

ITALIAN WINE SEMINAR

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Italian Wine Laws

Like the French, the Italians have a system of wine laws to regulate the industry. These modern wine laws were established in 1963 to give structure to an often haphazard and unregulated wine industry. The system does have some quirks, but can be a useful point of reference for consumers attempting to understand the immense Italian wine industry.

Basic laws regulating yields, grapes used for specific wines, area restrictions for growing, viticultural practices and maximum and minimum alcohol strengths were set forward at that time. Three categories were established:

- *Vino da Tavola*, or table wine, typically, but with some exceptions, everyday wines-simple, pleasurable and inexpensive. Ironically, this category also represents the often not-so-inexpensive "Super Tuscan" wines.
- DOC wines (initials stand for *Denominazione di Origine Controllata*), a translation of the French *Appellation d'Origine C ntrol e*. There are about 250 DOC zones, and approximately 700 Italian wines bearing this classification. However, only a small percentage of these have any commercial viability. Twenty DOCs account for close to 45% of the country's total DOC production.
- *DOCG* (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita*) wines, first classified in 1980 with the intention of adding a quality classification to the top of the wine pyramid. The 14 *DOCG* wines indicate the highest quality (wines not only "controlled" but "guaranteed"). *DOCG* wines include such famous names as Barola, Barbaresco, Chianti, Brunello di Montalcino and *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*. Additional wines are petitioning for *DOCG* classification, so the existing group of 14 will continue to grow.

In 1992, among many changes made, the *Goria* laws were passed to bring greater flexibility to production, and add a broad new category. *IGT* (*Indicazione Geografica Tipica*), became a new classification under law, replacing *vini tipici* as the base of the quality pyramid. Ironically, some of Italy's most highly esteemed and expensive wines, previously sold as *vino da tavola*, could now in many instances "upgrade" to *IGT*.

I. PIEDMONT (Peed-mont or Pee-amon-tay)

“at the foot of the mountains- the Alps”



Location: Northwest Italy, bordering France to the west and Switzerland to the north

Climate: The winters are severe with frequent inversion fogs rising out of the valleys. Summers are hot, though not excessively so, but hail can damage the grapes at this time of year. Long autumns enable the late-ripening Nebbiolo grape to be grown very successfully.

Latest Excellent Vintages: '97, '98, '99, '00, '01, '04

Main Grapes: Nebbiolo (r), Barbera (r), Muscat (w)

Grape Varieties:
Nebbiolo (a.k.a. Spanna)

This name appears in documents early as 1268. It may be derived from the Italian word for "fog" (nebbia), the reference being either to the waxy bloom that covers its riper grapes, or to the fact that this is a late-ripening variety, which means that autumn fogs are an accompaniment to the grape harvest. The cradle of this variety lies in the hills around Alba, where it was probably already to be found in antiquity. Indirect evidence of its remote origin can be seen in the fact that it shares with white muscat the distinction of being the Piedmontese variety with the greatest genetic differentiation, the outcome of mutations over the course of the centuries. It is best grown on sunny, but not too dry hillsides. For this reason, it is quite at home at almost mountainous altitudes, provided it gets plenty of sun and is sheltered from cold winds.

Barbera

This variety alone is the wine used in over 50% of Piedmont's vineyards. It is probably a seed derivative of older local species in the Monferrato district. Its good performance in terms of both cultivation and output endeared it to the hearts of growers and it soon spread far and wide. Barbera is a vigorous variety with a constant and relatively abundant yield. It also displays good resistance to bad weather (hail and frost) and parasites. It ripens late and its grapes (used for wine-making only) are not gathered until the beginning of October. It is primarily planted in the provinces of Asti, Alessandria and Cuneo, though it is equally found in the Novara district and the province of Turin.

BARBARESCO (Bar-bar-esco)

Location: Right Bank of the River Tanaro, northeast of Alba

Main Towns: Barbaresco (45%), Nieve (30%), Treiso (20%), Alba (5%)

Soil Composition: Calcareous clay marls

What does that soil mean? Well this soil type has a high level of lime which

neutralizes the clay's intrinsic acidity. Its low temperature also delays ripening, so

wines produced on this type of soil tend to be more acidic.

Main Grape Variety: Nebbiolo

Wine Style of a Barbaresco

Sight: Colour is an agreeable garnet red, it has tinges of glowing orange fading outwards.

Bouquet: Very aromatic, complex ethereal components, combinations of fresh dark fruit. Very harmonious, gentle, immense aromas of flowers and fruit.

