Wine Spectator

More Brunello, Young and Old - Vertical Tasting with Bruce Sanderson at Wine Spectator Francesco Ripaccioli, whose family owns the Canalicchio di Sopra estate, stopped by Wine Spectator 's office with almost a dozen bottles spanning 2006 to 1995, including the recently bottled 2006 riserva. The 148-acre property includes 37 acres of vines and 5 of olive trees. The vines, which average 25 years, come from two areas: Canalicchio di Sopra and Le Gode di Montosoli. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel, using both indigenous and selected yeasts. The Brunello spends a year in 750-liter and 2,000 liter-barrels before maturing in 3,000-liter casks for an additional two years. The riserva ages an additional seven to eight months in wood. The Canalicchio di Sopra Brunello 2006 showed fragrant floral and cherry aromas, picking up tobacco, tar and licorice flavors married to an elegant frame. The 2006 Brunello Riserva was less open, with more licorice in the aroma and firmer and drier than the normale . Its sweet fruit was wrapped in a muscular grip of tannins, ending with a mineral finish. Floral, licorice, leather and spice flavors marked the 2005 normale , a medium-weight, elegant red that seemed to be developing quickly. The nose of the 2004 normale showed the beginnings of mature elements of licorice, tar, spice and balsamic. Though firm and tannic, it's fruitier than the '06 and '05, with a solid structure underneath. The 2003 was corked. As excellent as the complex licorice, spice and woodsy bouquet of the 2001 normale was, all sweet cherry, plum, leather, tar, tobacco and mineral flavors,

the 2001 Canalicchio di Sopra Brunello Riserva outshone it. Though less forthcoming aromatically, it exhibited more wild, balsamic notes, all backed by a firm, powerful and intense profile that just kept expanding on the lengthy finish. The 2000 normale was a brick color, displaying dried cherry, plum and licorice flavors. Lighter in style and spicy, it was balanced in favor of the tannins, with fine length. "In 2000, the summer was very hot, so we only picked grapes from the east side of the vines," explained Ripaccioli. Still fresh, the bouquet of the 1999 normale reminded me of macerated cherry and strawberry. The palate was racy and complex, boasting licorice and spice notes. Ripaccioli noted that hail destroyed 50 percent of the crop that year, concentrating the remaining grapes. Thus, a 1999 Riserva was made. It featured layers of sweet fruit, licorice and tar matched to a rich, round frame, all firmly structured and very long. The 1995 Riserva was fading to brick in color. Though not very aromatic, in the mouth it was full of sweet fruit and a savory quality. It was just slightly dry and tannic in the end. Bruce Sanderson - Senior editor at Wine Spectator