

# Azienda Agricola UCCELLIERA

Tuscany

I met Andrea Cortonesi at the end of 1995 and we started our collaboration in 1996.

Entering this farm's bumpy road, approaching one of the oddest-looking stone houses I have ever seen - all on top of itself with no right angles and a cock-eyed chimney (turns out to be over 700 years old) - being beset upon by a flock of heckling hens and a pack of yipping dogs which might best be described as new-wave mutts, and then seeing Andrea Cortonesi standing tall with his finely etched mustache and goatee, flanked by his diminutive mamma and papa, all three grinning well, I wasn't sure if I was in the Cuckoo's Nest or a Looney Tune. Keep in mind, the name of the estate, Uccelliera, means Birdcage. But when the dust settled, and as the creatures quieted down, a tour began of one of Italy's winery gems.

Andrea Cortonesi assumed the first 2 hectares of this gem in the southern Abate area of Montalcino in the mid-eighties. He was born and bred in Montalcino (went to grade school with Livio Sassetti's sons) and has worked in Montalcino's wine-world his entire career. Through the sweat of his brow he was able to buy Azienda Agricola Uccelliera when the Ciacci estate put it up for sale. In the ensuing decade he renewed the vineyards, built attractive and intelligently conceived new structures for vinification, aging and a new dwelling. To date, though the goatee is gone, he has not changed one stone of the ancient farmhouse, but the new buildings set off its unique contours more than ever.

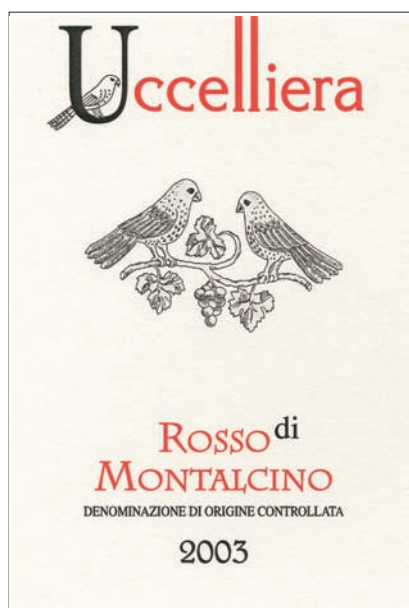
Andrea now owns 3.5 hectares of vineyards and contracts other 2.5, all planted with Sangiovese. To these 6 hectares approximately 0.3 hectares, planted with Cabernet and Merlot, were added. The real coming of age of Uccelliera was marked with the 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 vintages. Tasting

the wines in the cantina was a most edifying experience; not only as to the silky finesse of the wines, but also as to the nature of these vintages and how precisely and appropriately Andrea worked within them. Starting with the 1993 vintage a non DOC wine, "Rapace", was produced: a blend of Sangiovese, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, the name, meaning "bird of prey", pointing out the aggressiveness of Cabernet.



## **Brunello di Montalcino**

Zone: *Castelnuovo dell'Abate*  
Varietal: *Sangiovese 100%*  
Vineyard Ext.: *6 hectares*  
Average Prod.: *12,000-15,000 btl*



## **Rosso di Montalcino**

Zone: *Castelnuovo dell'Abate*  
Varietals: *Sangiovese 100%*  
Vineyard Ext.: *5 hectares*  
Average Prod.: *12,000-15,000 btl*