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## Italy' Red Grape Varieties

### **Aglianico**

Also called: Gnanico, Agliatica, Ellenico, Ellanico and Uva Nera

Origin: Greece

Aglianico (pronounced "ah-LYAH-nee-koe") is a red wine grape grown in the Campania and Basilicata regions of Italy. The vine originated in Greece and was brought to Campania by Greek settlers. The name may be a corruption of Vitis hellenica, Italian for "Greek vine".[1] Another etymology derives the name Aglianico from a corruption of Apulianicum, the Roman adjective which indicates the whole of southern Italy in the Latin age. In early Roman times, it was the principal grape of the famous Falernian wine which was the Roman equivalent of a First Growth wine today.

The vine was believed to have first been cultivated in Greece by the Phoenicians from an ancestral vine that ampelographers have not yet identified. From Greece it was brought to Italy by settlers to Cumae near modern day Avellino, and from there spread to various points in the regions of Campania and Basilicata. While it is still grown in Italy, the original Greek plantings seem to have disappeared.

In Ancient Rome the grape was the principal component of the world's earliest First Growth wine, Falernian.

Along with a grape known as Greco (possibly today's Trebbiano), the grape was commented on by Pliny the Elder, the maker of some of the highest-ranked wines in Roman times.

Traces of the vine have been found in Molise, Puglia and on the island of Procida near Naples, though it is no longer widely cultivated in those places. The grape was called Ellenico (the Italian word for "Greek") till the 15th century when it got its current name Aglianico.

Aglianico del Vulture

According to researchers the Aglianico grape is about 2,800 years old, as this vine has grown on the Vulture mountains for at least 28 centuries.

The volcanic composition of the soil in the municipalities of the Vulture mountains, where the grapes are grown at 200 to 700 meters elevation, give unique characteristics to these wines, which gained the DOC denomination in 1971. The color is ruby red with purple highlights, intense perfume of wild berries and between 12% to 13.5 percent alcohol. It's best after at least two years

of ageing and pairs perfectly with roasted and grilled meat and venison.

Unfortunately, in the past Aglianico was often used as blending wine. The Aglianico Spumante (sparkling) met with good favor in the US in the 1950s, but become hard-to-find after a while. Currently it seems poised for a gradual escalation in the international market.

Nearby the historic production zone of this grape there's the ancient town of Venosa (a.k.a. as Venusia in ancient times), which is the hometown of Virgil, the ancient philosopher who, in his book "Georgiche", offers an excellent examination of vine-growing in his time.

The grape is used in the following wines:

- DOCG Taurasi (minimum 85%),
- DOC Falerno del Massico Rosso (60-80%),
- DOC Galluccio Rosso (minimum 70%),
- DOC Aglianico del Taburno Rosso (minimum 85%),
- DOC Sant'Agata dei Goti Rosso (40-60%),
- DOC Guardia Sanframondi, or Guardiolo Aglianico (minimum 90%).

## **Aleatico**

This grape was brought to Italy by the ancient Greeks in times long past, and it later spread to Apulia and Latium. A white Aleatico, known locally as Liulico or Liatica, is found in some parts of Tuscany. In the past, it was believed that the Aleatico grape was a mutation of the Moscato variety, but recent studies by M. Crespan and M. Milani (2001) proved that the vine is not the result of a mutation, though it is directly related to the Moscato Bianco grape, with which it shares the characteristic aroma.

In Apulia the Aleatico grape is used to produce Aleatico di Puglia, Salice Salentino and Gioia del Colle VQPRD wines. In addition, it is included in various other VQPRD vines produced in Central and Southern Italy. Small quantities are also sold as table grapes, thanks to its Muscat-like flavor and the characteristic aroma. The wines produced with this grape are typically ruby red in color with deep purple highlights, are soft, velvety and sweet to the palate, with delicious fragrance and aroma of Moscato, which at times can be very intense.

The vine is widely grown in Apulia, especially in the Salento area and in the province of Bari. It's among the grape varieties registered as suitable to be cultivated in all the Apulia provinces.

