



## La Chertosa

2012 Reserve Sangiovese, Sonoma Valley, Sonoma, California

### Sam Sebastiani Comes Full Circle With the Launch of La Chertosa

When an industry stalwart like **Sam Sebastiani** returns to his Sonoma winemaking roots, it's cause to take notice. Now in his mid-70s, Sebastiani has launched **La Chertosa**, a small, deeply personal label that celebrates and honors his family's winemaking tradition. In many ways, it brings the Sebastiani story full circle, stitching together the disparate parts of a family story more than 120 years in the making.

La Chertosa begins not with its California launch in mid-2014 but in the late 19th century at **La Certosa di Farneta**, a monastery in a small Tuscan village near Lucca, Italy. It was there that Sebastiani's grandfather, **Samuele**, first tended to vines and learned to make wine. He took those skills with him to California in the 1890s, founding the **Sebastiani** winery in the town of Sonoma in 1904. For La Chertosa, the anglicized version of the monastery name, Sebastiani is farming some of the same blocks of red-soiled Wildwood Vineyard that his grandfather worked with more than 100 years ago.

"It's amazing; I've had the good fortune of retracing my grandfather's steps," said Sam Sebastiani. "I started going back to the monastery 30 or 40 years ago, and I've been there some 20-plus times. You get a feeling for what he left, for what he learned and then what he brought to Sonoma. If you go to that valley, it's got red soil. It has a very, very similar feeling, when you look at the hillsides and topography, to Sonoma. I used to joke that I thought I took the wrong plane and got back out."

Sebastiani hopes that this brand will be "a nice, simple business" that might one day be taken over by a grandchild. He'd retired from the wine industry several years ago, instead focusing on farming and wetland restoration on his property in Nebraska. "I hadn't

been out in the vineyards for a while, and people started asking me what was going on. I said, 'Wait a minute, I used to do this every day, and I

haven't been doing it'. It spurred me on to look back at what I really enjoy doing," he said. "I had switched over; I was farming corn, sugar beets and alfalfa in Nebraska. It's a whole different type of farming. You're basically farming commodities. It doesn't have quite the same allure to my psyche that winemaking does."

Sebastiani described that allure as the annual challenge to achieve a perfect wine—which, interestingly enough, he isn't sure can actually be achieved. But the allure is in the attempt. "What you do is every year you try to get close to this ideal flavor profile that you might have for a particular varietal," he said. "Then you're done, and you've gotten really close, and you think, 'If I had just done this or if I had just done that...' So then you have to wait 12 months to redo it. You effectively have that game going on. It's like perfecting any other sport. That's kind of what keeps me going. You can get close, but I don't think there is such a thing as a perfect wine."

He believes every wine has an arc of life, one that may have mysterious dips and bounces in quality. So, he trusts his palate and his decades in the vineyards to determine flavors. "There's a real value in tasting the grape itself in the field. That's what gets you closer to the type of wine you're going to make, not some chemical numbers," he said. "I am attempting to develop a flavor profile in each vintage that will be liked. I have a philosophy that I don't want any part of the wine to be

overpowering, so it's a full and rounded approach as opposed to a sharp punch to the stomach." Sebastiani works with winemaker **Derek Irwin**, as well as enologists **Zach Long** and **Blair Guthrie**, to create the final wines.



Price	\$35
Case Production	103 cases
Blend	88% Sangiovese, 8% Petite Sirah, 4% Malbec
pH	3.51
TA	2.9
Brix	N/A
Residual Sugar	0.19%
Alcohol	14.6%