

Bolgheri 2010 & 2011

Super Tuscans seem to have been fashionable forever, but 85% of vineyards in this region were only planted 15 years ago. Richard Baudains looks at the rise of Bolgheri

IN THE BEGINNING there was Sassicaia, conceived by the Marchese Incisa della Rocchetta and crafted by Giacomo Tachis, which burst onto the international scene in the late 1970s. (Its first published review outside Italy, incidentally, was a *Decanter* scoop of 1978). Then there was Ludovico Antinori's Ornellaia, whose first wines came out in 1984. A handful of other estates were founded through the 1980s, the most prominent being Grattamacco, Le Macchiole and Michele Satta, but in terms of winemaking, not much else happened for the next 10 years. A Bolgheri DOC was created in 1983, but it was for white and rosé wines destined principally for the tourists of the nearby seaside resorts.

The potential of the area for red wines was largely under-exploited until, stimulated by the DOC for Bolgheri Rosso and Rosso Superiore of 1994, the first investments from outside the region began to trickle in. Among the first on the scene were foreign entrepreneurs like Knauf, followed by big Italian producers looking to extend their portfolios, such as Allegri, Berlucchi, Folonari and Gaja; recently there has been an increase in the number of small-scale producers with local origins. Initial growth was slow, but since the turn of the century it has taken off. Between 2005 and 2009 production rose by 53%. Roughly 85% of the current area under vine in the DOC has been planted since 1998. In the last 15 years Bolgheri has grown from being the source of a handful of elite Super Tuscans to a thriving production area in its own right, with a distinctive identity.

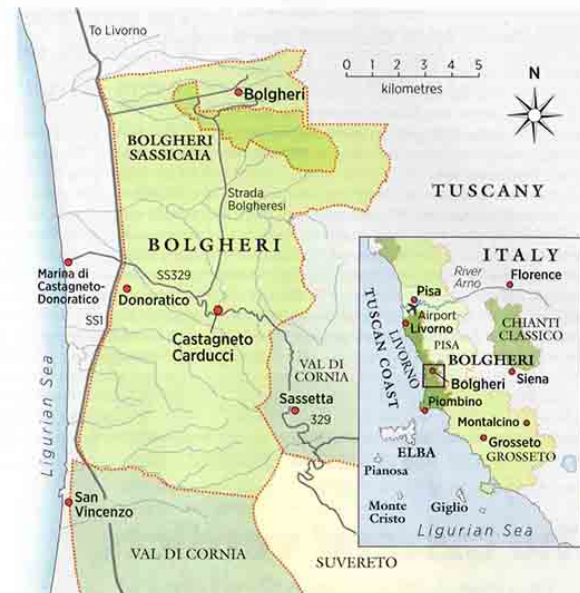
The coastal region has considerable climatic advantages over the traditional production areas of the central hills. It is more temperate, so generally escapes the worst effects of the frequent hot summers, but at the same time the lower and better distributed rainfall saves it in wet vintages. Soils are extremely varied, ranging from stony through mixed composition clay to almost pure sand, and elevations go from 350m to sea level along the coastal strip. A recent study found no fewer than 27 distinct terroirs in the DOC.

Varietals and blends

Bolgheri means Cabernet, which currently occupies 45% of the vineyard area. Merlot accounts for 24% of plantings while Cabernet Franc (admired by producers and on the increase), Syrah and Petit Verdot all weigh in with around 7%. The amount of Sangiovese grown is negligible. In part this is due to the unsuitability of many of the soils, but even where it could be planted, Sangiovese is the odd man out in a DOC inspired by the original Super Tuscans and by now associated exclusively with international varieties. The 1994 DOC norms imposed multivarietal blends. A rewrite of the regulations in 2011 introduced the added option of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc or Merlot. Virtually the entire production now comes under the DOC.

The handicap in the early part of the Bolgheri boom was vine age (rather, youth), reflected in often stereotyped expressions of the classic Bordeaux blend, but as vineyards mature the wines are gaining in personality and depth. These are the features that you would expect to see emerging in a tasting of the current releases of 2010 and 2011 - vintages with very different histories (see box right).

Richard Baudains is a DWWA Regional co-Chair for Italy



Bolgheri: know your vintages

(drinking times refer to Superiore)

- 2011** Rich wines with soft tannins from a potentially outstanding vintage. Keep.
- 2010** Cool, rain-affected vintage. Uneven but the best wines have elegant fruit and aroma. Drink or keep.
- 2009** Hot vintage. Merlot picked early with possibly low acidity. Later varieties helped by September rain. Full bodied. Needs time.
- 2008** Rainy spring, long warm summer. Fresh acidity and more aroma than structure. Starting to drink now.
- 2007** Hot vintage, picked early in perfect conditions. Soft wines with lovely fruit. Drinking now but worth keeping.
- 2006** Powerful, concentrated wines, but not always balanced. Tannins often still very rigid. Drink or keep.
- 2005** Warm summer, rainy September. Protracted harvest with lots of selection needed. The best wines have attractive fruit and balance. Drink.

