



Fattoria Selvapiana, Chianti Rufina 2018, Vigneto Bucerchiale 2016 and Vigneto Erchi 2016 (Dalla Terra Winery Direct, \$19, \$35 and \$50): These days, Chianti is my favorite wine that I hardly ever drink. As much as I am a big fan of Chianti and Chianti Classico, I'm not dining out these days and therefore not ordering it in restaurants, where it is often the ideal choice. That and the urge to explore new and different wines have left Chianti out of my repertoire of late. Consider this column the beginning of my reparation.

The overwhelming majority of my favorite Chianti wines are actually Chianti Classico, a separate wine once encompassed within the broader name of "Chianti." Within the Chianti category per se, Fattoria Selvapiana is the star. It hails from the smallest of the Chianti subzones, Rufina, in the northeastern part of the territory. Here the soils are similar to those of Chianti Classico, but a more northern location and elevations that can range from 200 to 700 meters (655 to 2300 feet) give the wines delicacy and tautness that is particular to the region – particular to Selvapiana, in any case, which is the zone's finest producer.

Among Selvapiana's four current releases, its basic **Chianti Rufina 2018** is the least expensive (\$19), the easiest to enjoy, and the readiest to drink. Despite these connotations of "lesser than," it's the wine I really want to drink, especially now, in July. Its nose is surprising fruity and vibrant for a Chianti; it suggests fresh red cherries, dried herbs, fresh mint and thyme, and licorice. In your mouth, the wine is dry and medium-bodied, a light-ish red with a spine of acidity and just a medium amount of tannin, with fruity flavors similar to its aromas. A noteworthy aspect of this wine is how well it "hangs" in your mouth – fruitiness in the front, acidity up the middle and a combination of fruitiness and textured tannin in the back. It's a complete wine that delivers all across your mouth. Did I mention the price, \$19?

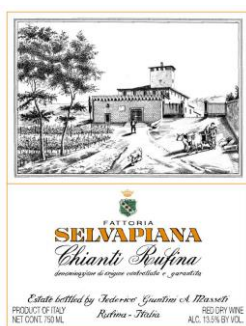
The 2018 Chianti Rufina is 95% Sangiovese with some Canaiolo, Colorino and Malvasia Nera. It is aged in large French-oak barrels, and only briefly.

The newest wine in the Selvapiana lineup is **2016 Vigneto Erchi Chianti Rufina** (\$50). It's the opposite of Selvapiana's basic Chianti Rufina in the sense that it's the richest Chianti, the most ageworthy and the most expensive. When Selvapiana's owners, the Giuntini family, purchased this land in 1999, it was the first purchase they had made since 1897! The 2016 is the first release from this vineyard.

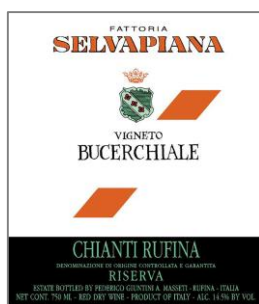
On the nose, this wine is complex but tight, showing savory mineral notes that combine with concentrated red cherry, spicy oak and woody herbal hints. After that tight nose, the wine seems surprisingly rich in flavor when it enters your mouth, all dark berry fruit but in a truly dry wine, not at all the sort of rich, fruity flavor many wine drinkers might be accustomed to. The wine has high acidity and an abundant amount of velvety tannin, but not enough tannin to overwhelm that fruit. Again, there's balance happening here between the aromatics and the structure. The wine maintains the signature structure of a Chianti and yet delivers fruitiness worthy of not only the fine 2016 vintage, but also an apparently fine vineyard and an enlightened winemaking regime. This wine is 100% Sangiovese, from vines that were a massale selection from the Bucerchiale vineyard. It aged 18 months in French oak barriques.

Between these two wines is the **2016 Selvapiana Vigneto Bucerchiale Chianti Rufina Riserva** (\$35). This is the winery's flagship, a single-vineyard, all-Sangiovese wine has a track record of aging beautifully. Stylistically it is closer to the Chianti Rufina than the Vigneto Erchi because it is light on its feet and has an uplifted, fresh energy, but is considerably more concentrated. Its aroma gives me red cherry, a bit of raspberry, a whiff of chocolate and spicy, smoky oak. Although weightier than the basic Rufina, this wine is still medium-bodied, with high acidity (of course) and silky flesh, at least until the wine's raspy tannins register on your tongue. Even then, a silkiness lingers and carries through to the finish. When the wine has some aeration, the tannin doesn't really need a few years to integrate, but in a few years this wine will be all the better, while remaining classically Chianti Rufina.

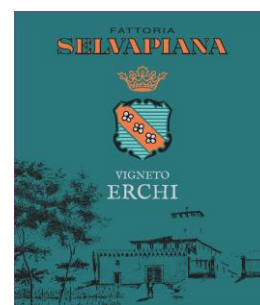
Traditionally, Vigneto Bucerchiale is considered Selvapiana's finest Chianti, but the emergence of Vigneto Erchi might be shuffling the cards. Bucerchiale is a wonderful, classically styled Chianti with a proven pedigree. But for me in this moment, choosing between the drama of Vigneto Erchi and the joyful appeal of the basic Chianti Rufina has me speaking about Bucerchiale as if it is an also-ran. Such is the sad fate of the middle child.



**FATTORIA SELVAPIANA
2018 Chianti Rufina DOCG**



**FATTORIA SELVAPIANA
2016 Vigneto Bucerchiale
Chianti Rufina DOCG**



**FATTORIA SELVAPIANA
2016 Vigneto Erchi
Chianti Rufina DOCG**

