

GUIDE TO WINE FROM ITALY

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF ITALY'S BEST SELLING RESTAURANT GUIDE HERE IS A COMPANION BOOK ABOUT ITALY'S BEST AND BIGGEST WINE PRODUCERS, VINEYARDS, WINES AND VINTAGES, INCLUDING A COMPLETE OENOLOGICAL GLOSSARY

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This guidebook contains a selection of the best Italian wine producers, including several "big names" known all over the world. Next to 24 of these producers appears a symbol of particular merit: a cluster of grapes. These are, in the opinion of our experts, the "Gorgeous 24" in Italian winemaking today.

III

LOMBARDY

viously, with Trebbiano grapes, is a white wine for the beginning of the meal.

Cellatica. This is produced in five towns in the province of Brescia with Schiava Gentile, Barbera, and Marzemino grapes; it is a vinous red that can be drunk with any part of the meal, and is particularly recommended with *polenta*.

Franciacorta Bianco and Franciacorta Rosso. Produced in Franciacorta in the province of Brescia. The first is made with Pinot Bianco and/or Chardonnay grapes and is a tasty, harmonious, delicate white that goes well with the fish from Lake Iseo; the second is made with Cabernet Franc, Barbera, Nebbiolo, and Merlot grapes and is a flavorful, vinous, ruby-red wine that goes well with grilled meats and young cheeses.

Franciacorta Spumante. Made with Pinot Bianco and/or Chardonnay grapes. Excellent wines for *metodo classico* spumante are produced in Franciacorta.

Valtellina. Produced in the province of Sondrio, essentially with the Nebbiolo vine, which is Piedmontese in origin, and is called Chiavennasca here. This is a robust, tannic red wine that goes well with traditional dishes of the Valtellina valley.

Valtellina Superiore. This comes from the best exposures and must age for at least two years (versus one year for Valtellina); it has the right to the geographical subdenominations Grumello, Inferno, Sassella, and Valgella. A high-bred red wine that goes well with roasts and game.

Oltrepo Pavese. These are not only the most fertile hills in terms of wine production, they're also the ones that assure Lombardy of two of the three zones (the third being Trentino) - along with Franciacorta - that are particularly devoted to producing high-quality spumante wines with the classic method. In fact, it's no coincidence that the great Piedmontese wine-growers get the grapes for their spumante from these very hills. The D.O.C. is Oltrepo Pavese, followed by the indication of the vine.

Oltrepo Pavese Rosso: produced with Barbera, Croatina, and Uva Rara grapes, this is a light, pleasant wine that can be drunk with any part of the meal. **Oltrepo Pavese Barbacarlo:** produced with Croatina, Uva Rara, Ughetta, and Barbera grapes. **Oltrepo Pavese Barbera** (from the vine of the same name), **Oltrepo Pavese Bonarda** (from the grape of the same name), and **Oltre-**

po Pavese Buttafuoco (from Barbera, Croatina, and Ughetta grapes): these are all young red wines, but all of good body, excellent with rabbit, poultry, duck, etc. **Oltrepo Pavese Cortese, Oltrepo Pavese Pinot, Oltrepo Pavese Riesling** (each from grapes of the same name): these are dry, distinctive white wines for first courses and fish dishes. **Oltrepo Pavese Moscato:** this dessert wine is also produced as a *spumante*, with grapes of the same name. **Oltrepo Pavese Sangu di Giuda:** obtained from Barbera, Croatina, and Uva Rara grapes, this is a sweet red dessert wine that goes particularly well with sorghum pastries.

Wine Producers

The best producers in Lombardy are concentrated in the two leading winemaking provinces in the region, Pavia and Brescia. We shall list only nine of them (in alphabetical order), representing the high points of a movement that will give qualitatively interesting results.

BELLAVISTA

Erbusco, Via Case Sparse, tel. (030) 726-7474. Great ambitions, state-of-the-art technology, some questionable results, and some good ones, as with the Casotte and Sole-sine reds (the 1985 vintage is excellent). The will to succeed of this winery is great, and we expect better and better results with every passing year.

