

Excerpt from SLOW WINE

PANZANO IN CHIANTI (FI)

MONTE BERNARDI

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In visiting Monte Bernardi ... one is struck by the clarity with which the American Schmelzer family ... have thrown themselves into the local fabric, and have quickly grasped the Chianti spirit in a manner, which is authentic and sincere. The Schmelzer siblings – Michael, running the production, and Jennifer, the commercial side – are here with their whole heart. ... Michael's sensitivity, research and experience have brought him to farm the vineyards biodynamically, with an approach firmly based in pragmatism, good sense, with little of the spiritual (esoteric).

15 hectares/37 acres – 42,000 bottles – 10% discount if you have book with you when you purchase

THE HISTORY – In visiting Monte Bernardi, beyond the striking natural beauty of the surroundings in which this farm is situated, one is struck by the clarity with which the American Schmelzer family, who acquired the farm in 2003, have thrown themselves into the local fabric, and quickly grasped the Chianti spirit in a manner, which is authentic and sincere. The Schmelzer siblings – Michael, running the production, and Jennifer, the commercial side – are here with their whole heart.

THE VINEYARDS – situated in soils rich in galestro, and well exposed and ventilated, the vineyards are grassed in alternating rows; shoot tipping is avoided, turning to shoot wrapping instead in order to retain the plant's equilibrium. Michael's sensitivity, research and experience have brought him to farm the vineyards biodynamically, with an approach firmly based in pragmatism, good sense, with little of the spiritual (esoteric).

THE WINES – in the cellar interventions are few and select, there is no clarification or filtration, and at most, two or three rackings in the life of the wine. Pressing is done in a basket press, vinification in cement tanks, aging in wood of varying sizes - never new, and minimal sulfur is added. The resulting wines have character and soul, even if sometimes they are not exempt of some youthful rusticity. The **Retromarcia Chianti Classico 2012**, selected as a vini quotidiano, (30,000 Btls.; 13€) has a typical "Chiantigiano" profile, earthy and floral, and subtle and sharp in the mouth, with a long, clean finish. Mature and rich, but still reticent in showing itself, the **Monte Bernardi Chianti Classico Riserva 2011** (5,000 Btls.; 17€) will need a little time to express its potential. For those who love "tuscan blends" **Tzingana 2011** (cabernet sauvignon & franc, merlot; 1,700 Btls. 38€) is very well made.