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### **Monte Bernardi Chianti – a renaissance**

Tuscany is, of course, renaissance territory and, when I visited Monte Bernardi in 2005, the vineyards and winery were undergoing a slow but sure renovation. Purchased by the Schmelzer family in 2003, the estate had in fact only been making wine since 1992.

Since 2004, winemaker Michael Schmelzer has been putting his own stamp on the wines. In 2005, I reported that his non-interventionist instincts were leading him to reign back on oak and pursue biodynamic techniques in the vineyard. With lovely fruit purity, freshness and mineral undertones, his 2004 barrel samples looked very promising indeed. In January, I met Michael's sister Jennifer at a tasting of their wines and was delighted to see, indeed taste, how the Schmelzers' vision has paid off. Though the 2005s were a little diffuse (it rained during harvest), the 2006s showed a lovely subtle concentration – these are restrained, fresh, textured wines with a real sense of place about them.

**Monte Bernardi Chianti Classico 2006** – with longer on the lees, this is textured, tight and long; very fresh and youthful without an ounce of excess fat for which I like it very much. A refreshing very food-friendly alternative to more commercial styles. Around £19.49

**Monte Bernardi Sa'etta Chianti Classico 2006** – very, very good with a beautiful saturation of red and black currant fruit in the mouth with liquorice, spice and mineral notes. Long with fine supporting tannins it's surprisingly approachable now, with a lovely texture. This 100% Sangiovese comes from the best parcel on the estate, which is located in prime Chianti Classico territory – Panzano's "Conca d'Oro" (golden bowl).  
Around £28.99

**Monte Bernardi Tzingana Toscana IGT 2006** – a very vital wine, lifted and floral with a lovely weight and concentration of black fruits fruit; long and very young, with present but ripe, textured tannins. Would benefit from a few years in bottle to flesh out and unfurl, but will surely blossom beautifully. Around £46