Bolgheri: the facts

Location commune of Castagneto Carducci, in the province of Livorno
Vineyard area 1,154 ha/43,270 hl (2009)
Registered producers 41
Grape varieties These can be 100% varietals or together in a blend: Cabernet Sauvignon,

Merlot, Cabernet Franc (0-100%), Syrah, Sangiovese (0-50%) complementary varieties (max 30%)
Ageing of Bolgheri minimum 12 months
Ageing of Bolgheri Superiore minimum 24 months (including 12 months in wood) >

DECANTER RECOMMENDED BOLGHERI WINES

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 UK: Looking for importer.
 Contact T. +39 3279892232

Vinitaly: Hall 9 / C12 (Consorzio Vini Bolgheri)

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The results

Our experts found much to like in this tasting, praising the vibrancy and freshness of the wines, especially those from 2010. Buy them and don't be afraid to drink them young, they told Amy Wislocki

PRICEY, BLOCKBUSTER, INTERNATIONAL – these may be among the descriptors that spring to mind when you think about Bolgheri reds. Certainly you are largely looking at international grapes here, and many wines will be more expensive than your average Chilean Cabernet, but these wines may just surprise you, if the comments of our tasters are anything to go by. They were full of enthusiasm, for both the basic ('normale') and superiore wines – in particular, for the sheer enjoyability factor.

'The best examples had a degree of freshness, and a juicy, ripe quality of fruit,' said Michael Garner. 'And they were so drinkable now – they could develop greater complexity with age, but you may then lose the vibrancy which is such an exciting aspect of the DOC.' Emily O'Hare was equally positive about the wines' food-friendly structure: 'From the get-go the wines had the warmth that you associate with Tuscan reds, but weren't at all concentrated, thick or syrupy.'

This innate Italian character also surprised O'Hare – 'so much less international in taste than I expected' – adding that the wines are popular with restaurant diners, who are comforted by the familiar French grape varieties.

'The best examples had a degree of freshness, and a juicy, ripe quality of fruit' Michael Garner

The grapes may be French but the blends are anything but, said Garner. 'It's a strange denomination, and reminds me more of the New World than Old World. To pull Merlot and Syrah together in one cuvée seems like an un-Italian thing to do, but I guess it's an area with a fairly recent history so they're still finding their way forward. And are doing a good job – on the whole standards are very high.'

So which blends found most favour? Syrah with Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon seemed to split the tasters. O'Hare enjoyed the Syrah, where it shone through – 'really good, exuberant and with lovely spice and red fruit' – while Garner was fairly equivocal ('very decent, well made'), reserving more praise for wines with a portion of Sangiovese or Cabernet Franc. D'Agata was firmly in favour of Cabernet Franc: 'Bolgheri is the single best area in Italy for Cab Franc, and one of the most remarkable terroirs for it. Syrah adds a

The scores

49 wines tasted

1
Outstanding
16
Highly recommended
32
Recommended
0
Fair
0
Poor
0
Faulty

different dimension, but the truly great wines are with Cab Franc – it adds a noble, cocoa note that Merlot can't give, especially in that climate. Most of the Merlot-Cab Franc blends have an intense violet note and a white pepper, aromatic note that Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot don't give.'

By contrast, D'Agata was fairly dismissive of Sangiovese in blends: 'It's not the right climate for it here; it doesn't do it. The few people who do have the right terroir for it use it to great effect – we had one wine that was made great by its 15% Sangiovese, which was floral and beautiful – but most in Bolgheri will go the Cab Franc route because they don't have the soil for Sangiovese.'

Tasters enjoyed both the normale and superiore wines, with no complaints about over-oaking in the latter. 'The distinction actually means something here,' said D'Agata. 'Some try too hard, but when you get a good one, it's clearly much better than the basic level. They've obviously worked hard to make that happen.'

But it was for 2010 that most praise was reserved: 'It was a very late-ripening vintage, and the grapes had lots of hang time, so could develop ripe fruit flavours and great complexity,' explained D'Agata. 'They have no trouble here getting ripe fruit and in-your-face flavour – but in 2010 it's combined with balanced acidity and freshness. 2011 has charm and ripe, creamy fruit, but lacks the same vibrancy and florality.'

