

# Decanter

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## A drink with...Manfred Ing

Manfred Ing, the South-African born head winemaker at Tuscan estate Querciabella, talks to Decanter about his Italian roots, Chianti Classico terroirs and exciting opportunities in Maremma...

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*The head winemaker at Tuscan estate Querciabella, South-African born Manfred Ing brings a global perspective and a precise approach to the estate, shaping its stylistic evolution since 2010. Here he discusses his deep connection with Italy, the contrast between Chianti Classico and Maremma, and the upcoming release of a new range of three Gran Selezione wines.*

### A drink with Manfred Ing

‘I’m a South African in Italy. I’ve always taken the road less travelled. When my friends went to work in Bordeaux, I went to Barolo. While they chased Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, I headed to Hawke’s Bay and Central Otago. Always trying to find my own path.

‘My grandparents are Italian, so **I’ve always felt a pull towards the country** – almost like something in my heart tugging me back.

‘In 2009, after finishing harvest, I was travelling through Chianti and ended up in a conversation with the team at Querciabella. They surprised me by being interested in my background – Napa, Barolo, Pinot in Central Otago – and how that experience could help take the winery forward.

‘In Chianti you respect the land, the tradition, and Sangiovese, but at the same time you can be open-minded and push the limits a little. That combination really resonated with me.

‘Every time I look out over the vines at Lamole, it takes my breath away. I might be slightly biased since I bought a house just up the hill, but honestly, there’s something truly special about this place that’s hard to explain.

## **A modern approach with deep roots**

‘What excites me most about these three Gran Selezione is how clearly they express their origins. **The 2021 vintage gave us remarkable purity**, so what you taste is really the voice of the vineyards.

‘But in a way, they’re a single story told through three expressions. The nuances change – the fruit, the texture, the accents – yet the narrative is the same: precision, transparency, and a profound respect for Sangiovese. That’s the thread linking all three wines.

‘We never commit to the same parcels every year. We let the vintage guide us. Some sites whisper, others sing – our role is simply to listen and to bottle the stories worth telling.

‘This approach has deep roots. Long before the Gran Selezione category existed, Querciabella was already crafting single-origin Sangiovese prototypes – never released, yet, but essential in shaping the estate’s understanding of place.

‘The new UGA\* framework simply gives us language for something we’ve always believed: **Chianti Classico is a mosaic of extraordinary terroirs**. Each site is capable of producing a singular and compelling expression of Sangiovese.

## **'Gran Selezione is evolving quickly'**

‘Let’s be honest, Gran Selezione didn’t have the easiest start. There was confusion, there were mixed expectations, and a gap between the idea and its execution.

‘If you look at where we are now – the level of ambition from producers, the critical attention, the feedback from collectors – it’s clear that **Gran Selezione has found its stride**.

‘The success we’re seeing today shows that when Gran Selezione is done with integrity – vineyard-focused, expressive of place, and true to Sangiovese – it has the potential to stand among the great wines of the world.

‘That’s important because it elevates the entire appellation, not just our own work. It pushes all of us to dig deeper, to be more precise, to trust in the identity of our sites. It gives coherence to the message. It encourages producers to pursue authenticity over formula.

‘Gran Selezione is evolving quickly. And if it continues to pursue greater purity and definition, its most significant contributions, to Chianti Classico and to Sangiovese, are still ahead.

## **'Maremma is like the wild west'**

‘Maremma on the other hand is like the Wild West. It’s exciting because, coming from South Africa, I’m used to working with many varieties, soils, exposures – maybe 20 different grapes.

‘In Chianti Classico, you have Sangiovese and a few things like Batar, our wonderful white wine, but the Consorzio sets clear rules.

‘In Maremma, you can do anything. **Whole-bunch Syrah? Mourvèdre? Cab Franc? Go for it.** It’s a place where we can experiment and create our own interpretation of the land. From Mongrana, our “baby super-Tuscan”, to wines that have a more rugged feel, the region gives us huge freedom.

‘Maremma allows us to look toward the future – to try and see around the corner. Mother Nature is unpredictable, but the more we explore, the more prepared we can be, it helps us understand what the future holds.

## **‘If I wasn’t a winemaker, I’d be a chef’**

‘I’m a massive foodie and if I wasn’t a winemaker I’d be a chef, without a doubt.

‘Tuscany is amazing for produce and ingredients. I feel incredibly lucky to be here. And yes – I’d be happy to cook for you next time! Absolutely.

‘I’m still here, my family is here, my boys go to school and play football here – honestly, it feels like home. I think I was born to be in this place. **I think I was meant to be here.** It feels right. Even though I’m not Italian, I have Sangiovese flowing in my veins.’

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## **\*UGAs in brief**

Introduced in 2023, UGAs—*Unità Geografiche Aggiuntive*, or Additional Geographical Units—represent the Chianti Classico region’s effort to trace its wines more precisely to their place of origin.

The system highlights the diversity of grape sources across the appellation, dividing the territory into 11 clearly defined districts.

Each UGA reflects a distinct identity shaped by a combination of natural factors, such as soil composition, microclimate and human influence.

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