Violets, roses, geraniums, field flowers, apples, peach, vanilla, cinnamon, and cherry.

Palate: Gentle robustness, typical of Barbaresco. A good balance of acidity and alcohol, with a foundation of round tannins and flavours of dark fruits

BAROLO (bar-ol-o)

Location: Two miles southwest of Barbaresco.

There are only about 3,000 acres of nebbiolo under cultivation here -- not quite as much

vineyard land as in Margaux, a single Bordeaux commune.

Soil Composition: Calcareous clay marls in the La Morra area and Helvetian sandstone in the Serralunga and Monforte d' Alba.

Main Grape Variety: Nebbiolo

Wine Style of a Barolo

Sight: Colour is very similar to Barbaresco with its garnet red body and glowing orange tinges that fade outwards.

Bouquet: Dried cherry, interspersed with rose petals, leather, tar, cedar, tobacco and earth.

Palate: Full bodied, with fruit flavors, licorice, stewed cherries, chalky aggressive tannins.

Comparing Barolo and Barbaresco - Kyle Phillips

Both wines are made from Nebbiolo, Piemonte's noble red grape. However, the terroirs are different – the Barolo region has more clay and more microelements, whereas the Barbaresco region tends to have more sand and clay. Also, Barbaresco is aged less – two years for the normal, three for the riserva, and four for the riserva speciale, as opposed to Barolo's three years for the normal, four for the riserva, and five for the Riserva speciale. Traditionally Barbaresco tended to be more rounded, with finesse, whereas Barolo tended to be more tannic, requiring longer (in some cases decades) for the raw power of the wine to meld into what many describe as a "fist of steel in a velvet glove." This is not to say that Barbaresco is a light wine – by comparison with almost anything other than a classic Barolo it is a big wine, and is in any case well suited to roasts, braised dishes, and aged cheeses.



Some Specialty Dishes from Piedmonte:

Bagna Cauda - Translates as "hot sauce". Its ingredients are olive oil, chopped garlic and anchovies, butter, and sometimes sliced tartufo bianco (white truffles, another Piedmontese edible ecstasy). Into this heated sauce the diner dips a wide choice of cold raw vegetables. Red wine is the traditional accompaniment.

Fonduta - It's made by melting Fontina cheese (from the neighboring Val d'Aosta region) with milk, butter and eggs. The cook tops the resulting "fondue" with sliced white truffles.

Bollito Misto - Literally, "mixed boiled". Meat is the prime ingredient.

Agnolotti - Piedmont style ravioli. Widely popular.

Grissini - Long, thin, crisp breadsticks. Originated in Turin. Now found globally.

Chicken (or Veal) Marengo - Created in Piedmont to help Napoleon celebrate his victory at Marengo.

II. VENETO (Ven-et-toe)



Location: Northeast Italy, stretches from the Po River to the Austrian border between Trentino- Alto Adige to the west and Friuli - Venezia Giulia to the East.

Climate: Similar to the Northwest in that summers

are hot and winters cold and harsh, but fog is less of a problem and hail more frequent. There are unpredictable variations in the weather from year to year so vintages are very important, particularly for red wines.

Latest Excellent Vintages: '97,'98,'99, '00

Main Grapes: Corvina (r), Corvinone (r), Rondinella (r), Molinara (r), Trebbiano (w), Garganega (w)

SOAVE (Suav-eh)

Location: Northeast Italy, 25 minutes east of Verona

Main Town: Verona

Soil Composition: Volcanic rock, calcareous soil

Wine Style of Soave

Main Grape Varieties: Garganega, Trebbiano

Sight: Pale straw gold colour

Bouquet: Apples, pears, melons

Palate: Light to medium bodied, flavours of apples, star anise, melon and pears. Moderate acidity and an extended finish.

VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO (val-pole-each-ella class-eeke)

Location: Northeast Italy, 25 minutes northeast of Verona

Main Town: Verona

Valleys of Valpolicella Classico: Negrar, Marano, Fumane, San Ambrogio

Soil Composition: Mixture of stone, clay and sand.

Main Grape Varieties:

Corvina: Thick skinned grape which provides colour and tannin. Mostly used for Valpolicella.

Corvinone: A sub-variety of the Corvina grape only a larger version, hence the suffix “none” pronounced “nonay”. It produces larger and juicier grapes of Corvina, making it a favorite among some winemakers.

