



ROUGE

NOVEMBER 2019

2017 ROSSO DI MONTALCINO

SESTI



WHEN IT COMES to the marked contrasts of neighboring microclimates, Montalcino in southern Tuscany gives the Bay Area a run for its

money. Summer 2017 was infernally hot in western Europe, with the

heat wave earning the nickname Lucifer. While the Sesti estate certainly endured a hot, dry year, the vines did not bear the brunt of it the way they did in other parts of Italy, even within the Montalcino DOCG. The astronomer-turned-vigneron Giuseppe Sesti says, “We were blessed with two rainfalls during the summer, which were so localized that they didn’t reach as far as four kilometers from us.” It wasn’t just the rain that saved the vintage at Sesti, producing this stately wine, whose relative concentration is balanced by remarkable finesse. Giuseppe and his daughter Elisa, who now manages the domaine, did what they could to react deftly to the heat. They left more leaves on their vines than usual to shield the grapes from the sun and also worked the topsoil with the “rippatura” technique, preserving moisture in the soil when it rains without drastically altering the soil structure. These factors combined to make an admirably restrained Rosso di Montalcino with notes of cherries, mint, and tomato—and likely lots of longevity. Pair it with roast rosemary chicken and potatoes, a wild mushroom polenta, or Chris Lee’s braised lamb shoulder for an exquisite fall feast. —Tom Wolf

\$40.00 PER BOTTLE

\$432.00 PER CASE

RIGHT

*View of the Castello di
Argiano from Sesti’s vines.*

Photo © Dixon Brooke

COVER

*Alberello-trained vines
in black volcanic soil.*

Photo © Dixon Brooke



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2018 ETNA ROSSO “SCIARE VIVE” VIGNETI VECCHIO

AT A RECENT STAFF TASTING, we opened and tasted a bottle of this 2018 Etna Rosso Sciare Vive, and no one said anything for a few minutes. Instead, there were merely wide eyes, raised eyebrows, and grunts of pleasure, maybe punctuated by a “Wow.”

We are not often lost for words while tasting wine, so what came over us? To start, this is only the third vintage we have imported from Vigneti Vecchio, and it is especially thrilling to taste the nuances from year to year with such a new discovery. Second, after a hot 2017 vintage and a correspondingly rich wine, it was fascinating to notice how different this bottling from the cooler 2018 tasted. Aside from environmental factors, Vigneti Vecchio’s wines are unusually elegant relative to most from Mount Etna for at least two reasons: tall, *alberello*-trained vines that shade the grapes from the sun, and the co-planting and blending of indigenous white grape varieties. The third potential reason behind our response is that we are not immune to the thrall of Mount Etna, which contains some of the most intriguing *terroirs* in the world. There is no other place like this for growing grapes: high elevation, plenty of Mediterranean sunshine, and jet-black soils of decomposed lava make it unique on Earth. One could mention bright notes of red fruit, high acid, and a “volcanic” character, but you just need to taste this wine for yourself to feel the magic of Vigneti Vecchio’s Etna Rosso. —Tom Wolf

\$37.00 PER BOTTLE ■ \$399.60 PER CASE



					
2017 Rosso di Montalcino <i>Sesti</i>	Sangiovese	15-year-old vines Oceanic sediment	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant 1–2 hours	Cherries, mint, tomato Stately, concentrated, restrained	Drink now through 2030
2018 Etna Rosso “Sciare Vive” <i>Vigneti Vecchio</i>	90% Nerello Mascalese, 10% indigenous varieties (Minnella, Grecanico, Inzolia, Carricante, Catarratto, Malvasia)	50- to 130-year-old vines Volcanic	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant optional	Strawberries, blackberries, stones Bright, elegant, volcanic	Drink now through 2025

LAMB SHOULDER WITH ROSEMARY AND VIN SANTO, BRAISED OVER COALS

by Christopher Lee

This full-flavored dish pairs excellently with the elegant fruit of Sesti's 2017 Rosso di Montalcino. Ask the butcher for pasture lamb, not too fatty. Braise the lamb gently for at least 4 hours in a clay or cast-iron vessel over low coals, preferably from fruitwood. The earthy scent of the coals on the lamb is heavenly, though you can achieve a wonderful result on the stove. You needn't buy an expensive Vin Santo—other sweet wines will do—but the raisined flavor of the Vin Santo is what you're after.

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| 4-pound piece of lamb shoulder on the bone, preferably neck end | 1 small strip orange peel |
| 2 tablespoons sea salt | 1 tablespoon crushed Tellicherry peppercorns |
| ½ pound unsmoked pig's trotter, meaty pork rib bones, or pork neck on the bone | 1 teaspoon fennel seed |
| 4 large shallots, peeled, root trimmed off, left whole | ½ teaspoon juniper berries |
| 6 cloves garlic, peeled, thickly sliced | 4 six-inch sprigs rosemary |
| 1 fresh bay leaf | 6 ounces Vin Santo |
| 3 small ripe tomatoes, stem and seeds removed, quartered | 6 ounces red wine |
| | 4 cups water or lamb stock |
| | <i>Persillade:</i> 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley mixed with 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest (about 1 lemon) |

One day ahead, season lamb shoulder generously with salt. Place in a covered dish and refrigerate overnight. Next day, remove shoulder from refrigerator and rest at room temperature for 2 hours. Warm a pot slowly over the coals and add pork. Cook for 10 minutes to render fat. Add lamb and brown on all sides. Remove meats from pot to a side platter. Add to the pot shallots, garlic, bay leaf, tomatoes, orange peel, peppercorns, fennel seed, juniper berries, and rosemary. Cook for 12 minutes, stirring, to melt vegetables. Return meats to pot. Add 4 ounces Vin Santo, red wine, and water or stock until liquid nearly covers lamb (add more if needed). Simmer gently with lid ajar for 4–5 hours, turning lamb occasionally, until lamb is tender. Transfer meats to a serving platter, removing and discarding bones and pork skin. Hold meat on a serving platter in a warm place. Degrease sauce, add remaining Vin Santo, and reduce for 10 minutes over medium heat. Pour sauce over meats. Sprinkle with *persillade*. Serve with polenta or buttered fresh noodles. Serves 6



Christopher Lee is a former head chef of Chez Panisse and Eccolo restaurants in Berkeley and co-founder of Pop-Up General Store in Oakland. Visit his website: oldfashionedbutcher.com.