## **Barbera**

Though the first information related to this vine in the region dates back to 1514, it is only in the 1800s that we find official documents mentioning it. There's no doubt that Barbera is the most cultivated among the Piedmontese vines. In fact, it is found abundantly in the provinces of Asti and Alessandria, but also in the provinces of Cuneo and Turin, as well as other Piedmont areas. In other regions the vine is cultivated in substantial amounts in the Oltrepò Pavese (or the Pavia banks of the River Po) area, Colli Piacentini (Piacenza Hills), Franciacorta, Umbria, Campania, Sicily and other Italian regions. In addition the vine has crossed the ocean and it is found in various countries worldwide, including Slovenia, Croatia, California, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Mexico and Australia, among others.

From the point of view of enology, the Barbera is very ductile. Characteristically, the grapes have high acidity and are used in the production of a wide variety of wine types. On the market you may find young, medium-bodied Barberas, as well as Barbera Spumante (sparkling version), both red and 'vinified in white', which means that the skin of the grapes was separated from the juice immediately after crushing, before the fermentation began. It is used also to produce novello wines.

It is with fully ripened grapes, however, that the Barbera gives its best, producing rich, generous red wines, often with great elegance, especially when aged for one year or longer in wood barrels or vats.

**Bonarda**

This vine is called various names and, at times, it is erroneously assimilated into other varieties. This grape is produced only in Piedmont, in particular on the Turin hills (Chierese), and the neighboring Asti hills, in the municipalities of Castelnuovo Don Bosco, Albugnano and Pino, among others. It is found also in Pinerolo, Bassa Val Susa (Lower Susa Valley) and, more rarely, at Canavese.

The Bonarda produces deeply-colored wines, characterized by intense perfume which, sometimes, different aromatic notes. In addition the wines are structurally balanced and age well. Though it is used mostly in blends, this grape can produce fairly good varietal wines.

## **Brachetto**

(Italian) is a grape variety found in Piedmont (Italy) and in Provence (France) which is used to make both red and rosé wines. At Canelli, on the border between the hills of Asti and the Lange proper, the grape is known as Borgogna. There is also a Brachetto cultivated in Argentina.

In Italy's region of Piedmont the grape is somewhat more widespread: production mostly falling within an area of the provinces of Asti and Alessandria between the rivers Bormida and Belbo plus various parts of the province of Cuneo. The most notable wine[1] here is the red Brachetto d'Acqui DOCG which is made in both still and spumante (fully sparkling) versions. Piemonte Brachetto DOC, also a red wine, is made with a minimum of 85% Brachetto; it is usually still, but may be frizzante (lightly sparkling). The grape is also used for up to 10% of the blend for the Ruché-based Ruché di Castagnole Monferrato DOC.

Related Piedmontese grapes include Brachettone, with larger bunches, grown in Roero; Brachetto Migliardi or Brachetto di

Montabone, present in the area between Nizza Monferrato and Acqui Terme. A non-aromatic version of the variety is grown as Brachèt in the Canavese, while in the Val di Susa the grape variety Lambrusca di Alessandria is called Brachetto.

### **Bombino Nero**

This vine produces big, tight bunches with side clusters. The grapes are big, blue-colored, with thick, consistent skin. It is usually harvested around mid-October.

### **Cabernet Franc**

This French variety has grown in Italy's northeastern regions for more than a century; today, its use is declining somewhat in favor of Cabernet Sauvignon (with which it is often blended)

### **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Some Italian wines based on Cabernet Sauvignon show the dark color, firm tannin, and blackcurrant flavors typical of the variety, but many others are lighter in color, body, and tannin, and have vegetal flavors, all indicative of high crop yields and under-ripe grapes.

### **Cannonau**

The Cannonau is the most famous Sardinian red wine. D'Annunzio appreciated and celebrated the famous Nepente, a Cannonau variety of the Oliena zone. According to some experts, (recently we had many confirmations about this theory) the growing of Cannonau dates back to the nuragic period; others say it's a variation of Cannonazo of Seville or Granaxa of Aragona, brought during the Spanish domination; it could be also a variety of the Alicante, brought from the Jesuites.

