

Family Wine Tasting - Italian Wines
December 23rd 2012
Exploring the Wines of Southern Italy



Italian Wine Basics



Etruscans and Greek settlers produced wine in Italy before the Romans started their own vineyards in the 2nd century BC. Roman grape-growing and winemaking was prolific and well-organized, pioneering large-scale production and storage techniques like barrel-making and bottling.

- Highest Production Country
- 20 Regions
- 350/500 Grapes
- More than one million vineyards under cultivation.
- 5th Largest per capita in consumption, US is 55th

Classifications

Italy has 4 appellation designations broken down into 2 categories.

The first category is Vini da tavola, loosely translated as “table wines”. Under this category are the subcategories of:

1) Vino da tavola (VDT), table wines or wines without any specific geographic origin. Contrary to what this label would imply, VDTs are not necessarily wines of lesser quality than the other designations. **They may just be wines that do not follow current Italian wine law.**

2) Vino da tavola con indicazione geografica tipica (IGT), which are table wines with a typical geographical indication. There are 125 such Regions. Introduced in 1992 it was created to recognize the unusually high quality of the class of wines known as Super Tuscans, IGT wines are labeled with the locality of their creation, but do not meet the requirements of the stricter DOC or DOCG designations which are generally intended to protect traditional wine formulations such as Chianti or Barolo. It is considered broadly equivalent to the French vin de pays designation, and in the Valle d’Aosta Vin de pays may appear on the label in place of Indicazione geografica tipica. Similarly, in the province of South Tyrol, the term Landwein may be used as a synonym.

The second category is **Vini di qualità prodotti in regione determinata (VQPRD)**, loosely translated as “quality wines produces in a determined region”. These are designations created by the European Union (EU) countries. Under this category are the subcategories of:

- 1) **Vino a denominazione di origine controllata (DOC)**, translated as controlled denomination of origin.
- 2) **Vino a denominazione di origine controllata e garantita (DOCG)**, translated as controlled and guaranteed denomination of origin.

All three require that a food product be produced within the specified region using defined methods and that it satisfy a defined quality standard.

- **Classico (classic):** is reserved for wines produced in the region where a particular type of wine has been produced "traditionally". For the Chianti Classico, this "traditional region" is defined by a decree from July 10, 1932.
- **Riserva (reserve):** may be used only for wines that have been aged at least two years longer than normal for a particular type of wine.

Wines grown in **DOC** regions must meet strict standards pertaining to production areas, grape varieties grown, grape yield per acre, alcohol content, and other specific growing, aging, and fermenting requirements.

There are over 300 DOCs in Italy.

Wines grown in **DOCG** regions have the same strict set of guidelines as DOCs. In addition, they must undergo and pass a taste test and a chemical analysis.

In Italy, there are just over 30 DOCGs, most of them in Piemonte (Piedmont) and Toscana (Tuscany).

Some DOCGs you may be familiar with are **Barbaresco, Barolo, Brunello di Montalcino, and Chianti Classico**.



Wine/Grape/Place	View	Scent	Taste / Sensation	Your Impression	Rating/Price
	Cloudy, Clear, Dark, Translucent, Brown, Ruby, Violet, Rust, Honey, Golden, Pale Yellow, Green	Earthy, Woods, Nuts, Flowers, Red Fruits, Stone Fruits, Apples, Citrus, Spice, Minerals, Odd/Off	Sweet, Sour, Tannic, Tar, Leather, Smoke, Moss, Nuts, Bread, Chocolate, Butter, Vanilla, Prune, Plum, Cherry, Berry, Peach, Apple, Grapefruit, Lemon, Minerals, Spice, Herbs, Grass, Straw, Simple, Complex, Balanced	Lively, Seductive, Exciting, Full, Complex Mellow, Plain, Strange, It's like.....	Naah, Yeah,Wow \$ <15, \$\$<\$30 \$\$\$>\$30,\$\$\$\$ over \$60
Nino Franco Rustico Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Veneto					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2010 Feudi di San Gregorio Fiano di Avellino, Campania					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2008 Schola Sarmenti Primitivo Nardo Puglia					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2010 Tormaresca Neprica S. Pietro Vernotico Puglia					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2006 Elena Fucci Titolo Aglianico del Vulture MT. Vulture, Basilicata					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2005 Molettieri Taurasi Cinque Querce Aglianico Tauras , Campania					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2011 Colosi Nero d'Avola Messina Sicily					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2009 Firriato Chiaromonte Nero d'Avola Paceco Sicily					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$
2008 Antinori Guado al Tasso Bolgheri Tuscany					 \$ \$\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$

Italian Wine Terms

Here are other important terms you'll want to know that could be on an Italian wine label:

Abbotcato or Amabile: Medium sweet

Amaro: Very dry

Annata: Vintage (year the grapes were grown)

Appoggiare: in Italian means "to support"; many top hillside vineyards in Tuscany are planted on terraced vineyards. Large terraces are called *poggione*.

