

DALLAS

MODERN LUXURY

FANTASY THAT *LUXE & LUSCIOUS*

DALLAS GOES GAGA FOR GAULTIER
TOP CHEF? PRIVATE SOCIAL OPENS
PLAYLISTS FROM TOP SPIN DOGS
WE'VE COME UNBLUED
...AND THE BUZZIEST BASHES

WANTED!
OUR
2011
GIFT
GUIDE

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ON THE COVER

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Sapphire and diamond necklace and earrings, both priced upon request at Harry Winston, Highland Park Village. Magenta silk voile creponne sleeveless dress, \$5,600, at Gucci, NorthPark Center.



Tuscan Reinvention

A historic magnet for both Hollywood and Italian luminaries, Castello di Casole, a five-star resort and luxury residence club in the heart of Tuscany, comes alive with a renovation, new construction and a luxe boutique hotel on its horizon.

Head of Estate

Once a historic manor, this restored five-star resort and luxury residence club ushers in a new era for the fabled hilltops of Tuscany. | *By Beth Weitzman* |

It's not hard to summon passion for Italy—a world-class destination steeped in art and history, brimming with delectable cuisine, savory wine and friendly people. If anything, it's a little too easy. Naturally, the multimillion-dollar revamp of Castello di Casole, a five-star resort and luxury residence club in the heart of Tuscany, is no exception.

After landing in Florence (one of my favorite Italian cities), I was whisked away on a 45-minute journey that delivered me to the massive, and massively beautiful, Castello di Casole, which is like another world entirely. Once owned by the Bargagli clan, a noble family from the small nearby town of Siena, Castello di Casole traces its roots back to 1680. Comprising 31 working farms that produced grapes, olives, wheat and sunflowers until the early 1960s, it then became a magnet for both Hollywood

and Italian luminaries (think famous Italian auteur Luchino Visconti and Austrian actor Helmut Berger of *The Godfather: Part III* fame). The storied estate was acquired in 2005 by U.S.-based Timbers Resorts, and has since undergone a complete restoration—a pristine preservation of its interior quarters and historic façade.

To first glimpse Castello di Casole is to travel back in time. Consistent with its pedigree, coveted address and top-to-bottom refurbishment, the estate is at home in the present, but never strays too far from its past—here, history and modern innovation have merged. Twenty-eight individual Casali—both fractionally and wholly owned—will soon make up the overhauled development (17 of which are already sold). These luxe, farmhouse-style residences, ranging in size from a generous 4,000 to a sprawling 7,000 square feet, pepper the vast 4,200 acres over which the kingly Castello di Casole so elegantly reigns. Some of the Casali have detached bedrooms in front of or behind the main house, and all have between three and five bedrooms, making the residences especially ideal for multigenerational or multifamily stays. CONTINUED...

The Price of Ownership

Whole ownership of a Casale is priced from €3.7 to €7.25 million. Fractional ownership (fractions are divided into one-twelfths) start at €465,000.

Hotel Villas—two- or three-bedroom homes—are offered in one-eighth fractions, starting at €275,000, and one-twelfth fractions, starting at €290,000.

The Bargagli Penthouse, an exclusive ownership opportunity within Hotel Castello di Casole, features a trio of bedrooms on two stories and a meticulous restoration of one of the historic castle's most significant quarters. Six Bargagli Penthouse memberships are offered at €750,000 each.

Hotel Castello di Casole—a signature development of U.S.-based Timbers Resorts—is scheduled to open early April 2012, and is now accepting reservations. Rates start at €630 per night and go up to €4,500 per night for the Bargagli Penthouse during the high season.

For more information, visit castellodicasole.com.



Clockwise from top left: Unique architecture is seen in this Casale bedroom; traditional exteriors are juxtaposed with modern interiors such as the bathroom shown here; the 41-suite luxury boutique Hotel Castello di Casole is set to open in April 2012.