Entry criteria: producers and UK agent were invited to submit either or both 2010 and 2011 vintages of Bolgheri and Bolgheri Superiore.

Outstanding 18.5–20pts (95–100pts)



Tenuta San Guido, Sassicaia, Bolgheri Sassicaia 2010 Decanter average score: 18.5/20pts (95/100pts) Individual judges' scores: Ian D'Agata 18.5 Michael Garner 18.5 Emily O'Hare 18.5

£114.40-£150 Armit Wines, Justerini & Brooks, Millésima, Secret Cellar, Swig, Oxford Wine Co, Private Cellar

There is very little left to say about this extraordinary wine except to continue to extol its proverbial elegance and amazing consistency. Year in, year out Sassicaia captures the character of the vintage in all its positive aspects while avoiding the attendant pitfalls. It can be delicate without losing structure and ripe without losing freshness, all the while maintaining its own unmistakable style. Winemaker and *eminence grise* of Sassicaia, Giacomo Tachis retired in 2010, his place taken by Graziana Grassini, with no perceptible change in style or quality. If there is anything new to add, it is the impression that in recent vintages, without losing any of its prodigious longevity, it has become a hint more approachable in its youth.

Ian D'Agata Extremely aromatic notes of red berries, sour red cherries, violet, white pepper and fresh herbs. Finishes very bright and fresh.

Michael Garner Scented berry fruit nose with good freshness. Ripe and full with fleshy fruit flavour and a hint of butterscotch. Good balance and length.

Emily O'Hare Memories of Côte-Rotie. This is supremely pretty, with lots of character and depth of flavour.

Drink 2015–2026 Alcohol 13.5%

Highly Recommended 17–18.25pts (90–94pts)



Ceralti, Alfeo, Bolgheri Superiore 2010 18.25 (94) IDA 18.5 MG 18.5 EOH 18.5

£35 Tuscanic

Fleshy and ripe with full berry fruit aromas. A very pure and lively wine. Lots of crunchy red berries, violets, sweet spices and a refined leafy nuance at the back. Balanced tannins and good length. Drink 2014–2020 Alc 14.5%



Collemassari, Grattamacco, Bolgheri Superiore 2010 18.25 (94) IDA 18.5 MG 18.5 EOH 18

£41 Decorum Vintners, Millésima, Uncorked

Very pretty Sangiovese florality and freshness to lift the rich aromas and flavours. Full, ripe and fleshy with forward, bramble fruit flavours. Great wine, with above-average clarity and cut.

Drink 2015–2020 Alc 14% >

The tasters' verdicts

Ian D'Agata



The Comitato Grandi Crus d'Italia named D'Agata Italy's best wine journalist in 2012. He is a DWWA Regional co-Chair for Italy, writes on the wines of Italy, Canada and Bordeaux for Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, and is author of The Ecco Guide to the Best Wines of Italy and Guide to Excellence in Italian Wines. D'Agata is also co-director of Rome International Wine School and lectures on Italian food and wine cultural history for New York University's Food Sciences Master's program. Prior to his wine career, he graduated in paediatric gastroenterology and nutrition.

D'Agata's verdict

'Overall, a great tasting. There were many very good to outstanding wines – not just the Bolgheri Superiore, that are often too oaky when young, but many basic Bolgheris of infinite charm. The latter category shows just how much winemaking has improved in the area, but also the importance of increasingly older vineyards (in what is an essentially very young wine production zone). A tasting of Bolgheri only five or seven years ago would have failed to show so many wonderful wines.'

'Clearly, the 2010 vintage is an outstanding one, with some of the better Bolgheris ever made, but the 2011s were also very impressive, with lots of fruity charm. Cabernet Franc confirms itself as a trump card here as it makes the difference in most wines, adding aromatic notes of violet, white pepper and cocoa that are very different than those of Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon. Outside of Pomerol and St-Emilion, it's rare to taste Cabernet Franc wines of such potential.'

Michael Garner



Garner has worked in the wine business for more than 30 years and has specialised in Italian wine for nearly 25 years. He is co-author of Barolo: Tar and Roses, is a regular contributor to Decanter and has taught for the WSET.

Garner's verdict

'My expectations for this tasting were not that high: I tend to favour native Italian varieties over international ones, and the last Decanter tasting of wines from this area

left me distinctly underwhelmed. However, I loved this one! When the wines are as good as this, such considerations seem narrow-minded.'

'As this is a denomination which seeks to elevate the importance of terroir by allowing a flexible mix of the prescribed grape varieties, the often highly individual blends can seem a little confusing; nonetheless the vibrancy, freshness and charm of the best examples was a sheer delight, and these are the qualities which sets Bolgheri apart. The presence of Cabernet Franc or, occasionally, Sangiovese in among Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah came as a welcome variation too.'