Asciutto: Bone dry

Azienda Agricola: Estate grown - using its own grapes in the production of its wines

Azienda Vinicola: A producer who buys grapes to make their wine

Azienda Vitivinicola: A combination of the two, using some estate grown vines and some purchased to makes their wines

Bianco: A white wine

Botte: Cask

Bottiglia: Bottle

Bricco/Bric: A vineyard on a high, steep ridge thought to be of higher quality

Casa Vinicola: Wine firm

Cascina – Farmhouse or Estate

Chiaretto: A rose wine

Classico: Originating from an old, historic place of origin such as the center of a DOC region; therefore a typical, well-respected wine

Collio: Collio "literally means 'hill' - is all about hillside vineyards."

Conca: a depression or shallow in a hillside

Dolce: Sweet

Fattoria: A medium sized wine growing property or estate

Fermentazione Naturale: Naturally sparkling wine

Frizzante: Lightly sparkling

Imbottigliato: Bottled

Imbottigliato all'origine: Estate bottled

Invecchiato: Aged

How To Read an Italian Wine Label



Liquoroso: Strong, sweet, often fortified wine

Località: Literally, *località* means “locality” in Italian, though in wine labeling usage it translates more closely to "surroundings."

Maso or Masseria: Estate

Metodo Charmat: Tank method used for sparkling wine

Metodo Classico or Metodo Tradizionale: Traditional method, bottle-fermented sparkling wine

Passito or Passita: A generally strong, sweet wine made from part-dried grapes

Podere: A small wine growing property or estate

Poggio: A very common word, primarily found on Tuscan wines. In common parlance it has come to mean hillside, and literally means “hill.”

Produttore: A wine producer

Recioto: Like Passito but only part made with dried grapes

Riserva: Aged more than usual by the winemaker before release to market

Ronchi: Terraced

Ronco: A hillside vineyard

Rosso: Red

Secco: Dry

Semiseco: Medium dry

Sodi: A piece of land that was historically very difficult to work.

Sorì: A high quality vineyard site, generally south facing

Spumante: Sparkling

Stravecchio: Very old

Superiore: Made using high standards of production

Tenuta: A large wine growing property or estate

Uva: Grape

Uvaggio: A mixture of grapes

Valle: Valley

Vecchio: Old

Vendemmia: Also means vintage

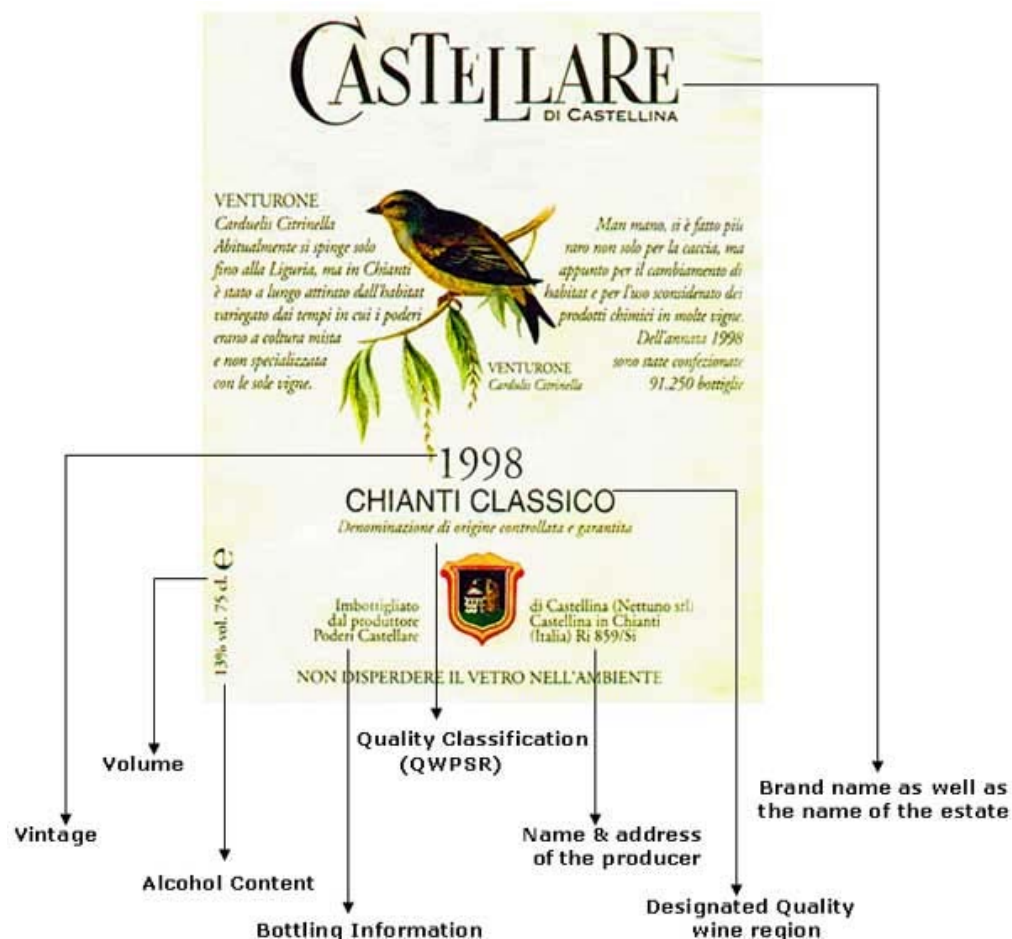
Vigna or Vigneto: A single vineyard, Vigneti Plural

