PREMIUM

Is Le Serre Nuove Italy's best second wine?

Aldo Fiordelli makes the case for Ornellaia's 'little brother'...



Aldo Fiordelli January 16, 2020



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This unusual result was due to the ripe and powerful 2015 vintage of the former, a Bolgheri DOC wine, versus the cool, rainy 2014 vintage of the Bolgheri Superiore grand vin (Bolgheri Superiore has to age longer before it's released). It's success is the consequence of a well-pondered approach instilled in the winery since 1997.

Scroll down to see Aldo's vertical tasting of Le Serre Nuove

The most recent vintage release was presented in Milan at the end of November, with an unprecedented vertical tasting – especially for a second vin – dating back to its debut. The number '20' in the centre of the label for the 2017 vintage recalls a 20-year history of achievements that have accompanied this wine.

Le Serre Nuove is arguably the 'business card' for Ornellaia, offering an insight into how the grand vin might age – in top vintages, the differences between Le Serre Nuove and its bigger brother are truly minimal. However, the temptation to over–rate a second vin such as Le Serre Nuove should be avoided. Most of the time it comes from young vines and includes both a larger proportion of press wines and a lesser amount of new oak ageing, compared with Ornellaia. 'The winery's intention is to make the best Ornellaia possible,' admits Axel Heinz, managing director of the estate.

Support of the fact that Le Serre Nuove is complementary to Ornellaia lies in the numbers: the former has a production of 250,000 bottles, the latter 150,000. However, we should also avoid considering the second wine intrinsically inferior – Le Serre Nuove should be rediscovered not by considering what it is not, but by recognising the capabilities of a top second wine. Most of all and generally speaking, in times of increasingly priced fine wines, second wines provide polite options against ostentation, elegant alternatives for everyday fine wine drinking, and safe bargains for wine lists in restaurants.

Le Serre Nuove is a sort of litmus test of the vintage, compared to the steady consistency of Ornellaia, which makes it an exceptional key to reading Bolgheri. The 2008 vintage is the quintessential example of what a second wine should be: full of power and complexity, yet a bit too rustic to be considered a flagship wine. However, 2006 and 2013 are extremely close in character to Ornellaia due to an extraordinary balance between power and elegance. One should be tempted to taste both wines side by side.

Le Serre Nuove is often an inversely proportional blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot to Ornellaia, depending on the vintage. The Le Serre Nuove blend is the outcome of an assessment of grapes originating from specific parcels of the estate's vineyards as well as various base wines, all with a clear vision of the wine that will be created: another face of Ornellaia, an elevated expression of its Bolgheri Rosso DOC appellation. Born in the shadow of Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove today shines by itself, crowned as the best Italian second wine.

Le Serre Nuove vertical:

Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2017

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2017 will go down in history as being one of the hottest, driest years ever in Bolgheri. There was virtually no rain in July and August but fortunately the hot weather was offset by cooler temperatures at night. 'We resisted the desire to present only good vintages,' said Axel Heinz,...

Points 91



LE SERRE NUOVE

Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2015

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After an unusual year in 2014, 2015 proved to be a very normal winemaking year – almost textbook, yet warm. July will be remembered as particularly scorching, hot and dry, with temperature peaking consistently above 30°C on every single day of the month. Fortunately, t...

Points 93

Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2014

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One of our most difficult vintages. There was no August,' said Axel Heinz, managing director of the estate. The harvest will go down in history as one of the latest, starting on 6 September



with the Merlot from young vines, and ending on 22 October with the last of the...

Points 88



Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2013

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The biggest challenge of the 2013 vintage was a long, uneven flowering with a two-week delay compared to the average – which reduced production and resulted in the uneven development of grapes. The blend is dominated by both Cabernets with a significant amount of Petit Verdo...

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Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2010

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This celebrated vintage was received at first with distrust by the winery. 'It was a cool vintage, not typical for Bolgheri, more rigid and lean,' explained Axel Heinz, managing director of



Ornellaia. Painstaking vineyard management and careful leaf-pruning in particular ensured...

Points 92



Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2008

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Incredibly dark and concentrated, this 2008 seems to be the product of another decade compared to the style of the previous vintages. Meaty and full of prunes on the nose, with earthy, camphor and glue stick tones, this Merlot-dominated blend is full and rich, smooth a...

Points 94

Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2007

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This vintage could be considered a good indication of how the 2015 will age. July was hot and dry, August a bit cooler. A perfect September with brilliant sun, mild temperatures, and little



rain permitted a perfectly slow, steady ripening of the grapes, which concentrated the aromat...

Points 92



Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2006

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This is one of the most austere Serre Nuove's, one which you would be hard pressed to call a 'second wine'. At the beginning of the harvest the grapes were perfect: concentrated and uniformly ripe. On first impact it is full of restrained earthy minerality, bramble fruits, cedar...

Points 96

Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 2001

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Bolgheri was less affected than the rest of Tuscany by the spring frost in 2001. Indeed, in early July the grapes were thinned - Merlot (about 30% dropped) followed by Cabernet Sauvignon



(about 10% dropped), to ensure that the remaining grapes ripened under optimal conditions. ...

Points 92



Ornellaia, Le Serre Nuove, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy, 1997

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The 1997 vintage in Tuscany is in reality underrated compared to the enthusiastic comments of the release. This was the first warm year after several cool vintages in the 1990s; however, Le Serre Nuove doesn't show the ageing potential one would expect. This was the first vintage of...

Points 90

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