



## An Ancient Italian Grape, Plus a Serious Sonoma Pinot and a Texas Sparkler

[September 30, 2025](#) / [james.brock@mac.com](mailto:james.brock@mac.com) /

Ciliegiolo. That's an Italian word. It's fun to [pronounce](#). It's fun to drink. And it leads this edition of *Tasting Notes*.

Ciliegiolo is a grape that originated in Italy, where it is found primarily, if not solely, in Tuscany, Lazio, Liguria, Puglia, and Umbria. The word translated into English means “small cherry;” its berries resemble that stone fruit and the wines made from them are redolent of cherries. It is not a variety that you are likely to have heard about on a regular basis, but those who know it are well aware of its value and importance. And since winemakers are paying more attention to it as a grape to shine on its own, as opposed to mainly blending it with Sangiovese to “soften” the latter's profile, I hope this ancient grape will come to attract your attention on a more regular basis.

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Back to Ciliegiolo, and a bottle of wine I sampled recently that leads this edition of “Tasting Notes.” It's produced by Badia a Coltibuono and goes by the helpful name Chill Ya Jolo. It, too, is fun to pronounce, and I loved drinking it. It's 100 percent Ciliegiolo, and sells for around \$20. Yes, you should chill this wine well before drinking it.

Ciliegiolo: A grape that deserves wider recognition.

The 2024 Chill Ya Jolo was imminently approachable — I am looking forward to sampling the 2025 — and I tasted it after the bottle reached 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Winemaker Roberto Stucchi Prinetti, aided by consultant Maurizio Castelli, know what it means to put together a wine that makes you smile, and this one certainly does that. It comes with 12 percent alcohol, and 20,000 bottles were produced after aging in stainless steel.

Drink this with pizza, scallops, or a good hamburger.

Labels are made to attract the eye and impart information about the contents of a wine bottle. The ladybug (coccinella in Italian) on this one calls attention to Badia a Coltibuono's approach to sustainable organic farming, and the Hesse quote is apt: Beauty is in the details.

Back to a little pertinent history now. Badia a Coltibuono — Abbey of the Good Harvest (or Cultivation) — was established in 1051 by Giovanni Gualberto (sainted in 1193 by Pope Celestine III), who founded the Benedictine Vallumbrosan order. It functioned as an abbey until 1810, when it was unable to withstand Napoleon's assault on the Church. Michele Giuntini, a banker from Florence and ancestor of the current owners, the Stucchi Prinetti family, bought the property in 1846, and that began the estate's journey to becoming a leader in the Chianti Classico universe.

This wine is liquid ruby; holding a glass to the light makes the Chill Ya Jolo even more inviting. The cherry aroma here is profound — it made me think of a time I had a particularly fresh basket of Lapins cherries and after rinsing sliced a few of them and caught their scent. A little heady, lots of vivacity.

I paired this wine with seared sea scallops; I put the Maillard reaction to good use and made sure that the scallops showed its effect, because that's a mix of flavors you'll remember for a long while. The wine's brightness and lively fruit seemed made for the seafood, which was prepared with a briny vanilla cream sauce.

Chill Ya Jolo might be seen as a summer wine, but in my house wines similar to it are consumed around the year. No reason to put strictures on matters such as these.