



**CASTELLO
DI CASOLE**

A BELMOND HOTEL
TUSCANY

PRESS KIT

CASTELLO DI CASOLE



A grand
retreat steeped
in legend

CASTELLO DI CASOLE



THE ART OF HOSPITALITY

Immersed within rolling hills of breathtaking Tuscan nature, Castello di Casole, A Belmond Hotel, Tuscany, is an authentic farm estate that invites you to live from the land.

An active working farm, Castello di Casole originated as a medieval castle on an ancient Etruscan site. The noble Bargagli family then cultivated its lands, expanding the monumental estate into the astonishing natural environment you see today. Deeply rooted in the agricultural life of Tuscany, a rich heritage inspires the modern vision of Castello di Casole.

Beguiling outdoor beauty and authentic rural living form the basis of this bucolic estate. The farm-to-table cuisine is derived from fresh produce sourced daily on site. Evenings of rustic glamour promise captivating sunsets, cocktails crafted from local botanicals and sensational stargazing. A vision of self-sufficiency and sustainability, Castello di Casole has become a guardian of the land, preserving, enriching and sharing in its produce, so guests can continue to enjoy its infinite charm.

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AN EXCEPTIONAL HISTORY

Castello di Casole was once a village, with a school, a church, a priest's house and an extensive farm that produced olive oil, wine, wheat and cheese. It was owned by the noble Bargagli family, whose private chapel still stands in this history-steeped enclave.

Located in the village of Querceto, near Casole d'Elsa, Castello di Casole commands an unparalleled location in Tuscany's bucolic heart. The village is named after the oak forests that surround the estate: quercia means oak tree in Italian. Early documents, dating from 998 AD, allude to the castle of Querceto as a quadrangular complex with an interior courtyard and four towers at each corner. One of these towers, the last vestige of the original castle, is still visible today. After the 14th century, the castle slipped into decline and was partially demolished.

Life under the Bargaglis

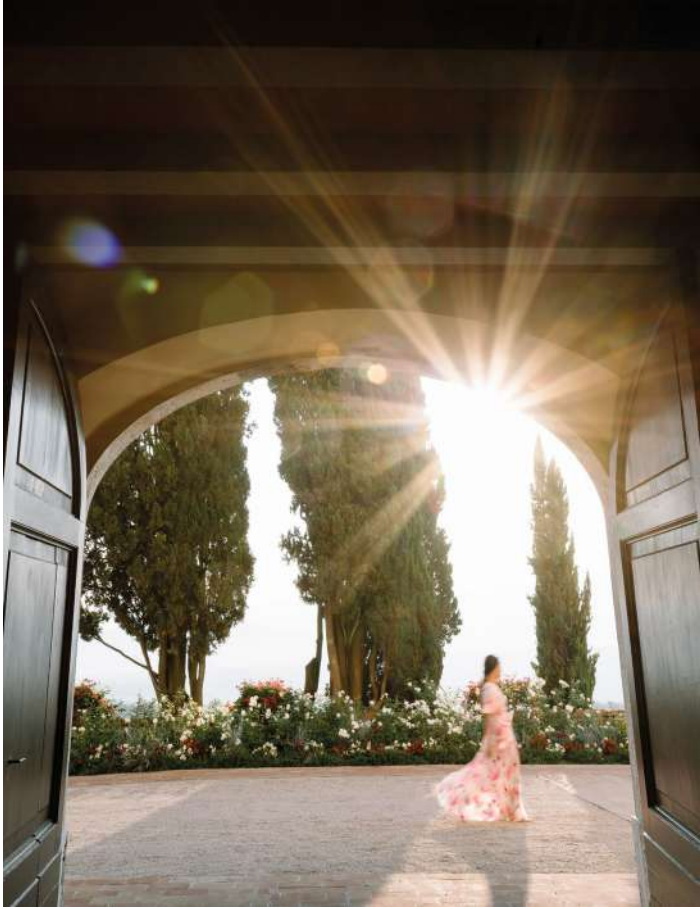
Querceto began a flourishing new existence under the ownership of the aristocratic Bargagli family, local to Casole d'Elsa since the mid-17th century. Over the next 300 years they developed the estate into an independent village and highly productive farm.

In the 18th century, the castle underwent major renovation, resulting in the villa style that you see today. Attached to it was an extensive patchwork of fields, managed according to a sharecropping system by the farmers who lived in dwellings dotting the estate.

The main villa - the former castle - was the master's house. The village enjoyed its own church, San Tommaso a Querceto, built in the 1830s when the parish population counted 258 people.

