



Fred Tasker

fredtaskerwine@gmail.com

WINE

Wines from under the Tuscan sun

Federico Fellini's 1960 film *La Dolce Vita* was set in Rome, but if you visit Italy, you'll find the real sweet life farther north — in Tuscany.

There's a golden quality to the sun around Florence that seems to vibrate the air and turn the landscape a shimmering lime-green. Rolling hills stretch to the horizon, and each hilltop has its own centuries-old castle — built for war but now likely housing a five-star hotel.

Restaurants serve two-pound Florentine steaks, marinated in balsamic vinegar and rosemary. They serve pasta as extra-wide pappardelle with wild boar ragu or with creamy alfredo sauce laced with truffle oil.

They are paired with rich, hearty, red wines redolent of black plums, blueberries and mocha, without hard tannic edges or searing acids.

Some Tuscan reds are made solely from the region's most famous grape, sangiovese. Others blend in cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc to make fuller-

bodied wines called Super Tuscans.

We Americans can also drink these wines, of course, with big, red steaks, duck and goose, pork stews, thus reaching out ourselves for the sweet life.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

• **2009 Tenuta Frescobaldi di Castiglioni**, Toscana IGT (50 percent cabernet sauvignon, 30 percent merlot, 10 percent cabernet franc, 10 percent sangiovese): ultra dark hue, aromas and flavors of black plums, tobacco and cocoa, powerful and smooth; \$22.

• **2009 Brancaia Chianti Classico Riserva** DOCG (80 percent sangiovese, 20 percent merlot): dark, rich and smooth, with aromas and flavors of black cherries, black plums and espresso; \$40.

• **2009 Brancaia "Ilatraia" Rosso Maremma Toscana IGT** (40 percent cabernet sauvignon, 40 percent

petit verdot, 20 percent

cabernet franc): hint of oak, flavors of black cherries and black pepper, rich and smooth; \$60.



RECOMMENDED

• **2008 San Leonino Chianti Classico Riserva**, Toscana DOCG (90 percent sangiovese, 5 percent syrah, 5 percent cabernet sauvignon): bright red hue, aromas and flavors of tart cherries and licorice, medium body, smooth; \$29.

• **2009 Trerose Vino Nobile di Montepulciano**, Toscana DOCG (90 percent sangiovese, 5 percent merlot, 5 percent cabernet sauvignon): hint of oak, aromas and flavors of red berries, tobacco and spice and big, ripe tannins; \$22.

• **2009 Azienda Agricola Poliziano Vino Nobile di Montepulciano**, Toscana DOCG (100 percent sangiovese): cherry, cranberry, tobacco and spice aromas and flavors, medium body, soft tannins; \$28.

• **2009 Val di Suga Rosso di Montalcino Toscana DOC** (100 percent sangiovese): bright red color, lighter body, tart cherry and espresso flavors, soft tannins; \$21.

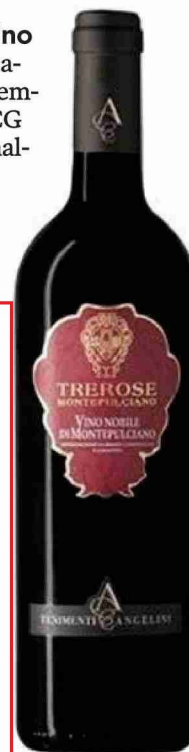
• **2010 Azienda Agricola Poliziano Rosso di Montepulciano**, Toscana DOCG (80 percent sangiovese, 20 percent merlot): tart cherry, red plum and spice flavors, with bitter choco-

late finish; \$15.

• **2010 Lohsa Morellino di Scansano**, from Tuscany's up-and-coming Maremma region, Toscana DOCG (sangiovese, cilieggiolo, malvasia nera and anaiolo grapes): red plum and espresso aromas and flavors, soft tannins, crisp acids; \$15.

• **2008 Brancaia "Il Blu" Rosso Toscano IGT** (50 percent sangiovese, 45 percent merlot, 5 percent cabernet sauvignon): gentle and smooth, with aromas and flavors of black raspberries and cocoa, ripe tannins; \$85.

• **2010 Brancaia "Tre" Rosso Toscano IGT** (80 percent sangiovese, 10 percent merlot, 10 percent cabernet sauvignon): deep red color, gentle tannins, aromas and flavors of black raspberries and espresso; \$23.



Fred Tasker has retired from The Miami Herald but is still writing about wine for the McClatchy News Service. He can be reached at fredtaskerwine@gmail.com.