

Italy, Tuscany, Chianti Classico: Nittardi Retrospective

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Vintage	Wines	RP
2016	Nittardi Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi Vigna Doghessa	93+
2018	Nittardi Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi Vigna Doghessa	93
2007	Nittardi Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi	91
2013	Nittardi Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi Vigna Doghessa	90
1988	Nittardi Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi	89

Fattoria Nittardi is one of those lucky wineries that exists between wine and art, and it applies a profoundly creative aesthetic across all its endeavors. The winery is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, and to commemorate the occasion, I’m happy to present this little retrospective of Nittardi Chianti Classico wines from 1988, 1997, 2007, 2013, 2016 and 2018.

Based in Castellina in Chianti, Nittardi was founded in 1981 by the Canali-Femfert family. Peter Femfert, a native of Germany, and Venice-born Stefania Canali fell in love in Florence. The young couple moved to Frankfurt, Germany, where Peter had an art gallery, but they were called back to the sunshine of Tuscany quickly thereafter. They purchased an old stone farmhouse dating back to the 12th century, with surrounding vineyards at the heart of the Chianti Classico appellation.



The Canali-Femfert family

The boutique winery today produces the entry-level Chianti Classico Belcanto (Sangiovese with up to seven complementary grapes in the blend), the Chianti Classico Riserva (Sangiovese with a small part Merlot) and the single-vineyard Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi Vigna Doghessa. This retrospective focuses on that third wine, or the bottles that showcase the artist series labels and wrapping.



From a second property in the warmer Maremma area of Tuscany, the family makes a Vermentino-based white named Ben, a red blend called Ad Astra (with Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah) and the top-shelf Nectar Dei (with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Syrah).



Léon Femfert

For more information about the estate, the wines and the artist series, I spoke with Léon Femfert, who represents the second generation at the helm of Nittardi after his parents.



Fattoria Nittardi was once named Villa Nectar Dei.

1. Could you give us a brief history of your family's wine estate?

Nittardi is a historic property in Castellina in Chianti that during the Middle Ages was known as Villa Nectar Dei. During the Renaissance, Michelangelo Buonarroti purchased the estate, and it remained in his family until the 18th century. My parents arrived at Nittardi in 1981 and discovered a rather abandoned estate that they rebuilt and enlarged step by step over the decades. Besides making organic wine in Chianti Classico, today we also produce wine in Maremma.



2. I've always wondered how estates that use wine art labels decide which piece or artwork, or which featured artist, to showcase on their labels. Are the choices made according to vintage, or are there special rules you follow when matching art and wine?

We choose the artist based on personal preferences and taste and then ask him or her to create an artwork for the label and a second one for the wrapping paper. The artworks are always made especially for Nittardi. Most of the artists come here and create the artworks during their stay at the winery. We explain our philosophy to them and the characteristics of the specific vintage that their artwork will decorate. So, if you look at all our labels and wrappers, you will see many common elements, but artists are free people, fortunately, and it wouldn't make much sense to influence them too much...



3. In this mini vertical, I tasted the Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi from the 1988, 1997 and 2007 vintages and the Chianti Classico Casanuova di Nittardi Vigna Doghessa from the 2013, 2016 and 2018 vintages. The older vintages have stood up well to the test of time, with balanced acidity and good fruit concentration. How would you characterize the Nittardi terroir, and the Vigna Doghessa in particular?

Nittardi lies in the northern part of the commune of Castellina in Chianti, surrounded by oak forests in one of the wildest and untouched parts of Chianti Classico. The vineyards are all between 450 and 550 meters in elevation and have mainly south or southeast exposures. A mix of alberese (limestone) and galestro (schist) characterize our soils. Alberese gives power and depth to our wines, while galestro adds freshness and elegance. Vigna Doghessa was replanted in 2008 on a southeast-facing hill with a very high density. The name pays respect to my Venetian mother and to all women, as the “Doghessa” was a sort of female chieftain in the historic Republic of Venice.