By the 20th century, the Bargagli Estate in Querceto comprised over 30 farms, two villas and 2,200 hectares of cultivated and forested land. It was now one of the most important and expansive private properties in Italy. The self-sufficient village had its own school (Villa Scuola today), the aforementioned church (now a beautiful events space), a priest's house (Suites of Casa del Prete), a wine cellar (transformed into Essere Spa), and a limonaia built to house lemon trees in the winter (today's Limonaia suites). The Bargaglis' private family chapel can still be seen on the main village road.

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Thriving businesses

As well as wheat, wine, oil and cheese, the estate produced wool, silk cocoons and mulberry leaves. Creative industries, such as spinning, weaving and carpentry, sprang up in the village. On site were two furnaces that produced the tiles adorning the guestrooms today. Marquis Piero Bargagli was passionate about archaeology and, from 1870-75, carried out a series of excavations that unearthed a hoard of artefacts from the Etruscan age (5th to 3rd century BC). Many of these are displayed in the Library and Essere Spa at Castello di Casole, with further items exhibited in Casole d'Elsa's archaeological museum.

Glamorous new era

The end of sharecropping in the late 1950s led to the Bargagli family selling the estate. A few years later, Querceto was bought by Count Edoardo Visconti di Modrone Erba, the brother of world-renowned film director Luchino Visconti, who used to spend his summers here. The grand parties they held – to which movie stars from across the globe were invited – are the stuff of legend. Visconti added to the estate by building a large cattle barn and a hunting reserve.

In 1979, the property was restored and sold to a Milan-based company, that was considering developing Querceto into a tourist destination. However, in 2000, the estate was purchased by a private owner, who enlisted the services of renowned Italian designer Alessandro Mendini (1931-2019) to restore the villa. He also commissioned the construction of the Mendini houses, now our nine magnificent Oliveto Suites. In 2007, a US company acquired the estate and began turning it into a luxury resort. In 2018, Belmond acquired the stunning property. A year later, Belmond proudly became part of the LVMH group.

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RISTORANTE TOSCA

Fresh produce is honoured at Tosca, set on a panoramic terrace with spellbinding views of the Tuscan hills or an indoor sophisticated and relaxed ambience among Italian textiles. Menus celebrate Italian favourites crafted with homemade pasta, locally sourced meat and fish and garden-fresh produce, as well as Castello di Casole's own-label red wines, olive oil and honey. Executive Chef Daniele Sera's passion for simple, tasty dishes with a focus on seasonality, freshness and respect for raw ingredients informs every delicacy on his à la carte menu.

OPENING HOURS:

Lunch: 12:30 - 15:00

Dinner: 19:30 - 22:00

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Meet Executive Chef Daniele Sera

Chef Daniele's distinguished career spans nearly 40 years. Born in Sarzana, in the Ligurian province of La Spezia, his passion for cooking came from both his Tuscan mother, who was a private cook for noble Florentine families, and from his Ligurian father. The smell of soffritto (mirepoix) drifting through the house every day is indelibly stamped on his memory.

In 1984, he began his culinary trajectory, honing his craft at prestigious establishments including the St Regis Grand Hotel in Rome, the three-Michelin-star restaurant Domaine Les Crayères in Reims and the equally starry Enoteca Pinchiorri in Florence. It was during a stint in Japan that he mastered fish and seafood techniques, which he showcases at Tosca in Tuscan Archipelago fish dishes.

He has been Executive Chef at Castello di Casole since 2011, where his constant search for flavour sets his food apart. For Daniele, every recipe must harness the true flavours of the surrounding environment and every ingredient must be recognisable and traceable. He is a chef in constant evolution, each day seeking the perfect fusion between terroir, experience and past and present cultures.

Castello di Casole's home-produced ingredients are the stars of Chef Sera's farm-to-table cuisine, from rich game and tasty vegetables to the estate's wine, olive oil and honey. Local products, such as cheeses from sheep farm Paugnano and meats from his Tuscan friend Simone Fracassi further enrich the exquisite menus at Tosca.