'In general I preferred the 2010 wines for their breadth of aroma and balance though there were plenty of good examples from 2011 as well. I was also surprised by just how good some of the basic Bolgheri DOC (ie non-superiore) wines were, and apart from one or two showstoppers in the superiore category there was not a great deal to choose between the two in terms of their ability to deliver sheer enjoyment and, probably, value for money.'

Emily O'Hare



O'Hare is head sommelier and wine buyer at London's The River Café, where she has worked for five years. She also writes about Italian wine and sits on judging panels for Decanter and the DWWA. In her spare time she runs a women's tasting group, Women, Know Your Wine! and a wine-focused pop-up restaurant, Whizzbangpop.com.

O'Hare's verdict

'From what I have read, 2010 was an inconsistent, difficult vintage, with heat spikes in summer and rain in the autumn. 2011 is said to be a great vintage for Bolgheri, however that is not reflected in my tasting notes. The wines we tasted from 2011 rarely tipped over 17/20 points for me. I found some wines rather sedentary. They lacked vigour, and lost shape by the time they hit the back of the mouth. The 2010s, however, rarely dipped beneath 17 points. They were delicious! Truly enjoyable wines.'

'Being obsessed with Italy's native grapes, I used to be a bit anti-Bolgheri but the 2010 vintage has claimed me as a fan. The wines were acrobatic: perfumed and pretty on the nose and meaty and savoury on the palate – luxurious, rich and rewardingly refreshing.'

'Oddly, I wasn't thinking so much about Bordeaux, a tempting comparison, but about the northern Rhône – that floral lift on the nose, the compact, dark fruit flavours and tannins. Most of these wines will benefit from time in the cellar, there are a couple that I could drink now, and one in particular that I'd like to drink every day of my life.'

Highly Recommended (continued) 17-18.25pts (90-94pts)



Tenuta San Guido, Sassicaia, Bolgheri Sassicaia 2011 18 (93) IDA 18.25 MG 18 EOH 17.5

POA Armit Wines, Millésima, Secret Cellar, Swig
Pristine aromas and flavours of cassis, violet, cedar and minty aromatic herbs. Round and ripe with some freshness of acidity. Interesting breadth of flavour. Fleshy, ripe and very good. Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13.5%



Gaja, Ca' Marcanda, Bolgheri 2010 17.5 (91) IDA 17.25 MG 18 EOH 17

£69.99 Hedonism, Secret Cellar, Wholefoods
Aromas of coffee and chocolate and hints of garrigue. Ripe, round and juicy with plenty of fleshy, sweet fruit though balanced by decent acidity. Perfumed finish. Very good. Drink 2015-2026 Alc 14%



I Greppi, Greppicante, Bolgheri 2011 17.5 (91) IDA 17.75 MG 17 EOH 17.5

£15.95 Swig
Purple flowers such as violet and lavender with savoury red berry and vanilla nuances. Balanced and long, with fair concentration of ripe fruit flavours. Haunting aromas of chocolate and plum. Drink 2014-2018 Alc 13.5%



Le Grascete, Bolgheri Superiore 2011 17.5 (91) IDA 17.75 MG 16.5 EOH 18

N/A UK www.legrascete.com
Captivating aromas of small, dark berries, violet, red cherry jam and sweet spices. Quite complete on the palate, which is full of dried tobacco and fresh plum flavours. This is fleshy, spicy and needs time. Drink 2014-2018 Alc 15%

'Bolgheri is the single best area in Italy for Cab Franc, and one of the most remarkable terroirs for it' Ian D'Agata



Le Macchiole, Bolgheri 2010 17.5 (91) IDA 17.25 MG 17 EOH 18

£16.95-£18.95 Lea & Sandeman, Millésima, Vini Italiani
Fresh and vibrant aromas of red berries, aromatic herbs and orange peel. Bright and fresh on the palate with fair length. Very good overall. Drink 2014-2020 Alc 14%



Mulini di Segalari, Ai Confini del Bosco, Bolgheri 2010 17.5 (91) IDA 17 MG 17 EOH 18.5

N/A UK www.mulinidisegalari.it
Perfumed nose of fresh fruit and flowers; quite high-toned. This wine is different; fragrant and fresh, lively and clean. Good length and aroma. Very correct. Drink 2014-2022 Alc 13%



Cipriana, Scopaio, Bolgheri 2010 17.25 (90+) IDA 16.5 MG 18 EOH 17

N/A UK +39 (0)5 65 77 55 68
Round and ripe with forward, blue and bramble fruit aromas. Fleshy with good depth of juicy berry flavours and a great spice character. Lovely balance and length. Drink 2014-2020 Alc 13%



