The 2012 Brunello Vintage is a Return to Finesse by Kerin O'Keefe Defying the intense heat of the growing season, many 2012 Brunellos have the vibrancy usually found in cooler vintages. They boast juicy red berry, noble tannins and impeccable balance that will allow them to age well for years. Out of the 140 Brunello 2012s I've tasted so far, 88 wines were rated 90 points or higher, with 20 earning 94 points or above. This vintage marked a return to finesse, enticing aromas and generally lower alcohol levels when compared to other recent releases. The 2012s even have more consistent quality across the denomination than the highly acclaimed 2010s. The latter were a mixed bag divided between majestic wines boasting structure and finesse, and subpar wines marred by low acidity, cooked fruit and alcohol of 15% abv or more. Quality is more uniform in 2012, but

defenseless to adjust to the extreme heat, in 2012 the entire summer was hot and dry, so the grapes had the whole growing season to adapt. Grape quality was outstanding, with small bunches and small berries, which are ideal for Sangiovese." Constanti continued, "2012 was a great vintage in this part of the growing zone, where high vineyard altitudes generated fresher temperatures," adding that in order to retain fresh acidity, he harvested a bit earlier than usual, starting on September 20th. The estate, which only makes a riserva bottling in exceptional vintages, will be releasing a 2012 riserva next year. Though quality is high, quantity isn't. 2012 will be remembered as the smallest crop in the last ten years, a result of heat and intense drought that reduced yields. Overall production was down 14% compared to 2011, but many producers have told me their