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POOL GRILL

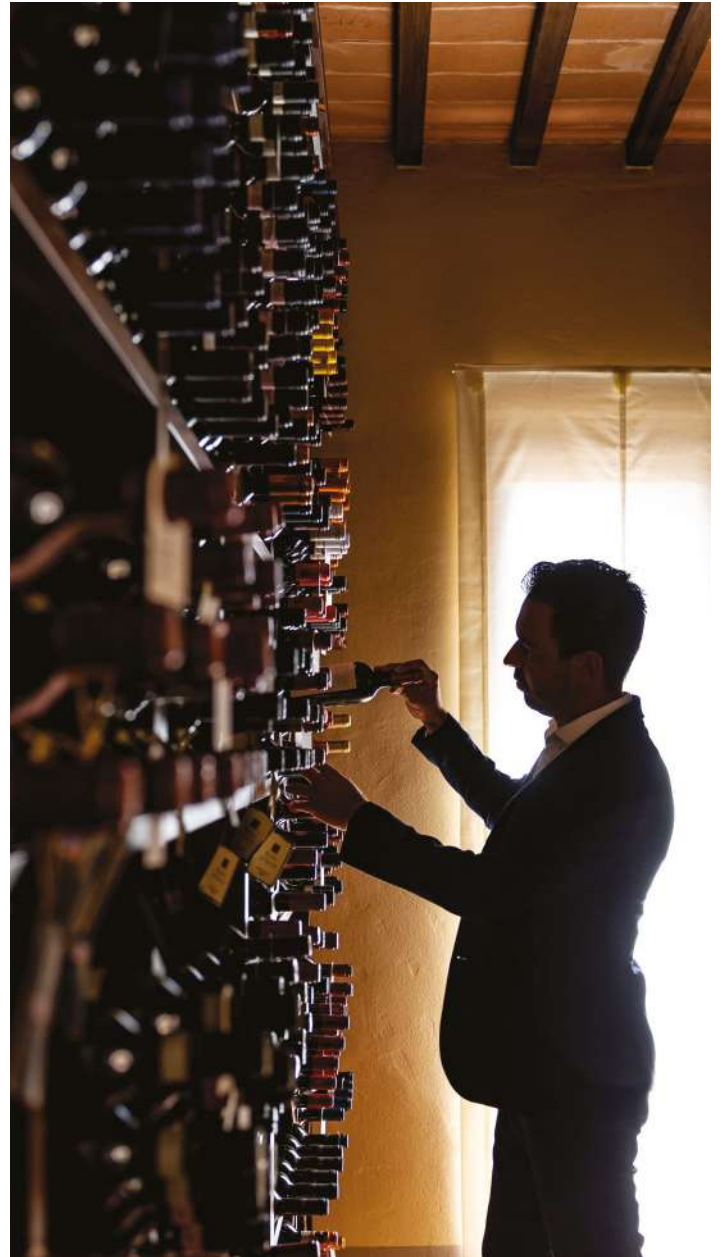
Recently launched, our Pool Grill is the place to indulge in delectable lunches while soaking up the ravishing vistas of the valley. Guests can watch and interact with our Executive Chef in his outdoor kitchen as he cooks succulent meats on the new Gullo charcoal grill and prepares delicious vegetables, salads, pizza and pasta.



POOL BAR

Just steps from our infinity pool, with panoramic views of wild Tuscany, the Pool Bar offers enticing artisanal sandwiches, refreshing gelato, smoothies and milkshakes.

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BAR

As evening falls, our charming lounge bar is the ultimate place for an aperitivo watching the sun set over the hills. With classic marble details, a frescoed wall and banquette-style seats, the interiors invite sparkling conversation. The impeccable menu of grappas, amaros, vintage wines and late-night cocktails can also be enjoyed outside under the starry sky.

WINE CELLAR

Overlooking the courtyard of the former village, our wine cellar represents oenological paradise. Rare and vintage labels from Tuscany and beyond can be sampled during private wine tastings with our sommelier. Bottles can be taken away to enjoy by the glass or savoured over an exclusive dinner featuring Chef's bespoke delicacies.

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ESTATE SPECIALITIES

Continuing a long tradition, Castello di Casole still produces estate-bottled wine. Created from grapes grown on our estate, the tempting red is a rich blend of Sangiovese, Petit Verdot and Cabernet. The grapes, cultivated without chemicals, are carefully picked by hand, ensuring only the highest quality bunches enter the vinification process. After fermentation in steel barrels, just 6,000 bottles are produced, which are available exclusively to our hotel guests. The wine's name, "Si Di Si", is a pun on the English pronunciation of the acronym CDC - Castello di Casole. The stylish label is inspired by the hotel's glamorous past. Echoing the vintage movie posters of the 1950s and '60s, it evokes the films of aristocratic director Luchino Visconti, whose brother formerly owned the castle.

With approximately 1,000 olive trees spread across 30 acres of land at the property, we produce our own organic olive oil. Three olive varieties - Frantoio, Moraiolo and Leccino - go into making an average of 2,000 half-litre bottles per year, which we sell at the Emporio del Castello.

From the 30 beehives dotted around the estate we produce an organic, multiflower honey and present 100g jars as gifts to our guests.

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Today's gardens: at a glance

The gardens at Castello di Casole are an evolving project. Our plan is to introduce more colour, plant further varieties of local flowers and plants and establish a cycle of flowering to ensure radiant blooms throughout the season.

