Buyer Beware: Everything You Need to Know About the 2015 Brunello Vintage If you follow Italian wine, you've likely heard the buzz surrounding the just-released 2015 vintage of Brunello di Montalcino, with many pundits claiming it's one of the best vintages ever. Coming on the heels of the washout 2014 vintage, unsurprisingly, a number of local wine makers have been touting the greatness of 2015 well before its official 2020 release. Time for a reality check. With few exceptions, vintages are almost never even across the board in Montalcino. Variations between altitudes, soils and microclimates, as well as producer experience and styles, make such sweeping acclaim almost impossible to apply to Brunello. But in all my years of tasting Brunello, never have I seen a vintage with such an erratic performance like 2015. An overall hot and dry vintage, there are

beware" vintage. The Good The good news is that there are some stunning 2015 Brunellos, like Il Marroneto's Madonna delle Grazie that earned one of my rare 100-point ratings. Loaded with finesse, it's vibrant, impeccably balanced and one of the few from the vintage with serious aging potential. Of the more than 200 wines reviewed, 18 bottlings scored 95 points or higher. Many of my top wines come from high-altitude vineyards that generally perform better in hot, dry vintages. Most hail from the denomination's standout producers that have years, if not generations, of winemaking experience. While the classic areas just south and north of the town of Montalcino did well overall, this vintage depended more on what producers did, or didn't do, in the vineyards as opposed to specific subzones. Even some of the most renowned areas of the