



## Best Italian Wine Value

*Piccini's 2004 Sasso Al Poggio is a truly super Tuscan Red.*

QRW STAFF

For us, finding fine Italian vino at a price that doesn't prompt heart palpitations is still a challenge. Most Super Tuscan, Brunello, Barolo, and Barbaresco have prices that are surreal. Even Chianti Classico Riservas are getting up, and it seems that most of the fine Italian wine production is not for ordinary mortals, but for high end restaurants, collectors, and investors. These are institutions and people that keep wine prices high, and there is little we can do about it because the demand is obviously there.

Part of our Italian dilemma, however, was solved when, in an autumn 2008 blind tasting of medium priced Italian reds (\$25 to \$40), we discovered a wine by Piccini. The producer's name was a surprise because most of the Piccini production we knew was their simple Chianti, a palatable wine nicely priced, but without much merit. It was good bistro wine, nothing more. Then we tasted **Piccini's 2004 Sasso Al Poggio**, and we were impressed, even more so when we discovered the retail price: \$30 — a case, with discount, cost us \$275.

We have to stress the price of the Piccini Sasso Al Poggio because it comes from the 2004 vintage, which in Tuscany is a five-star vintage by anybody's ratings. On a case basis then, the 2004 Sasso Al Poggio cost us \$23 a bottle. Not only is the wine drinking beautifully at present, it has many more years to go.



*Mario Piccini and his sister Martina*

So, we have immediate approachability with significant longevity for \$23. Buy all you can.

We got in touch with Mario Piccini, who, with his sister, runs the winery. We praised the Sasso Al Poggio and the price. "I'm glad you liked both," he said, "because we're now getting into the U.S. market with our more serious wines — Chianti Classico Riservas and our Valiano wines. AV Brands in Maryland is handling our wines. We also have a **2001 Valiano 'Vino in Musica'**, a Tuscan wine. It's delicious. You have to taste it ... Another important thing you should know is that

we cut production at the winery by about a half million cases. We're producing about 600,000. My father would never believe it," he said laughing. "We are very serious about our quality." Of the quality of the rest of Piccini's wines, we subsequently discovered, there is no doubt, and will report on them in the Spring 2009 issue.

As for the **2004 Piccini Sasso Al Poggio, IGT Toscana**, the wine is rich with strawberry/raspberry aromas. More of same in the flavors. Richly textured, soft and smooth, with floral raspberry notes and gentle spice. The wine is generous and finishes well. It's the kind of wine which, at a blind tasting, you simply write "yes," because the wine speaks for itself, and writes its own script. ☞

Photo: JAMES YOUNG