Highlights include:

- A 200-year-old olive tree, an iconic symbol of Tuscany, greeting guests at the entrance rotunda.
- We have our own Castello di Casole rose variety with a vibrant yellow heart and a delicate fragrance. It is one of 6,000 roses of 50 different species that adorn the gardens.
- We currently count 7,452 plants in our collection, among them *Laurus nobilis*, jasmine, tulips, wisteria, hydrangeas, geraniums and various aromatic varieties.
- Our rolling estate is home to 300,000 trees. The majority are oaks (the area is called Querceto because of its oak forests), including holm oaks and turkey oaks, but there are also citrus trees, olives and vines.
- 25 traditional terracotta urns from the ancient town of Impruneta, just south of Florence, explode with vibrant, seasonal blooms.

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Introducing Orti del Castello

In exciting news for 2023, we are bringing our farm-to-plate ethos truly alive with the launch of Orti del Castello, the Castello Vegetable Gardens. Blending nature, gastronomy and hospitality in a productive hectare of land, the initiative is designed to immerse guests in rural and rustic Tuscan life. Vegetables, fruits and edible flowers cultivated here complement the estate's existing homegrown products of wine, olive oil and honey, which Executive Chef Daniele Sera uses in his seasonal, organic, farm-to-plate cuisine. Guests can stroll to the garden, located in front of a cypress lane leading to the Castello's entrance, to learn how the produce is cultivated, pick it, then later taste it in the restaurant's dishes or prepare it during a lesson at the new cooking school of sustainability.

In addition, a smaller vegetable garden within the castle offers an inviting, cypress-shaded space where guests can enjoy workshops ranging from making herbal teas and natural cosmetics products to botanical eco-printing.

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CURATED EXPERIENCES

Cinema under the stars

Launched in 2022 to embrace the concept of the Italian Villeggiatura – slow, sensuous summers and the height of indulgence – Castello is continuing its alfresco summer movie season. The initiative revives an Italian custom that was popular up until the 1970s, when groups would gather under a starry sky to enjoy a fantastic open-air film. After a Tuscan dinner in the courtyard, guests follow an illuminated path to our magnificent amphitheatre, where a big screen and every cinematic comfort await.

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Stargazing Nights

Our property has been awarded the “I Cieli più belli d’Italia” quality astrotourism certification, which identifies the very best locations for observing Italy’s beautiful night sky. On Friday evenings during the summer, we host Dinner under the Stars, a typical Tuscan sagra-style dinner in the ancient courtyard with cooking stations and live Italian music. This is followed by astronomer-guided stargazing sessions in the amphitheatre using state-of-the-art telescopes.



In addition, private astrotour lessons with English-speaking astronomers can be arranged for individual guests, during which they are guided through the stars, galaxies, planets and nebulae with the aid of powerful telescopes and learn how to navigate their way in the dark using the constellations.

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The Etruscan civilisation and Castello di Casole

Long before the Romans inhabited Tuscany, the Etruscans put their sophisticated stamp on the region. Castello di Casole and the village of Querceto bear evidence of rich Etruscan culture, from holistic wellness and winemaking to pottery. Our estate is home to a collection of Etruscan masterpieces belonging to former owners, the Bargagli family. Marquis Piero Bargagli was so passionate about archaeology that, from 1870-75, he carried out a series of excavations that unearthed a hoard of 5th to 3rd century BC artefacts. Many of these are displayed in Essere Spa and the library; the rest were donated for display at the Civic Museum of Archaeology in Casole d'Elsa.

Through a series of curated experiences at Castello di Casole, we bring the Etruscan age alive, inviting guests to discover who the Etruscans were and what makes them timelessly intriguing. They include:

- **Live like an Etruscan:** Led by an English-speaking guide, guests bicycle to Casole d'Elsa to visit the archaeological museum in the company of expert Etruscologist, Marco Bezzini. They visit nearby Etruscan tombs for insight into how the ancient civilization lived and died. After returning to the hotel, they enjoy an Etruscan massage at Essere Spa, benefiting from time-honoured natural ingredients such as damask rose oil, myrrh, olive oil, almonds and grape seeds.
- **Cosmetology workshop on the footsteps of the Etruscans:** In this hands-on workshop, an expert teaches guests how to use natural ingredients, often readily available in their own gardens, to create homemade face and body products in the style of the Etruscans, who took great care of their wellbeing.
- **Medicinal herb and natural remedy workshop:** Combining both Etruscan and traditional Tuscan knowledge, this course gives guests the chance to create customised natural remedies such as herbal teas and healing oils.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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