



ITALIAN WINE LAWS

by Sharron McCarthy

In ancient times, Italy was dubbed the "Land of Wine," and for three millennia, no product has ever been more closely identified with that country. The vine thrives in every region. Yet, despite paeans of poets, philosophers and essayists, it wasn't until late in the 20th century that Italian wines gained a reputation for products of the highest international quality. Passage of the Wine Law of 1963 spurred the industry's modernization. Highly comprehensive, the Denomination of Origin laws are, in part, patterned after France's respected Appellations Contrôlées. They define Italy's winemaking traditions and regulate every phase of viticulture and viniculture, including vine types, grapes, their processing, aging and bottling. More recently, in response to pressure from winemakers, the laws have been amended to encourage experimentation with untraditional grape varieties and techniques. There are now four different categories:

Vino da Tavola (VDT) - Simple table wines that carry neither a varietal name nor a vintage date.

Indicazione Geografica Tipica (Typical Geographic Indication, IGT) - This appellation, instituted in 1992, falls between Vino da Tavola and Denomination of Controlled Origin. The government's purpose is to upgrade a major portion (about 40 percent) of Italy's table wine production by placing these products on a par with the French Vin du Pays or German Landwein. The wine's label must declare its specific region and may cite varietal type and vintage. Growers or regional governments are required to apply for IGT status just as they do for a DOC or DOCG appellation. Currently, there are more than 100 IGTs.

Denominazione di Origine Controllata (Denomination of Controlled Origin, DOC) - Wines bearing this appellation are registered by the government. Their labels must state their zone of origin and the wines are required to meet certain production standards. Only approved methods of planting, cultivating and fertilizing can be employed, for example. Maximum yields are controlled, as are bottling specifications, alcohol content and aging. The products and their claims are subject to government review at any time. There are currently about 300 DOCs.

Among the latest DOCs is [Sant'Antimo](#), awarded in 1996 as part of an effort to heighten the status of Italy's growing number of "Super Tuscan" wines. Until then, they carried only a VDT appellation because most of them are produced from non-native varieties.

The Sant'Antimo production area is located in the Tuscan town of Montalcino and its environs. The growers who petitioned for the category reached back in time for the appellation's name. Its inspiration was a local abbey, called Sant'Antimo, which, according to legend, was established by Charlemagne in the 9th century to express his thanks to God for providing him with a cure for a plague that had been ravaging his troops. He named the abbey after the saint Antimo, who was martyred during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian.

Wines approved for the Sant'Antimo DOC can be designated simply as Rosso or Bianco (red or white) made from grapes authorized for growth in the province of Siena, or bear the name of the following grape varieties, provided that 85 percent of the stated varietal is used in the wine's production and it is produced in limited quantity: Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Pinot Nero, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (Denomination of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin, DOCG) - The most stringent of the categories, this appellation embraces all DOC assurances and further requires a producer to control and guarantee everything claimed on the wine's label: zone of origin, net contents, name of grower and bottler, place of bottling and product's alcohol strength. Affixed to the bottle is a government seal of approval, and the wine is subject to analysis at any time by government inspectors.



The wines and regions of the current 33 DOCGs are:

Tuscany: Brunello di Montalcino, the first to be awarded this appellation; Carmignano Rosso, Chianti, Chianti Classico, Morellino di Scansano, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano

Piedmont: Asti/Asti Spumante-Moscato d'Asti, Barbaresco, Barolo, Brachetto d'Acqui, Dolcetto di Dogliani Superiore/Dogliani, Gattinara, Gavi/Cortese di Gavi, Ghemme, Roero

Lombardy: Franciacorta, Sforzato di Valtellina/Sforzato di Valtellina, Valtellina Superiore (Sassella, Grumello, Inferno and Valgella)

Emilia-Romagna: Albana di Romagna

Umbria: Sagrantino di Montefalco, Torgiano Rosso Riserva

Campania: Fiano di Avellino, Greco di Tufo, Taurasi

Abruzzo: Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Colline Teramane

Sardinia: Vermentino di Gallura

Marche: Rosso Conero Riserva, Vernaccia di Serrapetrona

Veneto: Bardolino Superiore/Classico Superiore, Recioto di Soave, Soave Superiore/Classico Superiore

Friuli: Picolit, Ramandolo

Sicily: Cerasuolo di Vittoria

Although DOC and DOCG were established in 1963, the first DOC was not awarded until 1966 (Vernaccia di San Gimignano), and the first DOCG not until 1980 (Brunello di Montalcino).

Listing of Castello Banfi wines by category:

IGT Toscana

Le Rime

Col-di-Sasso

Centine

San Angelo

DOC Sant'Antimo

Fontanelle

Serena

Tavernelle

Colvecchio

Mandrielle

Cum Laude

SummuS

ExcelsuS

DOC Other

Castello Banfi Moscadello di Montalcino

Castello Banfi Rosso di Montalcino

DOCG

Banfi Chianti Classico Riserva

Banfi Chianti Classico

Castello Banfi Brunello di Montalcino

Poggio alle Mura Brunello di Montalcino

Poggio all'Oro Brunello di Montalcino Riserva