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WINE ENTHUSIAST

M A G A Z I N E



DELICIOUS
CABERNET!
I'D PAY TWICE
AS MUCH!

A 90 POINT
WINE FOR
\$12! WOW!

THESE ARE

CASTELLO VICCHIOMAGGIO

The beautifully restored castle of Vicchiomaggio once served as Florence's first line of defense against Sienese attackers. Now, the estate boasts holiday accommodations, a restaurant, olive groves and a winery. Current owner John Motta's Piedmontese father purchased the estate during the 1960s after selling his U.K.-based wine import business.

Of Vicchiomaggio's 152 hectares, only 33 are planted to vines—mostly Sangiovese with smaller amounts of Canaiolo, Colorino and Cabernet Sauvignon. The wines themselves include elements of tradition (hand-picking; large oak vessels for aging and only indigenous grapes in the classic Chiantis) and innovation (barrique and Cabernet Sauvignon in the "modern-style" wines).

In addition to the wines from Vicchiomaggio, Motta has a new wine project in the Maremma consisting of 20 hectares in the Morellino di Scansano DOC, but it is too new for us to comment on the quality of the wines from his Tenuta Vallemaggiore. Motta recently visited *Wine Enthusiast's* Westchester, New York offices to pour us his latest releases.

90 Vicchiomaggio 2000 La Prima Riserva (Chianti Classico); \$35. Our unanimous favorite of the tasting, La Prima comes from the oldest vines on the property, and is a blend of 90% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo and 5% Colorino aged in barriques. Dark color, with black plums and hints of violets on the nose, the oak is understated, allowing the blackberry, plum and floral notes to shine through. Finishes rich, chewy and long.

89 Vicchiomaggio 2000 Petri Riserva (Chianti Classico); \$27. Petri spends part of its maturation in barriques and part in larger oak to help preserve its fruit. The aromas are not particularly fruity, boasting tobacco and earth alongside dried herbs and mocha, but the palate shows dark fruit flavors and a bright beam of acidity before finishing with echoes of earth and tea.

89 Vicchiomaggio 2000 Ripa delle More (Toscana IGT); \$NA. From the "little hill of blackberries," this is Vicchiomaggio's top modern wine, a blend of 90% Sangiovese and

10% Cabernet Sauvignon that stays in barrique for 18-24 months before bottling. It's toasty as a result, but also laden with blackberries and plums, then strikes a brighter, cranberryish note on the finish. Try in 2006, when the oak should be more integrated and the tannins more supple.

87 Vicchiomaggio 2001 San Jacopo da Vicchiomaggio (Chianti Classico); \$18. Traditional Chianti, with no small oak aging and no Cabernet or Merlot. Leathery, with dried cherry aromas and a hint of tobacco on the nose, then shows bright, focused fruit flavors on the palate. Finishes with bass notes of dark chocolate and earth.

86 Vicchiomaggio 2000 Ripa delle Mandorle (Toscana IGT); \$20. Named for the little hill's almond trees, this modestly priced super Tuscan is a blend of 80% Sangiovese and 20% barrique-aged Cabernet Sauvignon. The Sangiovese provides black cherry and tobacco flavors, while the Cab contributes toasty, buttery oak and herbal notes. Drink now and over the next several years.

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