Italian Wine

Italian wine is popular the world over, which is not surprising when you take into account the country's ideal climate and a history of grape cultivation that stretches back centuries. Italy is also one of the world's largest wine producing countries, second only to France, producing approximately 20% of the global total to France's 26%.

The History Of Italian Wine

Viticulture, the cultivation of grapes and grape vines, dates back to the days of the Etruscans and Greeks, who were both producing wine in Italy long before the advent of the Roman Empire. The Romans were also very involved in wine production, developing highly efficient methods of cultivation, winemaking, storage and bottling. Consequently, wine production and consumption has long been an important part of Italian culture.

Italian Wine And The Culture

Grapes are cultivated throughout Italy, with each region producing its specialty wines. Most is produced in modern wineries, but many villagers make their own wine, treading grapes with their feet in traditional fashion. Italy's long narrow shape and lengthy shorelines create excellent climatic conditions for coastal wine growing regions, plus its mountains and

foothills provide a variety of altitudes, climates and soil conditions.

In Italy, wine is an integral part of the family meal, and young children are introduced to a small amount, mixed with water, from an early age. Consequently, Italian teenagers who drink wine with meals at home don't face the same temptations regarding binge or heavy drinking as teens whose families don't practice this custom. A recent study at Boston University confirmed the long-held belief that when wine drinking is an accepted part of daily life, it loses its appeal as a form of rebellion.

Italian Wine Classifications

Italy recognizes four categories of wine:

Table Wine:

1. Vino da Tavola (VDT): Wine produced in Italy. It makes no reference to quality, just geography.

2. Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT): Wine from a specific region within Italy. This further differentiates Italian wines.

QWPSR (Quality Wine Produced in a Specific Region)

3. Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC):

Wines from geographic zones that are more specific than an IGT region. This category has very strict legal requirements.

4. Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG): As well as referring to a specific geographic zone, this category also requires that the permitted grapes are specifically defined, and the wine must pass a blind taste test for quality.

Each of Italy's 20 regions offers a range of excellent wines. Each wine has its own unique appeal, and the only way to decide which ones are to your liking is the obvious route – the taste test. Even if you have a list of favorites based on past experience, there may be even better Italian wines that you simply haven't come across yet.