Ornellaia, Bolgheri Superiore 2011 17.25 (90+) IDA 17.25 MG 17.5 EOH 17.25

POA Armit Wines, Secret Cellar, Oxford Wine Co
Big, ripe and burly: sweet bramble fruits with notes of molasses and chocolate. Full and very ripe with solid tannins; a real taste of Maremma. Drink 2014-2017 Alc 14.5%



Poggio al Tesoro, Sondraia, Bolgheri Superiore 2010 17.25 (90+) IDA 17.5 MG 17.5 EOH 16.5

£31.99 Carruthers & Kent, D Byrne & Co, HarperWells, Harrods, Hedonism, The Good Wine Shop, Toscanaccio, Vallebona, Waples Wines, Wined Up Here
Blackberry, liquorice and cedar nose. Sweet spice, cherry cola flavours and smooth tannins. A crowd pleaser. Drink 2015-2018 Alc 14.5%



Serni Fulvio Luigi, Acciderba, Bolgheri 2010 17.25 (90+) IDA 16.75 MG 17.5 EOH 17.5

£20 GIDA
Big, rich and dense but with lively acidity that lifts the ripe red fruit aromas and flavours. This has masses of fleshy berry fruit flavours with charcoal and gunpowder nuances. Drink 2015-2028 Alc 14%



Banfi, Aska, Bolgheri 2011 17 (90) IDA 17.25 MG 17.5 EOH 16.5

£50 Bibendum
Mint and menthol complement blueberry and cassis on the floral nose. Big, round and juicy with good aromas of blue and black berries with some spicy overtones. Lively on the long, juicy finish. Drink 2015-2018 Alc 14.5%

Highly Recommended (continued) 17-18.25pts (90-94pts)



Campo alla Sughera, Arnione, Bolgheri Superiore 2010 17 (90) IDA 17 MG 16 EOH 18

£22.70-£25.95 (2007) Mondial Wine, Winedirect
Big, dense and suave. Ripe and chocolatey with pretty coffee and herbal notes with complicating hints of strawberry jam. This has a Côte-Rotie vibe: cool and pretty. Drink 2015-2017 Alc 14%



Cipriana, San Martino, Bolgheri Superiore 2010 17 (90) IDA 16.25 MG 18 EOH 17

N/A UK +39 (0)5 65 77 55 68
Scented and ripe with notes of coffee and butterscotch. Balanced palate with broad, ripe berry fruit flavours and decent oak integration. Drink 2016-2022 Alc 13.5%



Mulini di Segalari, Bolgheri Superiore 2010 17 (90) IDA 17 MG 16 EOH 18

£16 www.mulinidisegalari.it
Almost pungently floral with bright red berry fruit and oriental spices. Ripe, full and fleshy with decent berry fruit aromas. This has freshness and vibrancy. Drink 2014-2020 Alc 13%

Recommended 15-16.75pts (83-89pts)

