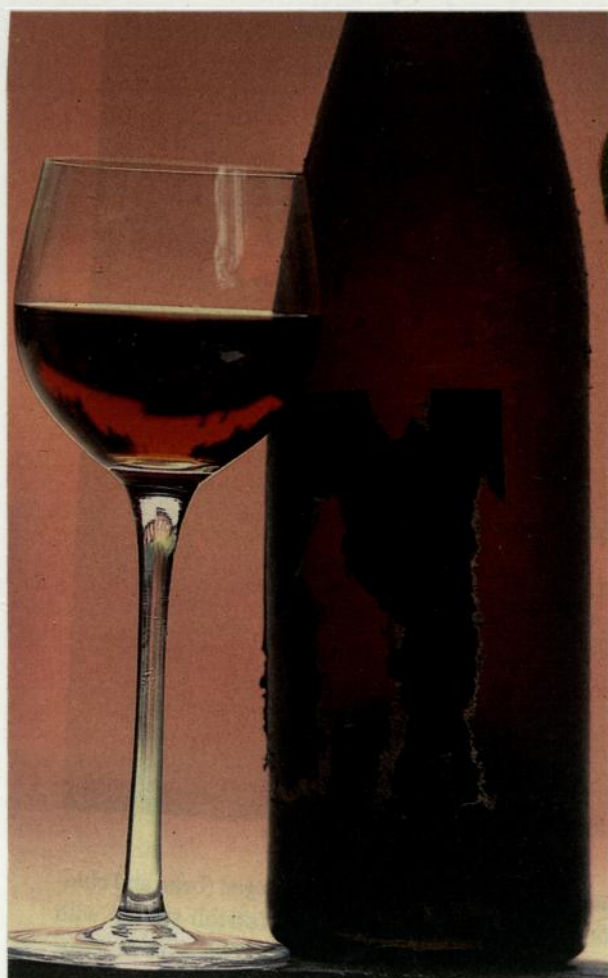


The Taste of ITALY

Most fertile of the regions of Italy, Lombardy is watered by the mighty River Po and sustained by the wealth of Italy's major centre of industry, Milan. Here the foods of the rich, based on meat and dairy products, meet the great staples of the poor – rice, maize and pasta – overlaid by the fast foods of the modern world. But the Lombards are learning once more to cherish their ancient cuisine, as Claudia Roden reports in the second of her new cookery series. Photographs by Robert Freson

WINES OF THE REGION

BURTON ANDERSON'S GUIDE TO THE LOCAL VINEYARDS



Hard-to-please Lombardians have made a single exception to their rule of ignoring home products. Wines from Franciacorta are much in vogue in Milan. The vineyards of Franciacorta, which lies just west of Brescia on Lake Iseo, surround lavish villas, a few of which have suddenly become famous wine estates. Two decades ago Guido Berlucchi began making sparkling wines there from pinot and chardonnay so successfully that the firm became Italy's largest producer of champagne-method *spumante*, though the grapes he uses now come from as far away as Piedmont and Alto Adige. Smaller estates followed with wines made exclusively from their own vines.

Ca' del Bosco was the first grand cru, though the "châteaux" of Bellavista, Cavalleri and Monte Rossa are admired for wines that experts consider rivals to fine champagne. Ca' del Bosco carries the challenge further with a Cabernet-Merlot that often beats top Bordeaux in blind tastings, and red Pinot and white Chardonnay that could be mistaken for fine burgundy. Such feats just can't be ignored.

