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Life Lessons with winemaker Paolo Bianchini by Adam Lechmere A former professional cyclist for the Colnago team, Paolo Bianchini is now the co-owner of Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona in Montalcino – which came to be the family wine estate in a twist of fortune. Here he talks regrets, Robin Hood, and how cycling is still his number one WORDS BY ADAM LECHMERE There can be few more extraordinary stories than that of the Bianchini family. In the 1980s, Giuseppe Bianchini was estate manager at the lovely Montalcino estate of Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona. The owner was the countess Elda Ciacci, widow of count Alberto Piccolomini d'Aragona, a direct descendant of Pope Pius II. The countess died without heirs in 1985 and the Bianchini family heard the news that was to change their lives and the lives of their children – and grandchildren – forever. She had left her

hectare estate in the south-east of Montalcino, close to the medieval village of Castelnuovo dell'Abate and with the Orcia river to the south. The Ciacci family had bought it in 1877, but its palazzo dates back to the 17th century. While the contessa had dreams of producing great wines (she had written, "Giuseppe knows exactly what I want and he has the philosophy to produce a great-quality winery"), there were only five hectares of vines. Giuseppe began planting in earnest for the rest of the decade, and the first vintage of Brunello he released was the 1990. There are now 55 hectares of vines and 40 hectares of olive groves. Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona produces three Brunello di Montalcino including the Riserva Santa Caterina d'Oro, two Rosso di Montalcino, three other wines and olive oils. The Brunellos are highly regarded, regularly garnering the highest

[the Francesco Moser winery is in Trentino]. He's a simple and honest man, and we share the same passions – wine and bikes. Which words or phrases do you most overuse? "Drive safely", to my children. What's your greatest regret? That my father passed away in February 2004, before our new cellar was completed at the beginning of 2005. I wish I could have spent more time with him. I am sure he would be very happy to see how the winery has grown up and developed. Not a day goes by where I don't think about him. What time do you go to bed? 10pm, more or less. I usually wake up very early. What album, boxset or podcast would you listen to on a night in alone on the sofa? I love Italian music. It depends on my mood, but I usually love to listen to pop music. I love Biagio Antonacci, Ligabue and Zucchero. What's your favourite thing in your wardrobe? My tailor-