In France it's called Grenache.

Cannonau is cultivated practically on the whole island but the central areas are its ideal habitat: Ogliastra, Barbagia of Nuoro and Barbagia of Dorgali, where it reaches the 50% of all the vine cultivations.

Despite this popularity the quantity is not very large: product quantity per hectare is about 50 quintals, while the maximum allowed is of 100 quintals.

The most of this product is prepared to supply the table wine market, even if it has rather high alcohol content (13.5°).

Traditional growing method adopted is the "alberello", while in recent times the "spur pruned cordon" technique gives very good results.

The particular refined flavor and fragrance of Cannonau changes from area to area; it almost always has a warm flavor, with an

aftertaste which is similar to the bitter taste of dark chocolate.

Nowadays, through modern technologies, this wine is almost all bottled after a brief aging period (about one year) in vintage wooden casks.

Its over ripe grapes give the "Anghelu Ruju", famous for its character and elegance.

Other varieties of grapes which complete the wine can't be up to 10%.

The aging required is 1 year.

## **Chiavennasca**

The name in the local dialect is Chiuinascha, which means 'more marc' (the solid leftover after the grape crushing). This vine has been widely cultivated in the Valtellina area since the 15th century and it is genetically related to Nebbiolo, one of the typical Piedmontese native vines. This variety is part of the vitivinicultural history of its production area and is used in the composition of the Valtellina DOC wines.

## **Carignano**

The Sulcis area has been one of the first sites in which the Phoenicians settled, they started straight away to produce wine to commercialize around the coasts of the Mediterraneo, although we can't be sure the Carignano is, actually, a local species of vine. The study of the local dialects suggests that this variety comes from the centre of Carifera in Aragona, where Carignano spread under different names: in France (Carignan), in Algeria and in Tunisia.

The Sulcis areas, as well as Sant'Antioco's and San Pietro islands are the best areas for this strong variety that loves particular winds coming from the sea, rich in mineral salts. The wine is ample and robust, with high alcoholic content: for this reason in the past it has been exported as blending wine to complete the structure of light wines made in most famous areas.

The yield per hectare doesn't exceed 60 quintals and most of the times the wine gets kept in casks during which time it improves in quality: the intense ruby color, the fragrances of prunes and currants, the taste warm, intense and mellow.

The wine obtained the DOC classification in 1977 and is marketed under the name "Carignano del Sulcis".

## **Cesanese**

The word Cesanese means 'from Cesano', which is a town near Rome. Among the native red vines the Cesanese is the one that is identified most with the Latium region. Among the different clones, the one from Piglio is the best known and, rightly so, is considered the best.

The Cesanese wine has ancient traditions, as proved by the many archeological findings in the area. In Roman times, Emperor Nerva liked the wine from the town of Piglio so much that he had an imperial residence, whose ruins are still visible, built in the

area. In the Middle Ages, historic documents hint that it was the favorite wine of Frederick the Second, who would drink it during his hunting parties. Other documents report that it was the favorite wine of two Popes from Anagni, another town near Rome, Innocenzo the Third and Bonifacius the Seventh.

The vine production is abundant and averagely consistent. It ripens with difficulty at high elevation and in areas with poor exposure. The wine has a characteristic flavor, pleasant and discretely tannic. It is included in many Latium DOC denomination.

### **Calabrese Montenuovo**

is an ancient variety of red wine grape from Italy. It was discovered in a vineyard in Campania and became famous when it was found to be one of the parents of Sangiovese.[1]

### **Campidano Di Terralba**

Terralba is a flourishing agricultural town placed in Campidano plane, where vineyards are grown, as well as cereals and vegetables.

Actually the wine has obtained a prominent position in time.

The production of "Rosso di Terralba" wine is supplied by grape-varieties with the characteristic of a good alcoholic content and an aromatic sharpness; the grapes grow in a marshland cleared about 50 years ago.

