

Fall in Love With Italy, One White Wine At A Time



Italy has been making wine for a very, very long time. There is evidence that Etruscan and Greek explorers cultivated wine grapes as far back as the 5th century BC. But it was the Romans who, three hundred years later, developed a widespread winemaking industry and introduced advanced techniques, such as barrel fermentation and bottling.

Additionally, Italy is one of the few places in the world where wine is produced in literally every region of the country, from the Trentino Alto Adige in the north, all the way down to the island of Sicily in the south. It is often in the top ten countries in the world in both wine production and per capita wine consumption. So Italians know their wine. But when most wine consumers in the United States think of Italian wines, they usually think about red wines. And while Italy makes some pretty fantastic reds, their white wines are not only delicious, but provide some of the best values around.

Having recently returned from a trip to Italy, I was happily surprised to find affordable white wines that were so delicious and easy to drink, I was convinced that there must be a hole in my glass. Every time I opened a bottle of white wine, it seemed to just disappear. And when I paired it with a variety of cheeses and salami, and fish dishes, well, the wine simply evaporated.

Here is an assortment of some of the wonderful white wines Italy has to offer from some of the major wine growing regions.

Located in north-east Italy, Veneto is one of Italy's major wine regions. Pinot Grigio and Garganega are the two most popular white varieties and account for most of the region's still wine. The **2013 Geretto Pinot Grigio** is one reason why. This Pinot Grigio displays a bright bouquet of lemon fruit and apple blossom. The delicious citrus favors merge with accents of minerals and white flowers to produce a bolder, richer version of this classic wine. The crisp fuller flavors are achieved by the longer contact with the skins during fermentation producing excellent balance and a delightful finish. **\$12**

The Antinori family is one of the most famous wine producers in Italy. Their **2012 Marchesi Antinori Santa Cristina Campogrande Orvieto Classico** provides one of the best values in white wines and worth tracking down. It is made from a blend of white wine grapes from the Umbria region in Tuscany. The bouquet opens with luscious fruity-floral aromas reminiscent of lemon zest and white flowers. Soft and well-balanced on the palate, flavors of nectarine, white peach, and fresh citrus glide across the tongue on a carpet of bright acidity. The finish is zesty and refreshing. **\$12**

One of my favorite wine discoveries comes from the island of Sardinia. The **2013 Argiolas Costamolino Vermentino di Sardegna** is made from 95% Vermentino and 5% other Sardinian varietals. Vinified in stainless steel tanks to preserve the fresh, aromatic qualities of the grapes, with a touch of Malolactic fermentation to provide richness, the wine offers up beautiful scents of citrus on the nose and lush yet crisp flavors of guava, pineapple and nectarine on the palate. Delightfully zesty acidity keeps the palate refreshed and the wine food-friendly. **\$13**

The **2012 Pieropan Soave** also hails from the Veneto region, but employs the other popular varietal from that area: Garganega. Made from a blend of 85% Garganega and 15% Trebbiano di Soave, it has a fragrant nose of apricot and nectarines that reminds me of a summer roadside fruit stand. The lush flavors of stone fruits have depth and weight in the mouth and feature just a hint of creamy lemon on the fresh and well balanced finish. **\$16**