



**CORNEY &
BARROW**
INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS-1780

IPSUS



A somewhat rhetorical question landed in my inbox earlier this year. Did I want to taste a very good and unique wine, made by the Mazzei family (of Castello di Fonterutoli's fame in Tuscany)? The wine is Ipsus, made of 100% Sangiovese grape. The vineyard is located in Il Caggio, a *localita*, in the Chianti Classico hills.

The obvious 'yes' answer led to a bottle landing on my desk in Hong Kong, then a Teams meeting with Giovanni Mazzei and a virtual tasting with our team. We liked the wine and agreed on meeting at the winery later in the year. This happened at the end of August when I was to briefly visit Montalcino to taste the new vintage of Soldera.

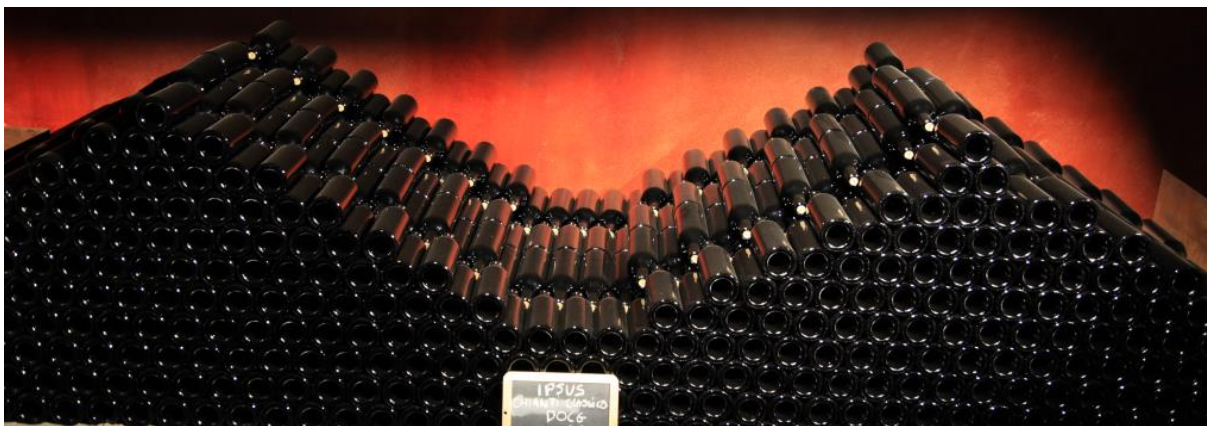
Will Hargrove and I did the short, 55-minute drive from Montalcino to Il Caggio for the final check and the all-important handshake. We are now the appointed exclusive agent for Hong Kong and Singapore for this sublime wine.

Ipsus is bound to become for Chianti Classico Gran Selezione, what Soldera is to Brunello di Montalcino. Our first release is vintage 2018. We also managed to get hold of some 2016 and 2015 – another reason to meet “in the flesh” as it is harder to turn down a request in such a circumstance. This is a very exciting project to be involved in, especially from the off. We are confident in the future for this wine.

Thibaut

Thibaut Mathieu

Managing Director Asia, October 2022



THE HISTORY

In 2006, the Mazzei purchased a property of 150 ha in the hills of Chianti, in the hamlet of Castellina in Chianti. They were interested by the 50 ha of vines within the land. Previously the grapes coming from these vineyards, were sold to a leading Tuscany producer, to be blended with its own crop. But, to the Mazzei and particularly to Giovanni, son of the current CEO of the family business and 25th generation, the vines had superb potential.

Through the course of the following years, studying the vineyard, the vines, the micro-climates and the crop, the Mazzei identified 6.5 ha of vines, over 6 plots, which have a distinctive expression and quality. It was enough for Giovanni to move his home to the hamlet, in the middle of the vines, and to dedicate all his attention to making a wine unique to this place. With 2015, Ipsus was born.



THE ESTATE

Ipsus is coming from a single estate, planted only to Sangiovese, in a *localita* called Il Caggio. There are 6 plots, for a small 6.5 ha of vines, around the top of the hill, surrounded by Tuscan forest, wild life and tranquility.

The hamlet is composed of several buildings, currently home to Giovanni and his family as well as the ageing cellar of Ipsus. For vintage 2023, there will be a winery to vinify the wine on the estate. And Giovanni will renovate some of the other houses to become an exclusive abode, reserved for the happy few with an allocation of Ipsus. On request a personal chef will give a unique Toscana experience to visitors.