BERLUCCHI

Borgonato di Cortefranca, tel. (030) 984-451. A large winery, a prestigious name, millions of bottles that reach every corner of the world. The average level of production is always respectable, with particular high points in the Cuvée Imperiale. And don't forget their Franciacorta Rosso and Bianco.

CA' DEL BOSCO

CA' DEL BOSCO
Erbusco, Via Case Sparse, tel. (030) 726-7311.
At the age of seventeen, Maurizio Zanella decided to become a great winemaker and to make Erbusco a second Epernay. Fourteen years later, his wines have become famous all over the world. Those are just two moments from the brief history of this winery, which suffice to give an idea of the en-

trepreneurial abilities of Maurizio, but which don't emphasize the three talents that have enabled him to reach the peaks of Italian (and not just Italian, either) winemaking in just a few years: intuition, passion, and tenaciousness. The glaring evidence of this is not only to be found in his wines, but also in his winery itself, which is a little jewel that certainly merits a visit (call ahead for an appointment). Among the products of Ca' del Bosco, the wine named Maurizio Zanella is one of the best red wines in all of Italy, and the Ca' del Bosco Chardonnay, Franciacorta Bianco and Rosso, and Spumante Dosage Zero aren't far behind. But Maurizio is young, and so is his winery: who knows what great new surprises they'll have for us in the future.

CAVALLERI

Erbusco, Via Provinciale 74, tel. (030) 726-7060.

Giovanni Cavalleri was a man of finance, and now he produces wine with the same managerial spirit, following a very simple philosophy: to make good wine and to sell it well. It's no coincidence, then, that the labels on his bottles are designed by Franco Maria Ricci, a further touch of style for a winery that certainly isn't lacking in style. Obviously, the same goes for the wines, particularly the Franciacorta Rosso Tajardino and the Franciacorta Bianco Rampantino. The champenois method spumante production is also good.

MAGA

Brioni, Via Mazzini 50, tel. (0383) 51-212.

This little winery (30,000 bottles per year) in the Oltrepo Pavese is also called "Barbaccarlo," and Barbaccarlo wine is the jewel in its crown. The name originated a century ago (but the winery is much older) when the nephews of old Carlo decided to dedicate the family vines to their uncle (barba in dialect). This is why the descendants of Carlo Maga ("Barba Carlo," as his nephews called him) are the only ones who can call the wine of this zone by that name. There are several great vintages: of the latest, 1983 and 1985. The winery also produces other outstanding wines, including Ronchetto di Maga and Monte Buono (also called Sangu di Giuda, "Judas' Blood").

Each wine requires the proper glass.

LOMBARDY

LA MUIRAGHINA

Montù Beccaria, Località Molinazzo 2, tel. (0385) 61-303.

An interesting new phenomenon on the winemaking scene of the Oltrepo Pavese, due to the dedication of Anna Gregorutti. The first fruits are a nice Malvasia and an excellent Felicino. But they're only in the second year of winemaking here, and everything leads us to believe that great things are to come from La Muiraghina.

LA PERTICA

Castello di Polpenazze del Garda, tel. (0365) 471.

are on the western slopes of Lake Garda, in a climate that is particularly favorable for growing grapes and olives. In fact, La Pertica began making its name with its olive oil, and is now gaining attention for its red and white Sincette and Colombaio wines.

LA VERSA

Santa Maria della Versa, Via Crispi 15, tel. (0385) 79-731.

The Cooperative Winery of Santa Maria della Versa, under the direction of Duke Antonio Giuseppe Denari, has succeeded in joining the best of two often antithetical concepts in the world of wine: quality and quantity. Five million bottles a year, but of excellent quality, are the results of a shrewd company policy that is supported by more than 750 partners, all producers from the Versa valley. A prestigious winery, known above all for its spumante wines, but which also deserves attention for its Oltrepo Pavese Rosso and its Barbera.

Vintages

1970 and 1971: excellent
1972: mediocre
1973: normal
1974: good
1975: normal
1976: good
1977: normal
1978: exceptional
1979 and 1980: great
1981: good
1982: excellent
1983: great
1984: normal
1985 and 1986: excellent
1987: good
1988: great.