Wine	Score	IDA	MG	EOH	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Batzella, Pean, Bolgheri 2010	16.75 (89)	17	16	17	Accessible nose of blue and black berry fruits. Cedar and graphite from the Cabernet Sauvignon, cocoa from the Cabernet Franc and the violet of both.	13%	2014-2019	N/A UK	www.batzella.com
Caccia al Piano 1868, Ruit Hora, Bolgheri 2010	16.75 (89)	16.5	16	17.5	Cedar and sweet dried fruit tones, though maybe a little too much oak. Fresh fruit and firm tannins; delightfully drinkable.	14%	2014-2020	£20.95 (2009)	Mad About Wine, My Wine Lifestyle
Campo alla Sughera, Ado, Bolgheri 2011	16.75 (89)	16.75	16.5	17	Bell pepper on the nose, then smoother on the palate with hints of coffee and cocoa to complement the blackberry and cassis flavours.	14%	2015-2018	£13.70 (2010)	Mondial Wine
Chiappini, Guado de' Gemoli, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	16.75 (89)	16.25	16	18	Full and hot with a hint of spice. Berry and bramble aromas. Good tannins and acidity.	15%	2014-2016	POA	Aubert & Mascoll
Collemassari, Bolgheri 2011	16.75 (89)	17.5	16.5	16	Ripe, fleshy and aromatic with aniseed tones. Bright, fresh and juicy palate with lovely balance and length.	13.5%	2015-2022	£18	Decorum Vintners, Uncorked
Donna Olimpia 1898, Bolgheri 2011	16.75 (89)	16.75	16.5	17	Sweet, ripe cherries and aniseed, with some freshness. Dense and juicy, with aromatic herbs and youthfully chewy tannins on the palate.	14.5%	2015-2018	N/A UK	www.donnaolimpia1898.it
I Greppi, Greppicala, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	16.75 (89)	17.5	15.5	17.5	Bright and fresh with lovely perfume and plenty of floral lift to the dark berry and chocolate flavours. Fresh and vibrant.	13.5%	2014-2014	N/A UK	www.fattoriaalvicolo.com
Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove dell'Ornellaia, Bolgheri 2011	16.75 (89)	16.5	16.5	17	Coffee, cocoa, balsamic herbs and a ton of oak. This is a smart, tailored red with a really big palate. Needs time to loosen up and stretch out.	14.5%	2015-2018	£39	Armit Wine, Secret Cellar
Chiappini, Ferrugini, Bolgheri 2011	16.5 (88)	17	16	16.75	Creamy, violet and custard nose. Round and soft with pretty fruit flavours: smooth yet tannic with very good balance.	14%	2014-2018	£15	Aubert & Mascoll
Collemassari, L'Alberello, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	16.5 (88)	17	16	16.75	Slightly inexpressive nose at first. Leaky red berries and cedar linger on the palate with lots of fresh acidity and chewy tannins.	14%	2014-2016	£30	Decorum Vintners, Uncorked
Fattoria Terre del Marchesato, Emilio Primo, Bolgheri 2011	16.5 (88)	17	16	16.75	Bright, suave and juicy with smooth tannins and balanced red and dark fruit flavours that last and last. Would work well with food.	13.5%	2015-2018	N/A UK	www.terredelmarchesato.com
Le Macchiole, Bolgheri 2011	16.5 (88)	16.75	16	16.5	Initially torrefacted nose opens to offer red cherry and raspberry syrup notes. Developed flavours of black fruits and liquorice. A little bottle age will help.	14%	2014-2018	£18.95-£16.95	Lea & Sandeman, Vini Italiani
Podere Sapalo, Volpato, Bolgheri 2011	16.5 (88)	17.25	15	17	Lots of coffee and cocoa but not over the top. Big full and fairly ripe but with grippy tannins and a clean finish.	14.5%	2014-2021	£24	Astrum
Serni Fulvio Luigi, Tegoleto, Bolgheri 2011	16.5 (88)	16.5	16.5	16.75	Soy sweetness and savouriness to the nose with notes of cassis and underbrush. Medium full, juicy and ripe with balanced fruit flavours.	13.5%	2014-2018	£15	GIDA
Tenute Guicciardini Strozzi, Odra, Bolgheri 2011	16.5 (88)	14.75	17	17.5	Super spicy and meaty on the nose and palate. Round, ripe and sweet with decent tannic structure and chewy black fruit flavours.	13.5%	2014-2018	POA	Colasanti
Aia Vecchia, Sor Ugo, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	16.25 (87)	17	15	17	Full, dense and sweet but with lively acidity lifting the very ripe, almost syrupy, red and dark fruit flavours.	15%	2014-2016	N/A UK	www.aiavecchiaborgheril.it
Castello di Bolgheri, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	16.25 (87)	16	16.5	16	Hot and slightly candied tones to full berry fruit aromas. Good balance and length. Finishes bright and fresh.	14.5%	2015-2018	£42	Huntsworth Wine
Castello di Bolgheri, Varvora, Bolgheri 2011	16.25 (87)	16.5	16	16.5	Boysenberry, mulberry and aromatic herbs with hints of tar, shoe polish and quinine. Full and round with juicy fruit flavours and fair flesh.	14.5%	2014-2020 (2009)	£24.45	Moveable Feast
Fabio Motta, Pievi, Bolgheri 2011	16.25 (87)	16.25	16.5	16	Red and dark fruits, herbs, quinine and balsamic spices. Full and juicy with very ripe tannins and some acidity. Chocolate and herbs to finish.	13.5%	2015-2018	£20	Bianca Wines
Le Grascete, Antero, Bolgheri Superiore 2011	16.25 (87)	17	17	15	Sweet spices, chocolate and aromatic herbs, cassis, kirsch and blackberry liqueur. Youthfully chewy on the long finish; a real palate flatterer.	15%	2015-2020	N/A UK	www.legrascete.com
Marchesi Antinori, Guado al Tasso, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	16.25 (87)	16.5	15	17	Big dense and powerful, with brooding dark fruit, cocoa and vanilla flavours. Structured, tight and stern. This needs time.	14%	2016-2018	£70-£80	Berkman, Millésima, Swig

