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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.

