjust says the difficult 2014 vintage was "perfect for making amphorae wines," because quantities were so small. Fruit selection was severe in 2014 as much was lost to wet and chilly weather. At Petrolo, the 2014 harvest produced half as much fruit and farming costs were twice as expensive. This unfortunate math is similar across the major vineyards in Valdarno di Sopra.



Hair-raising wines? Luca Sanjust is caught in an electrical storm at the summit of the ancient Galatrona Tower that looks over the entire farm and vineyard at Petrolo.