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Recommended (continued) 15–16.75pts (83–89pts)

Wine	Score	IDA	MG	EOH	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Michele Satta, Piastrala, Bolgheri 2010	16.25 (87)	15.75	16	17	Sweet and ripe with notes of cedar and chocolate over perfumed blue fruit aromas. This is a well put together, good quality wine.	13.5%	2015–2020	£24	Sommelier's Choice
Michele Satta, Bolgheri 2011	16.25 (87)	16	17	16	Hot, sweet and ripe with cherry custard notes. Sweet and ripe with plum skin and cherry flavours.	13%	2014–2018	£20	Sommelier's Choice
Porfere Sapaio, Sapaio, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	16.25 (87)	16	15.5	17	Deep, dense and suave with youthful tannins supporting the herbal and aromatically spicy dark fruit and cedar flavours.	14.5%	2014–2016	£45	Astram
Chiappini, Felcaino, Bolgheri 2011	16 (86)	16.75	15.5	16	Big, juicy and dense. Perfumed red cherry and floral notes that last and last. Refined and very chocolatey tannins.	15%	2014–2022	£18	Aubert & Mascoll
Fornacelle, Guarda Boschi, Bolgheri Superiore 2011	16 (86)	16	15.5	16.5	Full and spicy with a touch of nutmeg. Big, round and quite full but lacks depth of flavour.	14.5%	2014–2014	N/A UK	www.fornacelle.it
Tenuta Argentiera, Argentiera, Bolgheri Superiore 2010	15.75 (85+)	15	15.5	16.5	Earthy and gamey on the nose with a hint of liquorice. Big and full with very ripe, but rather heavy, blue and black fruit flavours.	14%	2014–2016	£53	Eurowines
Tenuta Argentiera, Villa Donoratico, Bolgheri 2011	15.75 (85+)	16.5	15.5	15.5	Slightly trectley aromas and flavours of cassis and herbs. Full and forward with ripe fruits and round, fairly supple tannins.	14%	2015–2018	£25	Eurowines
Tenuta Argentiera, Poggio ai Ginepri, Bolgheri 2011	15.5 (85)	16	14.5	16	Perfumed nose of red berries and aromatic herbs, but a little hot with grainy tannins on the palate.	14%	2015–2018	£18	Eurowines
Tenuta Di Vaira, Bolgherese, Bolgheri Superiore 2011	15.5 (85)	16	15	15.5	Clean and fresh, juicy and aromatic. Finishes vibrant and peppery, but with alcoholic heat.	14.5%	2014–2018	N/A UK	www.tenutadivaira.com
Ambrogio & Giovanni Folanari, Campo al Mare, Bolgheri 2011	15.25 (84)	15.5	15	15	A big Merlot-dominated wine with coffee and cocoa complementing the black cherry and cassis aromas and flavours. Alcohol burn on the finish.	14.5%	2015–2018	N/A UK	www.tenutefolanari.com
Tenuta Di Vaira, Caccia al Palazzo, Bolgheri 2011	15 (83)	14.5	15.5	15	Quirky nose of green pepper and white lily with notes of lavender. Round and full with some rich and smoky fruit flavours.	14%	2015–2018	N/A UK	www.tenutadivaira.com

For full UK stockist details, see p102

Next month's panel tastings
Coonawarra & Margaret River
Cabernet and Mâcon 2012

My top three

Ian D'Agata

■ **Tenuta San Guido, Sassicaia, Bolgheri Sassicaia 2010** A simply outstanding wine with an extremely aromatic nose that screams Cabernet Franc. I remember tasting this from barrel with the Marchese Incisa della Rocchetta, Sassicaia's owner, on different occasions, and we always felt it had outstanding potential already when very young. **18.5/20 (95/100)** Drink 2015–2026

■ **Collemassari, Grattamarco, Bolgheri Sassicaia 2010** A little Sangiovese can go a long way in adding aromatics and freshness, provided you own vineyards in an area where it grows and expresses well (a rarity in Bolgheri). Grattamarco is delightfully fresh but powerful – a paragon of balance and refinement. **18.5 (95)** Drink 2015–2020

■ **Gaja, Ca' Marcanda, Bolgheri 2010** The wines from this estate have improved tremendously over the years. Their top wine is big, juicy and chewy, and reminds you of the Tuscan coast. This 2010 has an element of freshness and refinement that wasn't always there in past vintages. **17.25 (90+)** Drink 2015–2026

My top three

Michael Garner

■ **Tenuta San Guido, Sassicaia, Bolgheri Sassicaia 2011** While the 2010 took the main gong, I also loved the distinctive, very Mediterranean aromas of the 2011. Pundits often comment on the unique style of Sassicaia and that seductive and vibrant, aromatic intensity was clearly evident in both vintages here. **18/20 (93/100)** Drink 2015–2020

