

# The International Wine Review

JULY 2010

## Castello di Amorosa

*Tuscan Wines Made in a Napa Castle*

Castello di Amorosa is Dario Sattui's faithful reproduction of a 13th century medieval Tuscan castle replete with moat, torture chamber, several hundred feet of elaborately carved underground wine caves, and 30 acres of vines. Brooks Painter, the Castello's winemaker gave us a tour of the Castello's cellar, including barrel and bottle tastings. Brooks is a scholarly winemaker who previously made wines at Robert Mondavi and Stag's Leap. While Dario Sattui has invested a small fortune and many years building his castle, our tastings show he obviously hasn't skimped on the vineyards and winemaking either.

While the Castello produces a number of different white and red wines, including a delicious late harvest Semillon called **Il Passito Reserve**, our tasting focused on those wines with a Tuscan influence. Of these, the most interesting is Castello's **La Castellana**. This is a California interpretation of a Super Tuscan blend and not unlike some of the more internationally styled Sangiovese based wines we tasted

while traveling in Tuscany for our Report #15 on Chianti Classico.



The Sangiovese fruit used in Castello's wines come from three vineyards—Henry Ranch, Passaro, and the estate vineyard at Castello—located in two different parts of the Napa Valley. The Henry Ranch is located south of Napa near Mt. Veeder and receives more fog and lower temperatures than the other sites. Both Passaro and the estate vineyard are located on Diamond Mountain with very little fog, somewhat warmer temperatures and loose loam volcanic soils; grapes from Passaro and Castello produce somewhat riper flavors and firmer tannins than those from the Henry Ranch.

## Tasting Notes

### 2008 SANGIOVESE NAPA (\$26)

The hillside vineyards that provide the fruit for this Sangiovese suffered less than those on the valley floor from the spring frosts of 2008. Even so, the cool, dry summer produced lower than normal yields of very good quality. This shows in the fruit quality of this Sangiovese (93 percent) and Merlot (7 percent) blend. Aged 16 months in 30 percent new barrels, this tank sample shows a healthy amount of vanilla oak on a fruit rich palate of dark cherry. These oak and fruit flavors should be much better integrated by the

time the wine is released. The IWR doesn't give ratings to tank or barrel samples, but we expect this wine to show better than the 2006 with some time in bottle.

### 2006 SANGIOVESE NAPA (\$26) 89

This is one of the better California Sangiovese wines we've tasted over the years. A blend of 85 percent Sangiovese and 15 percent Merlot, the wine shows rich red fruit with herbal notes on a soft, lush palate. There's nice integration of oak and fruit and good acidity that brightens the wine. Delicious and ready to drink now.

### 2007 LA CASTELLANA SUPER TUSCAN (\$85) 93

**L**a Castellana means the lady of the castle in Italian, and this voluptuous beauty is dressed in a robe of dark cherry fruit and violets with smoky oak and chocolate notes. A blend of 66 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 18 percent Merlot, and the rest Sangiovese, it is velvet smooth on a beautifully integrated palate. Blessed with fine, ripe tannins, this wine is easily approachable when young. While not as powerful as Il Barone, it's more refined. To be released in 2012.

### 2005 LA CASTELLANA SUPER TUSCAN (\$65) 92

**T**he 2005 La Castellana has a higher concentration of Cabernet Sauvignon (75%) than the 2007. Dark ruby, almost opaque in color, this is a big wine showing dark fruit with notes of tobacco, chocolate, and earth. It is lush on the attack and creamy smooth on the palate with firm, ripe tannins on the finish. A nice acidic lift from Sangiovese shows on the finish. Available now.

### 2008 IL BARONE (\$95) 93

**T**he opaque ruby, slightly brooding Il Barone is the masculine counterpart to La Castellana showing inky aromas of black fruit with charred oak and violet notes. Made from 100 percent estate grown Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine shows great volume in the mouth, a smooth and beautifully structured palate with nice minerality and ripe, firm tannins on a very long finish. To be released in 2012, this wine has a long life ahead of it.

### 2005 AMOROSA 2005 IL BARONE (\$75) 91

**T**he 2005 vintage of Il Barone exhibits a savory nose with herbal and violet notes and a gorgeous velvet-like palate of rich dark fruit with earth and pepper accents. Somewhat chalky tannins show on the mid-palate, and the wine finishes with firm, dry tannins. A fine wine but not as succulent as the 2007.

These wines are not available in retail stores. They must be purchased at the winery or over the internet. Visit [www.CastellodiAmorosa.com](http://www.CastellodiAmorosa.com) for more information.

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