THE VINEYARD

The team at Ipsus tends 6 plots of vines, all with their own features and individually identified: *Cantina di Sopra*, *Cantina di Sotto*, *Pero*, *Campaccio di Sopra*, *Campaccio di Sotto*, *Orto*. The climate is Mediterranean, well ventilated because of the altitude - about 350m above sea level - and perfectly exposed South-East to South-West to benefit from the sun. The vineyard is unobstructed on a stunning 150° view. The team works hand in hand with the University of Firenze, to tend the vineyard organically. They don't prune, keeping only long shoots (like at Soldera, Arnoux-Lachaux et al). They don't use any chemicals to treat the soil or vines. They keep cover crop between the rows. The vines are an average of 30 to 40 years old. As you would expect replanting is done by massale selection.

The soil is a mixed of clay, limestone and the Albarese rock, crushed by the passing of time to small gravel. This is the typical rock of the Chianti area. The vineyards are well draining, thanks to a particularly fine texture of the earth. The vines are planted on the former bank of the old sea, at the time where the area was covered by water, several millions year ago. The Chianti valley, which was the bottom of the prehistorical sea has all the heavy and rich sediment, producing broader wines. The vineyards higher up like at Il Caggio are composed of finer sedimentary soil, resulting in more elegant wines of finesse and fine structure.

The Mazzei are the ultimate reference in the Sangiovese varietal. Through time (they have been in this business for over 600 years), they have identified 36 clones of Sangiovese, 16 of which have been isolated by massale selection and are their own. They use 4 of these Mazzei clones at Il Caggio. The 36 clones are used across their vineyards, according to the soil typicity.



THE WINEMAKING

Currently, the winemaking is done at the state-of-the-art Fonterutoli winery, a few miles away. As mentioned above from 2023 vintage, Ipsus will be made at Il Caggio.

At harvest, Giovanni further breaks down the 6 plots into 18 micro cuvees, vinified separately, in large oak casks and stainless-steel tanks. Then first blends are aged in oak barrels of various size (from 500L to 1500L) to get the best expression of the Sangiovese, aiming at vibrancy, freshness, elegance and luminosity. With the first vintages (2015 to 2017), the final blend was spending some time in concrete tank. But this has been replaced by ceramic round-shaped vessels from 2018. With time passing and better understanding of the vineyards and vines, sobriety is pushed further in winemaking and ageing, to allow for vibrancy and purer fruit expression, to let the Sangiovese natural quality shines.



THE WINE

Ipsus is a 100% Sangiovese wine, of which a paltry 2,500 to 4,000 bottles are made each year, depending on the vintage. 2015 was the first year to be bottled, the current release is vintage 2018 while 2019 to 2021 are maturing in the quiet cellar at Il Caggio. Ipsus is a Chianti Classico *Gran Selezione* DOCG.

Ipsus 2015 (2,400 bottles produced)

This is the first vintage released commercially. It was poured first during the vertical tasting led by Giovanni and his team in the ageing cellar of Ipsus. The vintage itself was spectacular across Europe as you will know. The nose is dominated by ripe red and black fruit aromas, but some herbal notes start to appear with some aeration. This beginning of evolution shows the potential of the wine. On the palate, the wine is elegant, pure and powerful; rather serious too. Cherry flavours dominate the palate. There is a good structure to allow some further ageing. Mineral and leather notes comprise the mid palate. It is certainly not your regular Chianti. The intention of Giovanni Mazzei is to transcend the appellation. This first opus is very promising.

Corney & Barrow Score 18-18.5

Recommended drinking from 2022-2030

£795 per 3 x 75cl, IB

Ipsus 2016 (2,600 bottles produced)

This second vintage displays the classic aromas of the Sangiovese that I like so much in the Brunellos. Vibrant red cherries, crunchy small berries, tension, soft spices, length, and freshness. Lean aromas instead of opulent and concentrated. Clearly the winemaking team had seen the benefit of using less new oak for ageing, yet the tannins are present and the wine is beautifully structured. Such a vintage was asking for a subtle hand. It will benefit from decanting. The potential of a juicy and vibrant Sangiovese wine shows its frame in the background. A stealth vintage.

Corney & Barrow Score 17.5+

Recommended drinking from 2022-2031

£795 per 3 x 75cl, IB

£530 per 1 x 150cl, IB

£1,060 per 1 x 300cl, IB

Ipsus 2018 (4,200 bottles produced)

This is the 4th vintage bottled by the estate but only the 3rd (and current) to be released for sale. Giovanni decided to keep the 2017 for further ageing. 2018 is perfumed, vibrant and minerally driven. It is an aromatic wine with elegant note of red fruits. The tannins are soft and integrated; you see the benefit of reducing the quantity of new oak while increasing the size of the barrels at maturation time. Although Sangiovese can be rustic, when the refinement is that precise, the 'less is more' approach is beneficial to push forward the purity of the varietal. At 14% ABV, it is already very balanced and harmonious, showing no signs of a warmer than average vintage.

Corney & Barrow Score 17.5-18

Recommended drinking from 2023-2033

£750 per 3 x 75cl, IB

£505 per 1 x 150cl, IB

£1,050 per 1 x 300cl, IB

TO ORDER

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