Vignaiolo or Viticoltore: Wine grower

Vino Novello: Wine that is considered new, in the bottle less than one year

Vitigno: Variety of grape

Vivace: Slightly sparkling



Did you Know?

Malolactic Fermentation:

Malolactic fermentation (or sometimes malolactic conversion or MLF) is a process in winemaking where tart-tasting malic acid, naturally present in grape must, is converted to softer-tasting lactic acid. Malolactic fermentation tends to create a rounder, fuller mouthfeel. It has been said that malic acid tastes of green apples. By contrast, lactic acid is richer and more buttery tasting. Grapes produced in cool regions tend to be high in acidity, much of which comes from the contribution of malic acid. MLF is also thought to generally enhance the body and flavor persistence of wine, producing wines of greater palate softness and roundness. Many winemakers also feel that better integration of fruit and oak character can be achieved if MLF occurs during the time the wine is in barrel. Malolactic conversion is accomplished by lactic acid bacteria (such as *Oenococcus oeni*), which consume malic acid to liberate energy.

New World' vs. 'Old World' Wine

Style Differences

Figuratively the terms 'New World' and 'Old World' are widely used as descriptive terms to describe or infer a style of wine or winemaking practices. And often the places where wines are made.

- Old World wines are traditionally more 'terroir' and structure driven.
- In contrast, New World wines are typically more 'fruity'; modern, squeaky clean, fruit forward and in general more varietal driven.

Different Philosophies

Old World winemaking philosophies emanated from a sense of place, and the primordial role ascribed to 'terroir' as well as 'mother-nature' in determining wine quality.

In contrast, the New World philosophy generally placed less sanctity on the preeminence of 'terroir', and more on the preservation of varietal fruit character, believing that the appropriate harnessing of scientific and technological best practices in the vineyard and in the winery could iron out any 'terroir' imperfections.

That is the theory, and while retaining certain truisms, today the dividing line is more blurred, as New World wine producers discover 'terroir' and Old World producers discover 'fruit', adopting many of the technological advances developed in the New World.

US Generational Trends

Six percent of Millennials (ages 17 to 34; 70 million) are drinking wine daily, 26 percent are drinking wine several times a week, and 19 percent drink wine once a week on average. This comprises the core wine-drinking segment of Millennials, accounting for 51 percent of them, compared to only 37 percent five years ago, Gillespie said.

Generation X (ages 35 to 46; 44 million) was late in coming to the table for wine, but are making up ground, Gillespie said, as 62 percent are core wine drinkers compared to only 41 percent five years ago. Baby Boomers (ages 47 to 65; 77 million) have also continued the trend toward more frequent wine consumption in the past five years. Thirty percent of Baby Boomers reported that they drink wine several times a week compared to just 17 percent in 2005.

"And last but not least, in that they have the largest proportion of daily wine drinkers, are the over-65 wine drinkers who show only modest shifts in consumption frequency over the past five years, said Gillespie. But looking at recent consumption shifts of all generations together, the Millennial and Generation X segments are driving the growth of the wine market.

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