

THE **tastingpanel** MAGAZINE

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Ole Smoky
**TAKING TENNESSEE
BY STORM**

PHOTO: JASON MYERS

Robert Hall, CEO of Ole Smoky Moonshine, with Joe Baker, founder of Ole Smoky Moonshine and Yeehaw Brewing Company, and Will Perkins, General Manager of the new Ole Smoky Distillery in Nashville, TN.

The Ransom Note with David Ransom

The Ransom Note is a monthly column by Tasting Panel East Coast Editor David Ransom. Each month, David connects readers with some of the people, products, and events making news along the Eastern Seaboard.



Texan producers recently gathered at City Winery in Manhattan.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TEXAS WINES

In Regions Large and Small, Quality Is Key

WINES FROM TUSCANY AND TEXAS HIT THEIR MARK

by David Ransom



Patroon restaurateur Ken Aretsky with Capezzana's Beatrice Contini Bonacossi.



The lineup from Capezzana, Tuscany's oldest wine estate.

Winemakers' spring promotional tours often focus on whites and rosés. But I prefer to give all colors of wine year-round love, so for this column I'm tossing seasonality aside to report on a couple of events that made me eager to book flights to their regions of focus: Tuscany's Carmignano DOCG and Texas.

First, during a wonderful dinner at restaurateur Ken Aretsky's Patroon on Manhattan's East 46th Street, I got to know the wines of Capezzana, Tuscany's oldest producing wine estate. Established in A.D. 804, it's also the region's largest producer of its smallest DOCG, Carmignano. This tiny appellation first rose to prominence in the 1700s, when Catherine de Medici married King Henry of France and—having fallen in love with French wine as well as its royalty—brought what were most likely Cabernet Franc cuttings back to Italy to plant them with the local grapes.

Eventually, that other Cabernet—Sauvignon—began to play a more prominent role in the region, and today Carmignano DOCG producers must blend a minimum of 10% into their

Sangiovese-based wines. Owned by the Contini Bonacossi family since 1920, Capezzana, with its DOC Barco Reale di Carmignano and DOCG Villa di Capezzana and Trefiano labels (imported by Mionetto), is the invariable leader in the region: These are the original Super Tuscans, and they're worth a pour.

Next, at City Winery in Lower Manhattan during an Uncork Texas Wine event, I spent an afternoon getting to know some of the Lone Star State's producers currently excelling at their craft. From three in the mid-1970s, the number of wineries here has risen to about 500 today, making Texas the nation's fifth-largest producer. Not a state to play by the rules, it grows almost 100 different grape varieties, from Gewürztraminer to Cabernet Sauvignon, with a current trend toward white and red Rhône and mostly red Italian varieties. Having had little exposure to Texan selections, I was very impressed with the quality of the offerings—all gold and even double gold medal-winning efforts. I now truly believe that they belong on anyone's list or store shelf. ■■