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## An Italian red with a California feel

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The interior of Tuscany, Italy, is recognized for the well-known wines of Chianti Classico and Brunello di Montalcino, while 90 miles southwest of Florence, along the Etruscan coast, are some of the most prestigious wines of Italy.

Within the coastal wine-growing region of Maremma is the village of Bolgheri, which serves as residence for these wines. It seems like a rather unlikely location, with some terraced vineyards running parallel to the blue-green waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea, but the reflecting sun and coastal breezes are an ideal breeding ground for the international varietals of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

The success in creating a Bordeaux-styled red blend in this region was initiated in the late 1960s by those with a pioneering spirit wishing to push the envelope. These early innovators were less concerned about following tradition and 100 percent Sangiovese but instead were focused on what was best suited for these soils.

The iconic wines included Ornellaia, Sassicaia, Masseto and Le Macchiole. Once referred to as “Super Tuscan,” regional wines are recognized as Toscana Indicazione Geografica Tipica, or IGT, referring to the fact that their style represents the typical geographic character of the region, while the wines from Bolgheri advanced to the more strict DOC guidelines in 1994.

One of the 38 members of the Bolgheri consortium is Aia Vecchia, which is owned by the Pellegrini family. They have been growing grapes for several generations in this region and own 118 acres of vineyards separated into two distinct estates, 74 acres of which are under the Bolgheri DOC. They produce a Vermentino white along with three red wines, with the Lagone being an important pillar of their production.

**The 2011 Lagone Aia Vecchia IGT was first released in 1998 and is clearly more New World California than European in its expression. The opaque color boasts of exotic incense and ripe blueberry compote. The sweet fruit is freshly picked with a slightly rustic edge layered with black sage, tea and anise that quickly reveal supple, silky tannins along the side. The ripeness is noted with a touch of heat in the back that quickly dissipates. This wine is long and generous in personality.**