■ **Collemassari, Grattamarco, Bolgheri Superiore 2010** Another gloriously expansive wine in terms of fragrance, delivering a little more breadth and nuance than many of its peers. It also has a beautifully modulated palate: ripe and fleshy but harmonious and persistent too. **18.5 (95)** Drink 2015–2020

■ **Gaja, Ca' Marcanda, Bolgheri 2010** Such a stylish wine: quite oaky now, but with a deliciously fresh, attractively perfumed nose. The palate is similarly balanced: brisk acidity balances the sweet, fleshy fruit and the whole is wrapped in ripe, finely grained tannins. **18 (93)** Drink 2015–2026

My top three

Emily O'Hare

■ **Tenuta San Guido, Sassicaia, Bolgheri Sassicaia 2010** Entirely, utterly exquisite. I wrote: 'What the heck is this?' I thought it might have been a Côte-Rôtie ringer in our Italian tasting? One of the finest wines I've tasted in a while. I'd willingly drink this now, regardless of the benefits of cellaring, as everything is already in harmony. **18.5/20 (95/100)** Drink 2015–2026

■ **Le Macchiole, Bolgheri 2010** A blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Syrah. This wine has been criticised by some as 'lightweight', but I didn't find it so. The palate felt dark, luxurious and plush – the blackberry fruit character is so fresh. The Merlot really does look beautiful in this blend. **18 (93)** Drink 2014–2020

■ **I Greppi, Greppicante, Bolgheri 2011** Great value! I scored it high in both 2011 and 2010. All primary fruit, violets and lavender. The wines aren't overworked or convoluted, they are an innocent and vibrant expression of Bolgheri. **17.5 (91)** Drink 2014–2020

NB: the tasters' top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines' identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors

Expert summary: Richard Baudains

This results prove the progress being made in this Tuscan coast DOC, with wines of both precision and personality among the basic Bolgheris as well as superiore wines



Richard Baudains is a Decanter World Wine Awards Regional co-Chair for Italy and has written on Italian wine for *Decanter* since 1989

WITH ABOUT 80% of the producers in the DOC present, including all the big names and a good selection of smaller, lesser-known estates, this was a very representative tasting. The only top producers not in the frame were possibly Guado al Melo, Giorgio Meletti Cavallari, Santini and I Loughi.

The results are very positive and perhaps even exceed expectations of such a wide-ranging tasting of Bolgheri. The fact that every wine was recommended underlines the high standards of winemaking along the coast and is not in itself surprising. What is more remarkable is the number of wines in the Highly Recommended bracket. This is something that you would not necessarily have predicted even three or four years ago, and is testimony to the advances being made in the DOC. If there has been a criticism of Bolgheri in the past it is that the wines were meticulously crafted but often short of personality. That view looks to be up for revision.

Another significant point that emerges from the scores is that the gap between the two historic leaders – San Guido and Ornellaia – and the rest of the field is closing fast. A 0.25-point differential between Sassicaia 2010 and the next placed wines hardly represents a real quality divide.

Staying with the overview of the results, two points strike me. One is that although 2010 and 2011 are vintages of quite different character, there was no marked preference

for one or the other if you look at the results (despite a leaning towards 2010 in the post-tasting discussion), and basically the two ran neck and neck through the tasting. The other impressive thing is the performance of the basic wines. For most producers this is the entry-level wine, and they scored right up there with the superiore category. Given the very significant difference in price between the two, Bolgheri looks an excellent buy in these vintages.

As for individual estates, it is no surprise that the sheer class of Sassicaia took it first past the post, albeit by a very short head. The dark horse of the tasting is Alfeo from the organic producer Ceralti. There were great results for several new estates: Banfi's Aska 2011 is the first release of a wine made at a recently acquired 5ha property; Fabio Motta, who learned his craft from Michele Satta, made his first wine in 2010; and Mulini di Segalari is one of the new generation of producers turning their back on barriques in favour of terracotta urns and larger oak barrels. **11**

'The results perhaps even exceed expectations of such a wide-ranging tasting'

Vini Italiani is the proud distributor of Perla del Garda's wines in the UK, including the Lugana DOC 2012. This medium bodied white wine has a delicate flowery aroma with notes of pineapple, plum and sweet citrus: light and zesty on the palate but with the structure to go well with food. Come taste it along with Italian cold cuts and cheese specialities at Vini Italiani, the first and only wine bar and store entirely dedicated to Italian wine in London.

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