Molinara: Traditionally, the third component of the Valpolicella DOC, it is increasingly being substituted by the Corvina and other varieties.

Rondinella: Used to add color and body to the blend

Wine Style of a Valpolicella Classico

Main Grape Varieties: Corvina, Corvinone, Molinara, Rondinella

Sight: Cherry red with ruby highlights

Bouquet: Fresh cherries, black licorice, prunes and a floral note.

Palate: Juicy cherry and strawberry fruit flavours, medium bodied.
Medium acidity and moderate tannins.

Amarone Della Valpolicella: (Am-‘r’-own-ay della val-pole-each-ella)

Process- Harvest predominantly the Corvina and Corvinone grapes, lay the individual bunches on straw mats for a period of four months. After the four months, the grape has lost 30% of the water. For the normal winemaking process, 100kg of grapes will make 70 litres of wine, the Amarone process with the same 100kg of dried grapes only makes 40 litres of wine.

Wine Style of Amarone:

Main Grape Varieties: Corvina, Corvinone, Molinara, Rondinella

Sight: A deep garnet red

Bouquet: Port characteristics, raisin, pepper, cherry jam, cigar and cedar notes

Palate: Full bodied, deep dark fruit flavours, raisins, prunes, chocolate, ripe plums

Valpolicella Ripasso: (val-pole-each-ella reap-asso)

Process- The best young Valpolicella is put into tanks or barrels that still contain the lees of the Amarone for which they were previously used.

When mixed with the young wine, active yeast cells in this sediment precipitate a second fermentation. This increases the alcohol content and gives it some recioto character.

Wine Style of the Ripasso:

Main Grape Varieties: Corvina, Corvinone, Molinara, Rondinella

Sight: A deep garnet red

Bouquet: Black pepper with cedar hints, dried fruits (raisins), walnuts

Palate: Medium bodied, raisin flavours, licorice, long persistence with a fume and

creamy character

Recioto della Valpolicella: (reach-otto della val-pole-each-ella)

Process- Grapes are selected while still on the vine and are allowed to “surmaturate” on mats from harvest until the first days of March.

Fermentation takes place in small stainless steel tanks for a period of time followed by barrique treatment.

Wine Style of the Recioto:

Main Grape Varieties: Corvina, Corvinone, Molinara, Rondinella

Sight: A deep garnet red with purple tinges

Bouquet: Intense, wild cherry, raspberry, plum, vanilla and berries

Palate: Full-bodied, smooth and soft, sweet, well balanced, ripe cherry, bitter sweet

chocolate, a bruised sourness.



Some Specialty Dishes from the Veneto:

Rice reigns in Veneto

Rice, not pasta, is the principal starch staple of Venice and is typically served combined with other ingredients. Its most splendid application is in the vegetable dish Risi e Bisi, literally Rice and Peas.

Outside Venice, in the Veneto region, the firm cornmeal-mush specialty, Polenta, rivals and in some places supplants rice as the primary starch staple.

Pasta, though in the third place in the starch popularity poll, has over the last century been steadily increasing its share of the market.

Seafood is a Veneto favorite

The principal source of animal protein comes from the seafood caught in the cool northern Adriatic Sea. These waters exclusively yield one of the

world's greatest culinary delights, the scampo. When seen on American menus, "scampi" almost invariably means oversized shrimp, lacking the delicate, sweet flavor of true scampi.

Other excellent local seafood worth sampling includes shrimp, crayfish, cuttlefish, mussels, eel, sole and mullet.

Leading meat dish of Veneto

One dish is world famous: Fegato alla Veneziana, tissue-thin calves' liver slices sauteed with onions.

III. TUSCANY (Tus-can-ee or tow-scan-a)



Location: West-central Italy, between the Apennines to the north and the east and the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west.

Climate: Summers are long and fairly dry and winters are less severe than in northern Italy. Heat and lack of rain could pose a problem throughout the area during the growing season.

Latest Excellent Vintages by Wine:

Chianti Classico: '90, '97, '98, '99, '00, '03, '06

Brunello di Montalcino: '90, '95, '96, '97, '99, 2000



Vino Nobile di Montepulciano: '90, '93, '95, '97, '99, '00

Bolghieri: '90, '95, '97, '99

Main Grape Varieties:

White:

Trebbiano: The most planted white varietal in Italy, it goes by trebbiano toscano in Tuscany, factoring into a wide variety of crisp, somewhat neutral DOC whites.

