

# AMBRA

In Italy the name of Carmignano, a small hillside town northwest of Florence, has been synonymous with fine wines since the 13th century, and documents attest to a sale of Carmignano in 1396 at four times the price of other contemporary prestigious wines. So great was its reputation that Cosimo III de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, decreed in 1716 that the appellation be strictly controlled, as well as the harvests and the sales, whether local or abroad. The confines of the ancient appellation remain identical to this day, making it one of the smallest D.O.C.G. areas of Italy.

The wine itself has a physiognomy all of its own for, although its varietal makeup is similar to that of the Chianti (high percentage of Sangiovese), it boasts up to 10% of Cabernet Sauvignon in its blend - all of Bordeaux stock at Ambra - in addition to a 5% allowance of other varietals including Merlot, Syrah and such native Tuscan vines as Colorino, Mammolo, and even some Occhio di Pernice. Thus, in Carmignano we find wines characteristically richer than those of the Chianti: of more obvious

structure and colour, more prodigal in their longevity and of better defined character. And yet Carmignano is not what one would call a big or tannic wine, nor does it have the rigour of a Brunello di Montalcino. Its richness is smooth and accessible and its bouquet expresses itself in finesse rather than in power. It likes wood, but not too much of it and, rightly (for once!), the laws governing its production demand only one year in wood, eight months after which it may be bottled.

The Ambra estate has its vineyards in the crus of Santa Cristina in Pilli (where the soil has a high percentage of limestone), of Montalbiolo (planted in rich, mild, loose, Galestro soil), of Elzana (the soil of which is clay and Galestro) and of Montefortini (the soil of which is sandstone) close to the Etruscan tomb bearing the same name.

Giuseppe Rigoli, the agronomist who owns the estate, mainly employs Sangiovese, Cabernet and Canaiolo Nero. Thus, Ambra's Carmignano has a concentration and deep aristocratic "robe" quite unique among its leaner siblings. The estate is small, the

total vineyard extension 20 hectares. The total output is only about 800 hectolitres which is a yield of only about 40 hectolitres per hectare; an indication of the rigid grape selection that goes into the making of this wine. Since the 1985 vintage, a Carmignano riserva has been produced, aged in small French oak (500 and 350 litre tonneaux) and from the estate's vineyards of highest elevation, called Montalbiolo, producing a wine of unmatched elegance. 1998 brings the debut of a second Riserva, Vigna Elzana: still Galestro soil but here clay is a defining component and the resulting wine is powerful, warm-natured and opulent.

Ambra also produces Carmignano S. Cristina in Pilli and Carmignano Montefortini (made from the vineyards bearing the same name); Barco Reale (the young version of Carmignano), a fruity, fresh, dry red wine; a dry spicy Rosato di Carmignano (made from the "saignée" of the best must of Carmignano); a white wine (100% Trebbiano) and a Vin Santo di Carmignano (aged for 6 years in oak "caratelli").



## Carmignano Riserva Montalbiolo

Zone: *Carmignano*  
 Cru: *Montalbiolo*  
 Varietal: *70% Sangiovese, 20% Canaiolo Nero, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon*  
 Vineyard Ext.: *1.5 hectares*  
 Average Prod.: *5,000 bottles*



## Carmignano S. Cristina in Pilli

Zone: *Carmignano*  
 Cru: *S. Cristina in Pilli*  
 Varietal: *75% Sangiovese, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Canaiolo Nero, 5% other red berry varieties*  
 Vineyard Ext.: *6 hectares*  
 Average Prod.: *20,000 bottles*