

Super Tuscans

LANGE BOOT MAKER TURNS TO ITALIAN WINEMAKING

BY ERICA DUECY



Photo: Jonathan Selkowitz



CLOCKWISE

1. Julia Mancuso in Lange boots calibrated by Roberto Cristoforetti.
2. Cristoforetti (center) with Alberto Tomba (left) and Marc Girardelli.
3. Lange boots in action.

At first glance, making wine and crafting competition ski boots may not seem like related endeavors. But spend a few minutes with renowned Italian boot maker Roberto Cristoforetti, and the parallels quickly become clear. “Each requires the same degree of precision and attention to miniscule

detail,” he says, plus a willingness to take chances and follow one’s instincts.

For more than 30 years, Cristoforetti has traveled with the World Cup Ski Tour, calibrating custom boots for ski racers there and at the Winter Olympics. A remarkable 69 Olympic medals have been won in boots Cristoforetti has designed on behalf of Rossignol

and Lange for the likes of Picabo Street, Julia Mancuso, and Alberto Tomba.

The wine connection? All of that travel—especially with avid wine enthusiast Tomba—stoked a vinous passion that eventually led Cristoforetti to the hills of Tuscany, where he now makes Pervale and L’Urlo, Super Tuscan wines.

THE ITALIAN PARADOX

Winemakers tend to be a passionate lot, but Super Tuscan producers like Cristoforetti are maverick innovators, bucking tradition in the pursuit of the perfect wine. They operate on the fringe of Italy's wine laws, accepting inferior designations in exchange for loose regulations.

The result is that some of Tuscany's most prestigious (and expensive) wines are classified as the pedestrian *Indicazione Geografica Tipica* (IGT) instead of the elevated *Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita* (DOCG). The IGT tradeoff means that winemakers are free to use international varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, along with modern winemaking practices.

These icon wines, like the world-renowned Sassicaia and Ornellaia, can run hundreds of dollars a bottle. But there's also a sweet spot of lush Sangiovese and Bordeaux blends, like Ornellaia's second label Le Serre Nuove, that run in the \$40 to \$100 range.



Tignanello 2009



L'Urlo 2010



Pervale 2009

SUPER TUSCAN PRODUCERS LIKE CRISTOFORETTI ARE MAVERICK INNOVATORS, BUCKING TRADITION IN PURSUIT OF THE PERFECT WINE.



Il Carbonaione 2009



I Sodi di San Niccolo 2007



Corbaia 2008

EARLY TUSCAN INNOVATORS

As far back as the 1970s, pioneering Tuscan winemakers realized that traditional varietals like Sangiovese weren't performing well in the hottest parts of the region. So they started experimenting.

Tignanello was one of the first Super Tuscan wines, a blend by 26th-generation winemaker Piero Antinori, who had traveled in France and fallen for Bordeaux wines. In 1971, Antinori started blending Sangiovese with grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. "It helped start the renaissance of Italian wine, the shift from quantity to quality," says Alessia Antinori, Piero's daughter, who now runs the company with her sisters.

Lamberto Frescobaldi, from another legendary winemaking family that traces back 30 generations, followed with Luce, a wine from Montalcino that was one of the first Merlot-Sangiovese blends in the region. These bottlings, along with Corbaia, Il Carbonaione, and I Sodi di San Niccolo comprised an early wave of Super Tuscans. Now winemakers like Cristoforetti and Axel Heinz of Ornellaia have expanded the Super Tuscan category with entrants like Pervale and L'Urlo, and Le Serre Nuove, respectively.

TOP SLOPESIDE SIPPERS

There may be no better wine than a Super Tuscan for the mountain table. These reds, many of which are made at elevation, have a vibrant brightness, yet also a richness that pairs beautifully with wintertime dishes.



Luce 2009

Le Serre Nuove 2009

“It’s perfect in the winter when it’s snowing,” says Tignanello’s Antinori. “You can really enjoy it with game, wild boar, pasta with meat sauce.”

Heinz, the Austrian winemaker behind Le Serre Nuove, loves to finish a day on the slopes of his native country’s Lech with dinner and a bottle of his red at the Hotel Post’s Michelin-starred restaurant. Le Serre Nuove “has intense ripe fruit and great freshness,” Heinz says. “It’s a refreshing breeze, a Mediterranean expression of Bordeaux.”

Luce’s Frescobaldi takes the on-mountain enjoyment of his wine one step further. A dedicated heliskier, his favorite way to enjoy Luce is to pause with his cliff-hucking pals mid-run, pull out salami and a bottle of Luce from his backpack, and drink the wine out of plastic cups while soaking in views of the virgin terrain awaiting his descent.

Wherever you choose to imbibe this season, these Super Tuscan are medal-worthy additions to your wine roster.

Urlari’s vineyard.



Best Slopeside **SUPER TUSCANS**

CORBAIA 2008**CASTELLO DI BOSSI, \$57**

Earthy, rich red with notes of cherry jam, tobacco and coffee. Pair with deeply flavored dishes like steak or roast beef.

I SODI DI SAN NICCOLO 2007,**CASTELLARE DI CASTELLINA, \$65**

Aromas of blackberry and cedar lead into a silky, full-bodied expression of Sangiovese with Malvasia Nera; perfect partner for meaty ragu sauces.

IL CARBONAIONE 2009**POGGIO SCALETTE, \$59**

Blackberry, savory spices, and leather dominate in this rich wine made from a legendary 75-year-old Sangiovese vineyard.

L'URLO 2010**AZIENDA AGRICOLA URLARI, \$47**

The dominant aromas of this 100 per cent Merlot wine are bright blueberry and cherry notes with a touch of vanilla and spice; the soft, rich body makes it a stellar pairing for venison.

LE SERRE NUOVE 2009**ORNELLAIA, \$75**

An addictive Bordeaux blend that makes an ideal après-ski sipper paired with aged cheeses and charcuterie.

LUCE 2009,**TENUTA LUCE DELLA VITE, \$93**

Silky, deeply concentrated Sangiovese-Merlot blend vibrant with plums and sweet spices. Ideally suited to wine-braised beef.

PERVALE 2009**AZIENDA AGRICOLA URLARI, \$38**

Immensely drinkable, berry-forward blend of Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, and other Bordeaux varietals that is well-suited to rack of lamb or wild boar ragu.

TIGNANELLO 2009**ANTINORI, \$88**

Ponder this velvety, layered Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cabernet Franc with friends, fireside, paired with cheese and charcuterie.