Reds:

Sangiovese: Italy's most noble and most diffuse red grape, the base of Chianti Classico, Vino nobile di Montepulciano (where it is called prugnolo), Brunello di Montalcino (where it is called Brunello), and Morellino di Scansano (morellino). Naturally high in acid and aroma.

Canaiolo: A native grape variety typically used as a softening complement to sangiovese in the blends of Chianti Classico and Vino Nobile.

Cabernet Sauvignon: This French varietal has been in Italy since the early nineteenth century, if not before. While tough to ripen farther north, it matures beautifully in Tuscany, producing wines with a luscious combination of sweet cassis fruit and firm tannins. The base of many "super-Tuscans."

Merlot: Ubiquitous, but in the Tuscan hills it seems to ripen more slowly and develop a more powerful, woody structure. Usually more of a blending ingredient than a star,

though it shines in Ornellaia's "Masseto."

CHIANTI CLASSICO REGION (Key-anti Class-ee-ko)

Location: In between Florence in the north and Siena in the south.

Main Town: Florence and Siena

Soil Composition: Mixture of Galestro (stony soil) and Albarese (lime based soil)

Laws: Chianti Classico Reservas must have at least 3 years aging in oak or bottle.

Wine Style of the Chianti Classico Region:

Main Variety: Sangiovese

Sight: Ruby red

Bouquet: Vibrant and inviting with notes of red berries and Morello cherries with slightly spicy undertones.

Palate: Medium to full bodied, raspberry and black cherry, to dried cherry flavours combined with good tannins and acidity.

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (Broon-elle-o dee Mon-tell-cheeno)

Location: Located in the heart of the town Montalcino, which is approximately 45 minutes south of Sienna.

Main Town: Montalcino

Soil Composition: Mixture of clay, limestone and Galestro

Laws: Brunello's must have at least 4 years aging and 3 of the years must be in oak

Wine Style of Brunello di Montalcino:

Main Variety: Brunello (Sangiovese)

Sight: Ruby red with garnet hues
Bouquet: Very intense with ample notes of cherry, red fruit in alcohol and red currant. Warm and inviting aromas of cocoa and dried figs are followed by ethereal scents and hints of leather
Palate: Pleasantly tannic and full bodied with dominant notes of fruit in alcohol, plums, licorice, cherry and hints of vanilla spices. Over time the wine becomes very smooth, revealing intriguing notes of spices and caramel.

VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO (veeno-no-beel-ay dee mon-tea-pool-chee- ano)

Location: East of Montalcino very close to the region of Umbria to the east

Main Town: Montepulciano

Soil Composition: Orange hard rock clay, mixed with some sand and alluvial soils

Wine Style of the Vino Nobile di Montepulciano:

Main Variety: Prugnolo Gentile (Sangiovese)
Sight: A deep ruby red
Bouquet: Very intense and ample with violet and red berry notes, some earthiness,
and licorice
Palate: An elegant wine with a full harmonic flavour, soft tannins, small red berry
fruits, plum, licorice and dark cherry hints.

BOLGHERI (Bowl-gee-air-ee)

Location: 70 kms northeast of Siena right on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea and
approximately 90 kms southeast of Florence.

Main Town: Livorno, Bolghieri

Soil Composition: Mixture of stone, clay and sand.

Wine Style the Bolgieri Region:

Main Varietals: Sangiovese, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon

It is very difficult to pinpoint a flavour profile of the wines from this region however, they tend to be a blend of French varietals, longer aging in barriques, full bodied wines with lots of extraction of fruit and tannins. Known as “super – Tuscans”.

MAREMMA (Mar-emma)

Location: The Maremma is an area located in the most south eastern part of Tuscany, bordering Lazio in the south and right on the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Climate: Mediterranean climate with hot summers (moderated by nightly sea breezes) long autumns, mild humid winters and rainy springs.

Soil Types: Loam and clay in some areas; clay and sand (with plenty of limestone, and multi sized pebbles).

Main Varietals: Morellino, Sangiovese

Morellino di Scansano DOC must be a minimum of 85% Sangiovese (Morellino) and the balance may be a blend of other varietals. Morellino has an expressive, attractive nose with black cherry, plum and black fruit aromas, along with a definite vegetal element (green peppers?) and some earthy hints. On the palate you immediately taste rich, ripe black cherry and berry flavors that blend into a pleasant tartness. Tannins are soft at first, then firm up in the lengthy, balanced finish, which exudes ample acidity and a final punch of black cherries. A wine that definitely would benefit from some aeration.



