

UNCORKED[®] IN ITALY

Limited Access Artisan Organic/Biodynamic/Natural Wines to Buy Now.

Do you want to drink artisan Italian wine made naturally with native grape varieties, but feel overwhelmed about which wines to choose and where to find them?

Not surprisingly, because there are: twenty different wine regions in Italy over 700 native grape varieties and thousands of wineries.

There is no easy way to find the best wines:

- The 100-point score system favors commercially successful wine with broad appeal to “standard” taste.
- The classifications of IGT/IGP, DOC and DOCG don’t help because the best wine could carry any of those labels. Many artisan winegrowers ironically decide to “declassify” their wine to IGT/IGP or even Vino di Tavola to maintain their quality standards.
- Most of the time, there is nothing on a wine label to indicate that the wine is organic/biodynamic/natural. (NB. If wine is sold largely on the basis of being “natural”, that may be a marketing ploy for selling plonk.)

The only truly reliable way to find these outstanding wines is to know the individual, independent winegrowers. And I do.

I live in Italy, visit the vineyards and cellars, talk with the winegrowers, and taste their wines. This fall, I’ve made a list of ten of my favorites from different parts of Italy with descriptions of great wines to try. For each, I’ve written a short description, listed the wines and added links to my blog for more info.

These wines are largely “under the radar” and still sold at reasonable prices. Unfortunately, many stores sell out as the year goes on because of the very small amount of wine produced. If the wines are not available where you live, you can likely order them through a store that sells online or makes shipments for telephone orders. The internet search system wine-searcher.com, especially the Pro-Version is useful or try one of these:

[Flatiron Wines and Spirits](#) (NY & SF)

[Solano Cellars](#) (Berkeley)

[Astor Wines](#) (NY)

[Slope Cellars](#) (Brooklyn)

[Uva Wines](#) (Brooklyn)

[MacArthur Beverages](#) (DC)

[DomaineLA](#) (Los Angeles)

The North



All Vigneti dei Dolomiti IGT

- Teroldego (\$25)
- Teroldego "Granato" (\$55)
- Fontanasanta Manzoni Bianco (\$30)
- Fontanasanta Nosiola (\$50)
- "Sgarzon" 2013 or "Morei" (\$45)



- Corte Sant'Alda Valpolicella "Ca' Fui" DOC (\$20)
- Corte Sant'Alda Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG (\$60-125 by vintage and seller)

Trentino-Alto-Adige

Elisabetta Foradori

certified biodynamic

Importer: [Louis Dressner Selections](#)

When her father passed away unexpectedly, Elisabetta Foradori took over his vineyards at age 19. She was determined to restore the native variety, Teroldego, to the prestige it enjoyed in the nineteenth century as the favorite of the Austrian Imperial Court. With relentless research, discovery of new clones, replanting and return to completely natural methods, she succeeded.

The wine that made her famous, Teroldego "Granato" is aged in wood, while Teroldego "Sgarzon" and "Morei" ferment and age in clay amphorae. Her white wines from the native varieties in the Fontanasanta vineyards have long skin contact, but are not "orange" wines.

Veneto

Corte Sant'Alda (Marinella Camerani)

biodynamic

Importer: [PortoVino](#)

In the 80s, Marinella Camerani began restoring the house and vineyards that her father had bought as a weekend retreat. She learned about grape growing and winemaking from scratch and moved from conventional to organic and then, biodynamic techniques. Her vineyards are high on a hill with unusual, white limestone rocky soil that drains fast and lends elegance to the wines. Forget about what you might have heard about Valpolicella (banal, lightweight wine) and Amarone (overly sweet and heavy) and try these.



Piemonte

San Fereolo Dolcetto Dogliani (Nicoletta Bocca)

biodynamic

Importer: [Rosenthal Wine Merchants](#)

Nicoletta Bocca's wines from Dogliani, just outside the Barolo zone, makes biodynamic wines that defy normal concepts of what a Dolcetto or Barbera or even Langhe Nebbiolo tastes like. Her flagship is "San Fereolo", a Dolcetto which she releases only after seven years of aging. The wines are rich, complex and earthy without ever being heavy.

- Dolcetto di Dogliani "Valdibà" DOC (\$20)
- Dolcetto di Dogliani "San Fereolo" DOCG (\$30)
- Langhe Rosso (Barbera) "Austri" DOC (\$30-35)
- Langhe Nebbiolo "Il Provinciale" DOC (\$35-70)



Friuli Venezia Giulia

I Clivi

organic/natural

Importer: [Weygandt-Metzler Importing](#)

Mario Zanusso and his father, Ferdinando, have old vines in the famous *flysch* soil (a 50 million year old sea bed of stratified clay and limestone) of the hills bordering on Slovenia in northern Italy. Their crisp but complex whites reflect the best of the native varieties, Friuliano and Ribolla Gialla.

