2012 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO RISERVAS ARE WORTH THE TIME The 2012 vintage may be one of the first vintages in a long time for Brunello di Montalcino when the riserva designation really counted. At least that's my impression after tasting about 70 2012 Brunello di Montalcino Riservas earlier this year. The designation is supposed to specially classify Brunellos that deserve an extra year of aging before being released on the market; however, many times it seems to be about the same quality as the normal bottlings with a few exceptions. Happily, this doesn't seem to be the case for a large number of riservas in 2012 that I tasted. And I recommend buying the top-rated ones. "We really focused on the quality this year with our riserva," admits Paolo Bianchini, one of the owners of Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona. "With the extra aging in wood as well as

the overall excellence of the wines," adds Guido Andretta of Vitanza. I also spoke to some wine producers who underlined how their understanding of dealing with hot and dry years helped them make more balanced wines in 2012. "We really came into our own with the riserva in 2012," says Jens Schmidt of Rasina. "It was a fantastic vintage." Overall, out of the 66 riservas reviewed this year, 16 of them were rated more than 95 points on our JamesSuckling.com 100-point scale. They're all really exciting and satisfying to taste. So, try some yourself and see what I mean. — CEO/Editor James Suckling Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona Brunello di Montalcino Vigna di Pianrosso Santa Caterina d'Oro Riserva 2012 97/100 - Some glossy oak warmth across the ripe red cherry and raspberry aromas on the nose. With walnuts, blonde tobacco, sweet brown spices and earthy nuances too. The