Some Specialty Dishes from Tuscany:

Bistecca alla Fiorentina - A thick, choice steak cut from the local Chianina cattle, charcoal broiled and flavored with olive oil, salt and pepper.

Cenci - A crisp, deep fried sweet pastry lightly dusted with sugar.

Fagioli al fiasco - Beans are charcoal simmered in an empty Chianti wine

flask with water, olive oil and garlic.

Trippa alla Fiorentina - Simmered tripe cut into strips and cooked in a casserole with tomato sauce, sprinkled with grated Parmesan cheese.

Key Tuscan cooking ingredients

Olive oil rather than butter is widely used in cooking. The Tuscan town of Lucca is considered one of the best if not the finest producer of that pale gold liquid. Another characteristic cooking ingredient is the bean, which goes into many soups and stews. "Alla Toscana" on a menu usually suggests a side order of beans. Although it is not true in the rest of Italy, beef is very popular in Tuscany. Along the Tuscan coast one finds seafood specialties. They include the well-seasoned soup-stew Cacciucco as well as dishes made with baby eel. Don't look for a spinach dominated cuisine in Florence despite the fact that "a la Fiorentina" sometimes implies "with spinach" on menus beyond Italy.

III. UMBRIA (oom-bree-ahh)



Location: Umbria is a mountainous region of central Italy, in the valley of the river Tiber. It is bordered by Tuscany to the west, the Marche to the east and Lazio to the south.

Climate: Umbria has a characteristic Mediterranean climate even if protected from its position inside the. In the summer the climate is warm and dry, and in the winter, mild. The Apennine makes a barrier to the influence of the Adriatic's sea and to the North-east cold air.

Latest Great Vintages: '03, '01, '99, '98, 97

Main Wines:

Whites:

Grechetto: This wine is characterized by an intense straw color. It is intensely fruity yet delicate with floral notes. It is soft, well-balanced and pleasantly fruity. Grechetto is an impressive aperitif wine and a great accompaniment to fish and white meat.

Orvieto: a historically significant white wine, typically known in its abboccato form, it is now a technically correct wine emphasizing clean, crisp, dry, green notes. This white is primarily made from Procanico and Grechetto with the addition of some Verdello and Malvasia.

Red:

Sagrantino di Montefalco: Though not well-known, this assertive, powerful, red wine Micrographic analysis shows that Sagrantino has more polyphenols (wine's flavor components) than any other Italian grape. "A deep ruby red, intense, penetrating, and expansive on the nose with potent raspberry/red currant fruit, richly spiced by the oak, its deep, concentrated, and powerful flavors, almost chewy in their richness but velvety in their texture, give an exceptional continuity and length."- Robert Parker on Arnaldo Caprai's 2000 Collepiano Sagrantino

Sangiovese: Aromas of red currants, black cherries, and violets are unmistakable as is the vigor and freshness, firm structure, focused fruit, and light tannins.



Some Specialty Dishes from Umbria:

Pasta:

Strangozzi is a rough noodle, long and somewhat thick. Any number of sauces can accompany the noodles. Whether served with a hearty meat sauce; an eggplant, onion and tomato sauce; sautéed porcini mushrooms and pecorino or a pesto of basil and arugula.

Tagliatelle, pence, gnocchi and pappardelle make regular appearances at table, as do the very simple *quadrucchi* - small, flat squares of pasta that accompany chickpeas in the simple yet elegant *ceci e quadrucchi* soup.

Umbrian Lentils:

Within Italy, Umbria is also known for the special variety of lentils. These tiny lentils come in a mixed palette of muted hues. Somehow these lentils manage to retain a firmness when thoroughly cooked that is completely different from other lentils. While others seem to almost disintegrate upon cooking, Umbrian lentils have a substantial meaty texture. They are frequently served in simple but hearty soups and sometimes used to stuff vegetables.

Formaggio – Cheese:

The most popular local cheese here is pecorino, made from sheep's milk. Appearing in many forms, you will find young and aged, sweet and spicy, mild and strong pecorino. Of course, other cheeses such as mozzarella, ricotta and parmesan as well as the less known stracchino all have their uses in the cucina. Oddly though, the Umbrian diet doesn't seem to rely quite as heavily on cheese as do other Italian regional cuisines.

Game, Salumi & other meats

There is **prosciutto di Norcia**, **prosciutto di cinghiale** (cured leg of wild boar), **Coglioni di Mulo** ("mule's balls" - no, not literally), **coppa**, **pancetta** and the list just goes on from there.

