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Fine Wine Italian Style: The Beauty Of Italian Wine.

By Jim Kapowski

Fine wine often brings to mind images of French rolling hills and elegant dinners; however, Italy's twenty regions bring to the pallet an array of fine wines for your dining pleasure.

Italian wine making enjoys tradition rich in both modern and rustic methods, although much of the country's wineries now employ scientific and technological tools to create quality wines. The country's wines are made primarily from two types of grapes, Nebbiolo and Sangiovese. The Nebbiolo grapes are used in the northwester part of the country, creating the red wines Barolo and Barbaresco. The Sangiovese grapes create one of the better-known Italian wines, Chianti, and are native to the central Tuscany and Umbria regions.

Italy's wines are divided into four categories based on origin, quality, and purity. When shopping for a fine Italian wine, look for those with the designation of "Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita D.O.C.G.," which is awarded to wines with a solid reputation. This designation considers region, production yields, and a DOC of at least five years. DOC indicates the origins of a wine, the type of grapes used in making the wine, and the methods of production. DOCG is a designation following stricter guidelines than the DOC, which includes a guarantee of origin.

The five regions of the Northwest produce over a quarter of the country's DOC wines, but only about twenty percent of the country's total wine production. This, then, is a good place to begin when shopping for Italian wine, as many wine sellers group Italian wine by the region, whether in general terms, such as Northwest, or by specific region, such as Piedmont. The Piedmont region creates a number of DOC and DOCG wines.

The Northeast region is home to two of Italy's wine schools, and generates about a third of the country's DOC wines. The three regions create about a fifth of Italy's total wine production. Veneto, one of the regions, now produces the most wine of any region in the country.

Central Italy, comprised of six regions, accounts for about twenty percent of both wine production and DOC wines. The tradition of wine making in this region has often been traditional, the region is moving toward more contemporary wine making methods, and the overall quality has improved. Some wine

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experts believe that this region will continue to make great strides in wine making, so for those who love red wine, this is an area worth watching. Tuscany creates the well-known Chianti wine, as well as a variety of other

Tuscan reds.

The Southern region, which includes the islands, is comprised of six regions. These regions produce about forty percent of the total production, but only about fourteen percent of DOC and DOCG wines. The region is focusing on overall quality, and this, too, is a region worth watching. For those interested in consistent quality wines, many of the region's production offer just that.

For those new to Italian wine or wanting additional information, there is an abundance of sources. An importer specializing in Italian wine is one of the best sources for information on fine Italian wines, and can provide suggestions based on your individual preferences. You can also do your own research and

wine tasting based on your style and preference. As with many things Italian, the wines are among the finer indulgences.

Italian Wine Facts is an information site that contains articles, a directory and other Italian Wine Resources. It can be found at:

<http://www.italianwinefacts.com>

How To Choose An Italian Wine

By Gray Rollins

Wine connoisseurs regularly boast about their fine Italian wine collections and rightly so. Even if you're not a connoisseur, by the end of this article you'll be able to put your best Italian wine forward.

Italy is best known for its Moscato, Barolo, Chianti, and Soave; but there are numerous varieties just waiting to be enjoyed. Italy produces more wine than any other country and it produces the largest selection of wines. When you choose an Italian wine, even if you have no wine buying skills, the odds of finding a poor one are very slim so relax!

Wine from the Piedmont region provides red wines that are light bodied and refreshing. This is where the famous Barolo and Barbaresco wines come from.

The Barbera grape appears in full body reds. The Dolcetto grape is light bodied and distinctly dry. The Nebbiolo grape is responsible for the dry, full body wines of the area. The Moscato Bianco is the grape responsible for the sparkling white wines from the area.

And then there is the indulgence of Chianti from the Tuscany region. Chances are you've indulged in this lovely wine if you've ever dined in an Italian restaurant. The popular region wines include Chianti,

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Brunello, Vino Nobile di Monepulciano, and Vernaccia de San Gimignano.

The Sangiovese grape with its robust flavor is used in medium and full bodied red wines. Vernaccia is the grape of choice for a variety of sweet and dry white wines.

You can order wines from Italy in any color, style, or flavor; but if you want to be sure you are choosing a good Italian wine look for the DOCG classification. This doesn't guarantee a better tasting wine, it just indicates level of quality that's been maintained for at least 5 years which puts the odds in your favor.

Remember this easy rule of thumb. Reds go with red meats and whites go with white meats. It's a simple rule that goes a long way in helping choose a wine for your meal.

Italians strictly regulate their wines within four classification from tightly regulated superior wines to lenient regulations and creative innovation. They are as follows:

1. DOCG is the strictest of the regulation levels. Output yield is regulated; the wine's composition is analyzed; there is a minimum alcohol content; and there are minimum aging periods.
2. DOC is the qualification of all quality wines. Output yield is regulated; origin is regulated; there is a minimum alcohol content; there are minimum aging periods; and grape variety is regulated.
3. IGT is classified as excellent value for the cost. There are less quality restrictions, as well as wider territories; and grape ratios are not regulated.
4. Table Wine is the wine that is consumed on a daily basis in Italy. It includes some of the most expensive wines and some of the least expensive wines. The level of alcohol is regulated and so are

the wine making techniques.

That's it. Now wasn't that simple? You are on your way to being a connoisseur of Italian wine!

Gray Rollins is a featured writer for Saloto. To learn more about Italian wine, visit

<http://www.saloto.com/>

and

<http://www.saloto.com/redwine/>



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