

Photo courtesy of Ricasoli



Castello di Brolio rises above the vineyards of Gaiole in Chianti, the historic home of the Ricasoli family and one of the defining estates of Chianti Classico.

DEEP ROOTS & NEW DIRECTIONS

Innesto & Sofia Ricasoli

INNESTO IS A NEW TUSCAN WINE VENTURE CREATED BY SOFIA RICASOLI, THE LATEST GENERATION OF ONE OF ITALY'S OLDEST WINEMAKING FAMILIES. THE RICASOLI FAMILY CONNECTION TO WINE STRETCHES BACK TO 1141 AND IS CLOSELY TIED TO THE HISTORY OF CHIANTI CLASSICO ITSELF AND THEIR ESTATE AROUND THE CASTELLO DI BROLIO.



Sofia Ricasoli amongst the vines of Santa Lucia, where she grew up

From a wine perspective, the most important family member to date was Bettino Ricasoli. As well as serving twice as Prime Minister of Italy after unification, he carried out extensive experiments in the vineyards and cellars at Brolio to improve the quality and consistency of Chianti wines.

In the 1870s, he developed what became known as the 'Chianti formula'. He identified Sangiovese as the backbone of the wine because of its structure and ageing potential, softened by smaller amounts of Canaiolo for roundness. Although Chianti production has evolved considerably since then, his work established the idea of a defined blend and gave the region a clearer stylistic identity.

The Ricasoli family also helped professionalise viticulture and winemaking in Chianti through vineyard research, clonal selection and a stronger focus on site expression. This helped establish Chianti Classico as the fine wine region it is today.

Against that backdrop, it made sense that Sofia Ricasoli chose not simply to continue working on the family estate, but to create an independent project with its own identity and style. Innesto means 'graft' in Italian – as in grafting a vine onto established rootstock – and the name reflects the idea of building something new from deep-rooted traditions.

The project is based at Santa Lucia, the house near Montifi in the heart of Gaiole in Chianti,

where Sofia grew up, surrounded by vineyards and olive groves just six kilometres from Brolio. The estate covers around 15 hectares, planted mainly with Sangiovese, and has long been farmed with a strong focus on sustainability.

The vines sit on a plateau, open on all sides, at roughly 350 metres above sea level, with an east-west orientation and constant airflow that helps preserve freshness in the grapes. The soils combine Alberese limestone, rich

in calcium carbonate, with ancient marine deposits of clay and fossil-rich sediment. These elements help give the wines acidity and structure as well as minerality and the ability to age well.

Innesto has now been launched on the UK market with two wines: a Chianti Classico Riserva and a multi-vintage Toscana IGT. I recently had the opportunity to taste both with Sofia herself.

HERE ARE MY NOTES:

2021 Innesto Chianti Classico Riserva Chianti Classico DOCG

100% Sangiovese – aged 18 months in second use 500 litre oak barrels, followed by 10 more months in 3000-5000 litre oak casks.


Classic Sangiovese aromas of pomegranate, red cherry, cranberry, dried herbs and violet sit alongside a touch of oak spice and mocha. Medium-bodied and fresh, it has bright acidity, fine tannins with plenty of drive and energy. Flavours of sour cherry, dried tea leaf, red earth and a lightly stony note linger on the finish. Still youthful, but it should gain more depth and complexity with a bit more time in bottle – 92/100 points.

NV Innesto No 1 Toscana IGT

84% Sangiovese from a blend of the 2021, 2022 and 2023 vintages with 16% Merlot from 2021 – blended in 2024 and aged six months in 3000 litre oak casks.

A more floral, fruit-forward style, with aromas of red cherry, wild berries, dried herbs and flowers, along with hints of beeswax and sweet spice. The palate is supple and easy-going, balancing juicy red fruit with fresh acidity and soft tannins. Herbal notes, a touch of earthiness and a lightly salty, iodine-like character add interest on the finish, alongside a gentle bitter twist that keeps everything fresh and lively. Plenty of depth, energy and drinkability – 94/100 points.

My Conclusions

Taken together, the two wines give a good sense of what Sofia Ricasoli is trying to do with Innesto: wines that feel grounded in Chianti Classico, but with a fresher, more relaxed and contemporary feel. Both are driven by Sangiovese and show plenty of energy, freshness and personality, while still staying true to where they come from. For a first release, they already feel confident and full of promise. Innesto wines and Ricasoli wines are distributed in the UK by John E Fells. 



The large oak casks in which the Innesto wines are aged

Photo courtesy of Ricasoli