...CONTINUED Nestled quietly amid the curved, meandering hills of Tuscany, the landscape goes on as far as the eye can see—and what you see is countryside and only a small portion of the total number of Casali. Artfully restored with materials such as reclaimed stones and barrel roof tiles, estate residences boast regional character and authenticity seamlessly intermixed with contemporary appointments—large glass-enclosed showers and spacious bathtubs plus modern cabinetry and lighting in the bathrooms alone. Conveniences extend to the kitchens, updated with top-of-the-line Gianfranco Ballerini appliances, and exterior living areas, featuring infinity-edged pools (some with fire pits). My favorite accoutrements, though, are the original al fresco pizza ovens. *Molto bene!*

Rich reds, sage greens and warm golds nod to the surrounding landscape and introduce an inspired interior further textured with local Italian fabrics and antiques that, together, uniquely personalize each Casale. Equally pleasing is the essentially endless slate of available services. From pre-arrival groceries to a personal-appointed governante to a bilingual concierge, nothing by way of hospitality is spared. Each owner receives airport transfers and access to a fleet of automobiles and drivers upon request. Even bikes are available for crisscrossing the estate's cypress-lined roads.

Given the fact that dusk in these parts brings with it a sense of absolute calm, the end of each day found me relaxing snugly inside my Casale—a haven, truly. Here, I gazed up at celestial night skies from my private pool—glass of pinot grigio in hand, of course. This is a nightcap not easily topped, I assure you.

On the subject of wine, 88 acres of Castello di Casole's total 4,200 are vineyards. Renowned winemaker and neighbor Paolo Caciorgna produces vino and serves as a consultant to Castello di Casole owners, helping



them intimately understand all facets of the winemaking process, from pruning in winter to harvesting in fall. Plans call for 13 additional separate vineyard plots to cultivate sangiovese, merlot, cabernet, petit verdot and other grape varietals. Since 2007, owners and guests have also enjoyed an exclusive proprietary sangiovese blend and private-label extra virgin olive oil produced from the estate's 13-acre crop of olive trees.

Amid all the buzz, however, is privacy—at Castello di Casole, an art continuously elevated. Not surprisingly, leaving the estate marked a bittersweet ending to a storybook trip of engaging history, culinary excess—ah, the pizza—marvelous wine and lovely people. But, thankfully, every end marks a new beginning. The 41-suite luxury boutique Hotel Castello di Casole is slated to open in the restored castello on April 2. Featured on the property will be the 5,400-square-foot Essere Spa and wellness

center, swimming pool, Pazzia Pizzeria, stylish Bar Visconti and the visionary Ristorante Toscana. Casale owners and their guests are welcome to use the hotel's amenities anytime. The hotel will provide additional room availability for guests of Casale owners, and also will be open for those savvy travelers who find it. Consider yourself so informed. ■

Area Activities

- Italian language classes
- Shopping
- Olive oil and wine tastings
- Wine country tours
- Bocce
- Road and mountain biking
- Hiking
- Cooking classes
- Guided day trips of nearby Florence and Siena



Nothing overwhelms all the senses quite like Florence, Italy.

DAY TRIP

Florence—a world-renowned hub of architecture, edifice and aesthetic supremacy; and the former stomping grounds of Renaissance elite (the Medici family, Michelangelo and Botticelli)—is nothing less than a sightseeing dream. Here, religious sites (Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore) are nestled alongside beautiful museums (Galleria degli Uffizi) and iconic works of Florentine art (“David” and “The Birth of Venus”) at every turn. A stop inside the just-opened Gucci Museo is a must for any fashion enthusiast. Culinary genius abounds, such as Enoteca Pinchiorri, a Michelin three-star restaurant soon to open its second location in the new St. Regis Florence. For the best pizza in town, head to La Bussola—a favorite since the '60s.

In nearby **Siena**, casually sip espresso on the world-famous Piazza del Campo, or leisurely tour the Duomo before enjoying dinner at the popular Osteria Le Logge, a classic trattoria set in the cozy confines of a 19th-century former grocer's shop, whose proprietor, celebrity Gianni Brunelli, has adorned the walls with pieces from his own contemporary art collection.