Lamb, veal and beef make regular if not very frequent appearances as main dishes in their own right. More often, modest amounts of meat are cooked into soups, stews and pasta sauces. When a large cut of meat is served on its own it is usually grilled over live coals and garnished with a drizzle of olive oil and some grated or shaved black truffle.

Squab(*palombe*) and boar (*cinghiale*) make for special and delicious dishes.

IV. ABRUZZO (Ab-roots-oh)



Location: Abruzzo is located 200kms east of Rome bordering Le Marche in the north, Molise in the south, Lazio to the west and the Adriatic Ocean to the east. Abruzzi is dominated by the Apennines, which reach their highest peaks in the 2,914 metre Gran Sasso. The entire region is 65% mountainous and 35% hills.



Climate: Abruzzi is sunny and dry with hillside vineyards cooled by ocean breezes. Very hot days in the summer, with cool nights. Very cold winters.

Soil Types: Shale, clay calcareous

Main Varietals: Montepulciano
d'Abruzzo,
Trebiano d'Abruzzo

Wine Style of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

Not to be confused with the Tuscan town of the same name, producers who get things right can make rather majestic Montepulciano, sometimes suited for long ageing, i.e. Villa Gemma, Masciarelli. A full-bodied wine with big tannins and loads of dark fruit.



Some Specialty Dishes from Abruzzo:

Spaghetti all'amatriciana- pancetta, onions, and tomatoes

Spaghetti alla chitarra- square strands of pasta served with a tomato sauce that is as tasty as it is simple

Gnocchetti con fagioli di Paganica- the local version of pasta e fagioli

Fagioli e cotiche di maiale- stewed beans and pork rind

Prosciutto di cinghiale- wild boar ham

Testicoli di mulo- small round lean pork sausages, so-called because they are always sold in pairs

Pecorino d'Abruzzo- local sheep's cheese
anything with wild mushrooms

Mozzarella and scamorza- a naturally dried cheese that is roasted on the grill

Burrata- a truly rare delicacy consisting of a ball of tangy cheese with a soft "butter"-like center

Salame di fegato pazzo- spiced liver salami

Roast or grilled lamb (agnello) or pork (maiale)

V. CAMPANIA (kumm-pahn-yahh)



Location: Campania is a region of Southern Italy, bordering on Lazio to the north-west, Molise to the north, Puglia to the north-east, Basilicata to the east, and the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west.



Climate: The climate in the sea zones and on islands is very mild and moderate; in the inland and mountain zones the climate is less favourable with severe winter storms.

Latest Great Red Wine Vintages: '01, '00,

'99, '98, '97

Latest Great White Wine Vintages: '03,

'02, '01, '00, '99

Soil Composition: Volcanic soils rich in sulfur, chalk and iron

Grape Varieties of Campania:

White:

Fiano- Fiano di Avellino is Southern Italy's leading dry, white wine. It is delicate with overtones of pear and almonds. Unlike most white wines, Fiano di Avellino improves with at least five to six years aging and good vintages are drinkable up to fifteen years. Fiano di Avellino is required to be made of at least 85% Fiano grapes.

Greco- A classic white wine made with the Greco grape, it shows a golden colour, freshness and toasted almond aromas and a slight hint of sulfur, with a crisp backbone.

Falaghina- Unique aromas of citrus, pear, cocoa and banana. It is an easy drinking wine with a delicate flavour, and a soft elegance.

Red:

Aglianico- Thought to be the longest cultivated grape in all of Italy, and is still one of the most planted in southern Italy. Aglianico from the Taurasi Valley can be called Taurasi only when it's aged before release at least three years, one of which must be in wood. For it to be a Riserva, it must be aged for a minimum of four years, with a minimum of eighteen months spent in barrel.

Main Wines of Campania:

Red:

Taurasi - one of Italy's most admired red wines is made with the Aglianico grape.

Aglianico is a corrupted pronunciation of "Hellenic," meaning "of Greek origin."

Often compared to Barolo, it is a full-bodied, complex wine with great aging potential.

Characteristics of a Traditional Style Taurasi: these wines are aged in old, large oak barrels that do not impart much of the 'oak' characteristics. These wines tend to be more rustic, restrained and layered with notes of earth and tobacco. This style may be less overt than those produced in the international style, but over time should become elegant and complex.

