

## CASTELLO DI VOLPAIA EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Castello di Volpaia is run by the passionate food and wine presence of Giovannella Stianti and her family. The family has carefully restored 12th century buildings that make up the village of Volpaia, retaining the original fortified walls and architecture of the period. Carefully reconstructing the interior of many of the ancient buildings, modern equipment was installed in the ancient caves and viaducts that wind underneath the village to make and store wine, vinegar, and olive oil. When one strolls through the serene peaceful village you would never know of the bustling commerce below. Rare climbing roses cover the ancient walls of the village that offer stunning views of cypress, pine and olives trees, and rows of vineyards. Harmony is created between the ancient structures and contemporary farming.



The village of Volpaia has historical fame as the home of the Della Volpaia family of clock and instrument makers. They were well known for making artillery spheres, clocks, compasses and notturlabi. The notturlabi is a hand-held astronomical instrument that gives the time during the night based on the position of celestial bodies. The Medici family commissioned the most famous of these instruments.

Great producers of olive oil, the family suffered a big loss in the devastating frost of 1985. Only 79 of Volpaia's 2,782 survived the intense weather. With unyielding determination the family replanted 27 acres of carefully selected varieties and clones of Frantoio, Leccino, and Maraiolo olive trees. Taking great care in selecting olive fruit for harvest, they insist on hand picking, carefully washing, and then pressing using the sinolea technique. The oil is centrifuged and then allowed to settle. The result is oil with a bright green color and notes of green tomato and artichoke on the palate.

The family is proud to be the first license to produce vinegar in Tuscany. By law, the acetaia, where the vinegar is made, must be at least one kilometer away from the nearest wine cellar to protect the wines from the acidifying bacteria in the vinegar. After careful research the family decided to use the traditional method known as truciolo or the wood shavings system to produce their vinegar. In order to preserve the wine's complexity, each new batch of vinegar has a specific bacterium that is selected. Once chosen, the bacteria are reproduced by gradually adding wine up to 300 liters. This process takes from 20 to 30 days. The vinegar starter is then moved to 2,000 liter tanks that hold 3 stainless steel baskets covered in freshly chopped shavings of seasoned oak and chestnut wood. Slowly rotating arms stir the liquid over the shavings where the vinegar bacteria develop. Particulates from the wine drop to the bottom of the tank and are then pumped to the top of the tank to sift through the shavings again. This process continues until the wine ferments and acetifies. This process takes 20 to 25 days. The red wine vinegar is then allowed to age an additional 12 months in chestnut and then oak barrels. The white wine vinegar is aged by the same means but just for 3 months. This slow and methodical technique develops vinegar with the ultimate character and bouquet.

Keeping with the family's passion for food and wine, cooking classes are offered in the beautiful kitchens within the Castello di Volpaia walls. Guests can enjoy world-class accommodations while learning the culinary arts of the region using their oils and vinegars and sipping the magnificent wines of the Volpaia cellars.

- Region: Radda in Chianti, Tuscany
- Olive cultivars: Frantoio, Leccino, Moraiolo
- Filtered, Estate-bottled, 250 ml/8.45 oz, 500 ml/16.9 oz
- Description: Transparent green color, unripe tomato and artichoke aroma. Rich thick texture is dominant, carrying a lengthy ripe fruit and mildly spicy finish.
- Traditions: Perfectly matched with simple foods such as fresh greens, grilled meats, or a bean salad.