4. How would you describe the individual character of Castellina in Chianti as opposed to the other villages that make up the greater Chianti Classico appellation?

Castellina is one of the historic villages of Chianti Classico, and you can find many different characteristics, which make Chianti Classico as a whole so special, inside our municipality. We have various altitudes (from 250 to 600 meters above sea level), soils and exposures. We also have very small and very big producers in our area who follow different commercial goals, and the style of the wines show this. Besides these traits, we have a unique light in Castellina, and the wines reflect this. Our wines always have reasonable power and softness

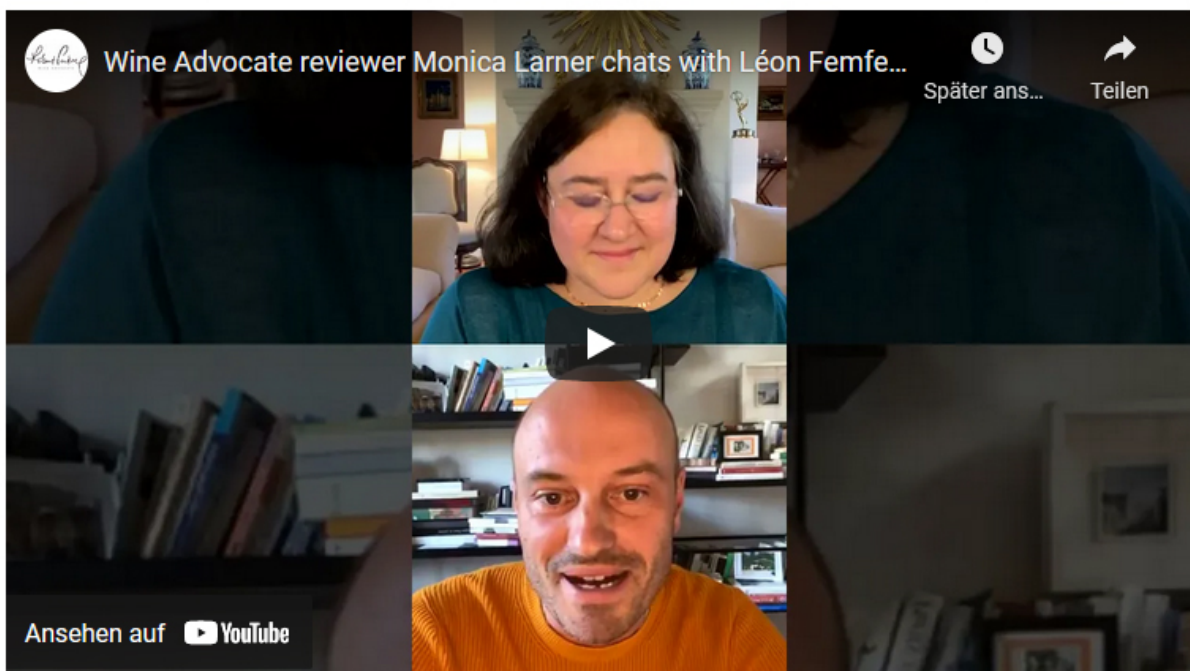
without being bulky. Thanks to the mix mentioned above, the wines of Castellina are among the most balanced wines you can find in Chianti Classico.



5. There is a lot of discussion now regarding climate change. How are you dealing with these fluid and uncertain changes to your environment?

Climate change with extreme seasons and less rainfall is real. In existing vineyards, we have been modifying our approach to the canopy management for years: We avoid leaf removal and edging. We do less plowing of the soil and use mulch made with late cuttings of cover crops to diminish evaporation. New vineyards are planted in cooler spots, with different Sangiovese clones and fewer vines per hectare to avoid water stress.

For more on our conversation, you can watch the one-hour Instagram Live interview I recorded with Léon Femfert earlier this year.



All photos are courtesy of the winery except the banner image at the top and the two smaller side-by-side pictures of their bottles and bottle wrappers.