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THREE DOLLARS

L.A.
STYLE

POTATIONS

Vino Verities

BY ALDEN MARIN

A former French president asked how political organization could ever be achieved in a country that produces 320 types of wine. Well, if cheese production stymie the political process

France, imagine what Italy must go through. A country that makes over 5,200 wines, Italy is by far the largest wine-producing nation in the world. It churns out a mind-boggling diversity of wines from its myriad wine-growing regions, and it seems that practically every farmable square-inch of the country is covered with some sort of grapevine. For our purposes, however, let's isolate and discuss a few of the best known and distinguished Italian wine producers and introduce some of the up-and-coming stars.

Angelo Gaja has been called "The King of Barbaresco." His firm's wines from the hilly, terraced vineyards of Piedmont's Barbaresco region are among the world's greatest. Gaja's Sori Tilden and Sori San Lorenzo are remarkably intense, expensive single-vineyard wines made exclusively from the Nebbiolo grape. Gaja's regular, blended Barbarescos—1981 and 1982 vintage—are superb: deeply-flavored, accessible tangy reds redolent of truffles, spice, herbs, black cherry and leather. Gaja also makes a fine Dolcetto—a lighter-styled red, reminiscent of a Beaujolais—as well as two new varietal entries into the marketplace: a cabernet (Darmagi) and a chardonnay. All three are excellent.

Ceretto and Giacosa are two other important producers of Barbaresco; Giacosa also makes a fine Barolo. The firm of Renaldo Ratti has some delicious and reasonably priced Barolos as well that are now becoming more available in our market. The Barolos of Pio Cesare—well repre-

wine, cabernet and chardonnay (which is still in barrels). Interestingly, the wine-maker at Zanella's estate is our very own Brian Lasky—from Culver City of all places. Pro-

east and into the Venetian corner of Italy, we find great advancements being made in white wine-making in the Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli areas. The Santa Margherita winery in Alto Adige is best known for its Pinot Grigio (the "White Burgundy" of Italy) and has now entered the marketplace with a lean, elegant and sparing chardonnay. If not overly intense, this estate's wines aim accurately for a conservative, middle-of-the-road, dry wine audience. As a result, they've done respectably well in Los Angeles. From the plains of Friuli, the firm of Bollini has had great local and national success with clean, decently made and inexpensive chardonnay, cabernet and Pinot Grigio. On a similar scale, we can look to the firms of Jermann, Gallo Stelio, Feluga and Dorigo for fine Pinot Grigios, Traminers and, in some cases, impressive, single-vineyard bottlings of chardonnay. Castelluccio, Ronco della Re (for sauvignon blanc) and Ronco delle Ginestre are several other distinguished wine-makers worth watching in this booming wine area.

Like Piedmont to the north, central Italy (from Florence to areas south of Rome) enjoys a fantastic tradition of red wine-making—from the irresistibly warm, delicious flavors of its Chiantis to the rich, powerful and tannic Brunello di Montalcino. Unfortunately, the name "Chianti" too quickly brings to mind the bland reds found in straw baskets in suburban shopping malls and Italian dives. Dispel that notion and try some of the great Chiantis which are now available and are rapidly and deservedly finding their way into the hands of eager American wine-drinkers. Among the best, in our opinion, are the Chiantis of Badia a Coltibuono,

Further to Italy's east, in Lombardy, Maurizio Zanella at CA' del Bosco has been making considerable headlines lately with his sparkling