Characteristics of a Modern Style Taurasi: these wines are aged in smaller new French barrels which lend more of the 'oak' characteristics, i.e. vanilla, butter and toastiness, for a rounder, more fruit forward result. This style may be more approachable at an earlier age.

Whites:

Fiano di Avellino - a distinguished dry white wine made with the Fiano grape, an ancient grape variety that is full of character and complexity.

Greco di Tufo - Greco di Tufo, both a grape and a wine, was introduced to Italy by the Greeks over 2000 years ago. It thrives in the volcanic soil just outside the small village of Tufo. This wine is crisp and intensely fruity. Greco di Tufo is usually ready to drink in three to five years and can age up to about twelve years.

Only eight places in Avellino can legally lay claim to make Greco di Tufo. The most prominent is the town of Tufo, in Avellino. A town once known for its sulfur mines, which were abandoned long ago.

Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio - (literally: the tears of Christ at Vesuvius) is grown on the terraced slopes of Mt. Vesuvius, the infamous volcano that looms over Naples. The area's rich volcanic soil produces very good red, white, and rose wines. All three are designated "Lacryma Christi." There is even a sparkling (spumante) version.



Some Specialty Dishes from Campania:

Bistecca alla Pizzaiola - A thin, usually tough beef steak masked with a garlicky, oregano-flavored tomato sauce.

Calzone alla Napoletana - Deep fried, crescent shaped dough stuffed (usually) with ham flecked Mozzarella cheese.

Lasagna - A baked dish comprising alternating layers of wide noodles, cheese, and seasoned meat sauce. (This dish is equally popular in several other Italian regions.)

Mozzarella in Carrozza - Literally, Mozzarella on a Carriage. The cheese is inserted between slices of bread, then dipped in an egg batter and cooked in hot oil. Essentially, it's a deep fried cheese sandwich.

Parmigiana di Melanzane - Sliced eggplant baked with cheese and a garlic and oregano laced tomato sauce.

Pizza - The Neapolitan version (topped with ingredients such as

mozzarella cheese, green peppers, onions, sliced sausage, anchovies and tomato sauce) is popular worldwide.

VI. PUGLIA (English- Apulia) (poolie-yaa)



Location: Puglia is a region in southeastern Italy bordering the Adriatic Sea in the east, the Ionian Sea to the southeast, and the Strait of Otranto and Gulf of Taranto in the south. Its southern portion known as Salento, a peninsula, forms the heel of the Italian "boot."



It is bordered by the other Italian regions of Molise to the north, Campania to the west, and Basilicata to the southwest. It is close to Albania, which is 80 km across the Adriatic.

Climate: Predominantly mediterranean; alpine in far north; hot, dry in south.

Terrain: Mostly rugged and mountainous; some plains, coastal lowlands.

Latest Great Red Wine Vintages: '01, '00,

FACT: Puglia churns out twice as much wine as Australia.
'99, '98, '97

Grape Varieties:

White:

Bombino Bianco- probably the most widely planted white grape in Puglia.

Verdeca- high in acidity, produces a neutral wine; it's tart and vegetal. Perhaps at its best in Locorotondo.

Bianco d'Alessano- often used in blends; produces a neutral wine.

Greco di Tufo- somewhat sparsely grown in Puglia; but used as part of the blend for Gravina.

Moscato Bianco- used in the making of sweet dessert wines.

Red:

Negroamaro- literally translated as “bitter-black” and produces fascinating, spicy-gamey reds. Found in Salice Salentino and Copertino and in increasingly impressive IGT wines.

The wine obtained from Negro Amaro ranges in shading from ruby to garnet red and its flavor features a pleasantly bitterish vein. Because of those constant characteristics and the black hue of the clusters, the variety was called niuru maru in the local dialect. The name was gradually transformed into Negro Amaro.

Primitivo- The name is said to be derived from the Italian *primiticcio* meaning precocious, because with respect to other Puglian grapes, Primitivo ripens up to a month previously- as early as the last third of August. This does not preclude Primitivo from packing in the grape sugar.

As far as Primitivo being the same grape as the California Zinfandel variety, DNA tests have satisfied Californian ampelographers that their Zinfandel is the same grape, doubtless from the same place, and probably at different times. Typically, Primitivo is deep in colour, with a bright berry fruit nose. The palate is rich, spicy, full-bodied, with a long velvety finish.

Uva di Troia- Named after the town east of Foggia named Troia, this late ripening varietal likes very warm climates and produces very big, inky red wines with notes of blackberry, truffle and blackcurrants.

