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**Rosso di Montalcino Doc 2015 "Canalicchio di Sopra" Wine of the week on Jancisrobinson.com** Written by Tamlyn Currin Having spent a few days immersed in Walter's latest Brunello reviews , my mouth was watering for a bit of Montalcino Sangiovese. Recovering from an international invasion of relatives over Christmas, neither wine rack nor wallet yielded the resources for something as fine as Brunello di Montalcino, but considering this was destined to be a Friday-night supper wine over our stained, dented and battered old wooden kitchen table, there was a more appropriate solution to hand. Rosso di Montalcino can't be considered cheap and it isn't considered grand. It's positioned a little awkwardly in the shadow of Brunello di Montalcino, and is often overlooked as a result. It suffers the reputation of being lean and mean, sometimes deservedly so, the best grapes having been selected for Brunello. But they fought and won the battle to keep it unadulterated by French grapes , and many producers now work hard to make this wine worthy of the Montalcino name. Canalicchio di Sopra is one such estate. Founded in 1962 by Primo Pacenti, his three grandchildren, Simonetta, Marco and Francesco Ripaccioli (pictured above and with Walter's article on Brunello 2012 Riservas published on Wednesday), run the estate today. They have 60 ha (150 acres), of which 19 are under vines. The best of their vineyards are geared towards the Brunello, but they make between 20,000 and 30,000 bottles of the Rosso di Montalcino every year. Most of their Rosso grapes come from the youngest vines of the Canalicchio



cru (clay-based soils, pictured above right), and some come from the Montosoli cru. The wine is fermented in stainless steel with gentle, daily pumpovers and is macerated on the skins for 15-20 days. It spends 12 months in 50-hl and 25-hl Slavonian oak barrels and 750-litre French oak barrels. Their 2015 Rosso di Montalcino, from a hot, dry year which resulted in high alcohols, ripe fruit and yet inexplicably high acidity and freshness, is a generous mouthful of warm cherries with gentle, silky tannins and a delicious cinnamon-spiced finish. Finely knit structure underpins abundant, ripe red fruit with loose-limbed ease and grace. It's so (dangerously) drinkable! It does clock in at close to 14.5%, true to the vintage, but it is beautifully balanced. We polished off a bottle with unseemly speed, and then went online and immediately ordered more. Victoria Moore wisely suggests drinking Rosso di Montalcino with aubergine parmigiana, among other things, and I can imagine it would be fantastic with any meal focused on aubergine or mushrooms. But we had it with seared tuna steaks, Kalamata olives and baby gem lettuce in an anchovy mayonnaise and it was just right. It is such a food-friendly wine, with its vibrant, enthusiastic fruit and soft, slim tannins, that I think it would be brilliant with home-comfort food: any kind of ragu or stew, pizza, spaghetti bolognese, or, quite frankly, a simple summer tomato and basil salad with a plate of bresaola. Walter reviewed it last year and gave it one of his rare 17.5s, which tells you everything you need to know. He suggests that you could keep this until 2024, but it tastes so good right now that waiting seems unnecessary. If this is baby Brunello, I could be persuaded to become the Peter Pan of wine drinkers. (And save myself £20 in the process.)

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