All Colli Orientali del Friuli DOC

- Friuliano "San Pietro" (\$20)
- Friuliano "Brazan" (\$35)
- Friuliano "Galea" (\$35)
- Ribolla Gialla (\$20)

Central



- "Trebbiolo" Rosso Emilia IGT (Barbera/Bonarda) (\$20)
- Barbera della Stoppa (\$35)
- "Macchiona" Rosso Emilia IGT (Barbera/Bonarda) (\$25)
- "Ageno" Bianco Emilia IGT (\$40)

Emilia Romagna

La Stoppa (Elena Pantaleoni)

organic/natural

Importer: [Louis Dressner Selections](#)

Elena Pantaleoni trained as a linguist and was running a book store in Torino when her father passed away. She returned to La Stoppa and gradually pulled out international varieties (Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, etc.) to plant then considered far less prestigious local varieties (Bonarda, Barbera, Ortrugo and Trebbiano).

Her risky bet has more than paid off with her wines now known worldwide for excellence from the fruity immediacy of her "Trebbiolo" to her Barbera and "Macchiona" both with long aging capacity (10-15 years) and her "Ageno", a semi-aromatic "orange" wine that pairs with all kinds of food.



- "Pacina" Toscana Rosso IGT (\$30-35)

Toscana

Pacina (Giovanna Tiezzi)

organic/natural

Importer: [Indie Wineries](#)

Giovanna Tiezzi's "Pacina" evokes all the beauty of her 1,000 year-old estate and cellar overlooking the historic town of Siena. Made with the classic native varieties of Sangiovese (95%) and Canaiolo as well as Ciliegiolo (5%), her wine is the "real thing" not like the many Chianti wines that are made for the international palate with Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot tossed in the mix. Her old vines, ideal "Tufo di Siena" soil and natural methods give her wines vitality, authenticity and elegance.



- Chianti Classico DOCG (\$30)
- "TIN" Toscana Rosso IGT (\$45)

Toscana

Montesecondo

Biodynamic

Importer: [Louis Dressner Selections](#)

After growing up in Tunisia, becoming a musician in Boston and working as a wine importer in NYC, Silvio Messana returned to his family's vineyards in the northernmost part of Chianti to make wine. He planted *alberello* vines (typical of Sicily and the south) and adopted first organic, then, biodynamic growing methods. His Chiant wines are immediate with lots of freshness and vitality made with native varieties Sangiovese (95%) plus Caniolo and Cilieggiolo (5%). The Classico is aged in wood while the TIN is made in clay amphorae.

The South



- "Pithos Rosso" DOC
- "Frappato" Terre Siciliane IGP (\$25-30)
- "Nero di Lupo" (Nero d'Avola) Terre Siciliane IGP (\$25)
- Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG (Frappato/Nero D'Avola)

Sicilia

COS (Giusto Occhipinti and Titta Cilia)

organic/natural

Importer: [Domaine Select Wine & Spirits](#)

In 1980, three college buddies, Giambattista Cilia, Giusto Occhipinti and Cirino Strano made wine in the old *palmento* (Roman designed wine making building) belonging to the Cilia family. The first two, Titta and Giusto, persisted becoming pioneers for wines of excellence in the unusual terroir of Vittoria. They spearheaded the movement to make Cerasuolo di Vittoria the first and still only DOCG classified wine in Sicily then have gone on to push the boundaries of natural winemaking with clay amphorae wines "Pithos Rosso" and "Pithos Bianco".



- “Il Frappato” Terre Siciliane IGT (\$45)
- SP 68 Bianco Terre Siciliane IGT (Albanello/Zibbibo) (\$30)
- SP 68 Rosso Terre Siciliane IGT (Frappato/Nero D’Avola) (\$30)
- “Grotte Alte” Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG (Frappato/ANero D’Avola) (\$85)



- Vigna da Franco ‘A Vita Cirò Gaglioppo DOC (\$20)

Sicilia

Arianna Occhipinti

organic/natural

Importer: [Louis Dressner Selections](#)

Arianna Occhipinti, niece of Giusto, went to Milan to study oenology but her real mentor there was Elena Pantaleoni of La Stoppa. She returned to Sicily to make wines that are similar to those of COS but have their own distinctive personality and flair. She is a force of nature, and her wines evoke that.

Arianna’s flagship is “Il Frappato”. Traditionally, Frappato was a grape variety used only together with Nero D’Avola. Arianna chose to make a varietal wine that highlights its light, floral and slightly aromatic characteristics but is still a complex and interesting wine. The SP 68 wines are named for the “Strada Provinciale” (country road), which runs past her winery. Both are made with younger vines, lighter in structure but full of vitality. Her “Cerasuolo” comes from her oldest vines and is what she considers the deepest expression of her land, history and culture.

Calabria

À Vita (Francesco Di Franca)

organic/natural

Importer: [David Bowler Wine](#)

Francesco Di Franco, a native of Calabria, went north to study and meet his wife, Laura. After long years away, he returned to the coastal city of Cirò with the goal of making international level wine with the native variety, Gaglioppo. The very high tannins give the wine lots of structure and Francesco’s old vines and natural methods lend elegance.