Wines:

Castel del Monte - one of the better known DOCs, the area makes white, red and rose.

Locorotondo - Apulia's premier white, made primarily with the Verdeca grape, has subtle fruit and almond notes.

Salice Salentino - a revelation from the south, this red can match its northern brothers for richness and complexity. Made from a blend of Negroamaro and Malvasia Nera.

Primitivo di Manduria - An early-ripening, and potentially high-alcohol, variety that is related to California's Zinfandel. This wine possesses power and color, and the graceless examples of just a few years ago are giving way to some slick and modern wines. Some are even treated to barrique aging.



Some Specialty Dishes from Puglia:

Typical Snack

The "**calzone**" (big sock) which is made from dough spread with onions, black olives, capers, tomatoes, pecorino cheese, anchovies and parsley, and baked in the oven.

Pasta

Puglia is proud of its homemade pasta, often formed of unusual shapes like the "**orecchiette**" (little ears). For Sunday dinners a favorite is "**Maccheroni al forno**" or baked maccheroni, made with little meat balls, sliced hardboiled eggs, pieces of artichoke, salame, and cheese, often surrounded with piecrust and baked in the oven.

Meat

As for meat, **beef** is used either for meat sauce or meatballs, The dominant meat in puglia is **lamb**, served on a spit, roasted, stewed, or even fried.

Cheese

Fresh **ricotta**, **pecorino**, and "**burrata di Andria**," which must be consumed within 24 hours to be properly appreciated.

Seafood

Since three quarters of the area of Puglia is surrounded by the sea its products are abundant and popular. **Sea turtle**, **oysters**, **mussels**, **cuttlefish**, and **octopus** are cooked in simple ways.

VII. SICILY (sis-ill-eee)



Location of Sicily:

South west of mainland Italy, which is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the west and south, by the Ionian Sea on the east, and by the Tyrrhenian Sea on the north, and which is separated from the Italian mainland by the narrow Strait of Messina.

Climate: The climate is Mediterranean, with hot dry summers and mild wet winters. Distance from the sea and the height of the larger mountains are the causes of sharp differences in climate: on the coastal belt, the average annual temperature is around 66 °F, which drops to 54 °F inland.

Latest Great Vintages: '03, '00

Grape Varieties of Sicily:

White:

Insolia- Insolia, whose etymology is uncertain, is a species of wine present mainly in Sicily. Sicilian Insolia which is golden yellow coloured with wonderful perfumes of the flowers and the fruit of Sicily, the zagara, the jasmine and the lemons. It is fruity and fresh, proper for fish and Mediterranean appetizers.

Red:

Nero d'Avola-Pronounced "Neh-roe Dah-voe-lah" and translated "The black (grape) of Avola," this grape makes a rich, perfumed and velvety red wine that's easy to drink but that can take a bit of aging, works well in blends with other grapes, and can benefit from (but does not require) the judicious use of oak. That's a lot to like in a wine grape, and it's a description that could just as easily fit many of the most desirable red varieties.

Frappato- It's homeland is the south east tip of Sicily, the province of Ragusa, where it is the mainstay of the characterful Cerasuolo di Vittoria. Its role is to add perfume such as floral and cherry fruit notes. Its colour is ruby red, the flavour has a great concentration of perfumes of marasca-cherry and mature fruit and on the palate it is soft, velvety and enveloping cherries, red plums, and roses.

Other red wines of Sicily:

Cerasuolo di Vittoria- Which is located in the Vittoria region of Sicily (South east), this is a blend of a minimum of 40% Frappato, and not more than 60% Nero d' Avola



Some Specialty Dishes from Sicily:

Caponata - Chopped vegetables such as eggplant (the most essential ingredient), tomatoes, onions, green peppers, olives, and celery individually cooked in olive oil, then combined. Caponata is similar in concept to the French Ratatouille.

Pasta con le Sarde - Macaroni cooked with sardines along with various flavorful seasonings. This dish is particularly popular in Palermo.

Cassata alla Siciliana - A sponge cake sliced into several layers and spread with a Ricotta cheese, cream, candied fruit, chocolate, and liqueur mixture, and then reassembled and covered with chocolate icing. Cassata alla Siciliana may also refer to an Italian ice studded with candied fruits.

Cannole - A confection consisting of a hard, tubular pastry shell stuffed with Ricotta cheese enriched with cream, candied fruit, and sometimes chocolate.