The introduction of new and more rational installations had an important rôle as well the adoption of training techniques more "expansive" than the traditional alberello sardo system, for obtaining this pleasant wine, once too alcoholic and aggressive.

Grape-varieties comes from Bovale species: Bovale Sardo, Bovale Mannu, Bovale of Spain ; the wine is produced in a lot of communes in Cagliari's province and before receiving the D.O.C. it used to be exported to the whole Italy and France as blending wine.

No more than 20% of other varieties ( Pascale, Gregu Nieddu, Monica) can complete it.

It only comes in one type: Dry, Red, aged of 5 months.

### **Canaiolo Nero**

The origin of this wine is unknown, though it has grown for centuries in the traditional production zone. This variety is mentioned in the Latin book *Opus Commodorum Ruralium*, by Pier de' Crescenzi, published in 1303, where he writes about a *vitis vinifera etrusca* (Etruscan wine-making grape) called canajuola.

The varietal wine has strong body, is sufficiently alcoholic and has bitter flavor. It's ideal in blends with the Sangiovese, bringing soft tones and roundness to the final product, such as in Chianti wines.

## **Ciliegiolo**

Red grape of Tuscan origin, the Ciliegiolo gets its name from the characteristic cherry (ciliegia in Italian) aroma and color, it is known also as Ciliegiolo di Spagna (Ciliegiolo from Spain). The true origin is uncertain, though many believe that it was imported to Tuscany from Spain around 1870. It grows sparsely in various parts of the country, though it's in Tuscany that is widely cultivated and is locally known with the names of Ciliegino and Ciliegiolo di Spagna (Ciliegiolo from Spain) as well.

The bunches are big, solid and cylindrical, often with side clusters. The grapes are fairly big, roundish and have medium-thick, black-purple skin. It's a truly vigorous vine, with constant, abundant yield and ripens fairly early, around the second half of August. The must produces excellent wines and is excellent in Sangiovese blends, thanks to its softness.

The wine is ruby red, robust, with low alcohol content, fruity and has low acidity, thus is used mostly in blends, such as the DOC wines Parrina, Colli Lucchesi, Chianti, Chianti Classico, Colli di Luni and Golfo del Tigulio.

## **Cornalin**

Known locally also as Humagne Rouge, this vine arrived in the region toward the end of the 14th century. In addition to being used in some Vallée d'Aoste DOC blends, this grape has been awarded its own sub-denomination. The wine is purply-red in color with garnet highlights, with intense, spicy perfume, low acidity and slightly tannic.

## **Corvina**

Most Corvina-based wines have light to medium body, high acidity, medium tannin, and flavors of red cherries. It has great potential as a stand-alone variety for fine wine. Late-ripening quality component of Valpolicella and the powerful Veronese speciality reds, Amarone and Recioto.

Corvina Veronese

Mentioned in documents dating back to 1824, this vine is currently cultivated in the entire Valpolicella, Bardolino and Garda Orientale (Eastern Garda Lake) wine zones, and takes its name from the deep dark color of the wine produced with it (corvino = crow-like in Italian).

This variety is usually blended with Rondinella, Molinara and Rossignola grapes to produce ruby red wines with purplish highlights. In the mouth the wine is slightly tannic with winy body (Valpolicella DOC, Ripasso DOC, Amarone DOC).

## **Dolcetto**

Cultivated in the Langhe area since the Middle Ages, this vine is named after the sweetness of the grape. Currently it is widely cultivated in the provinces of Cuneo (Langhe and the surrounding of Ormea), Asti (Colli del Monferrato, or Monferrato Hills), and

Alessandria (around Acqui, Ovada and Tortona) It is found in the Oltrepò Pavese wine zone and all the foothill and Alpine areas of Piedmont. In elevated areas, the early ripening of this variety produces excellent results. It is found in some areas of neighboring Liguria, in the province of Imperia, at Pieve di Teco and Pornassio.

Dolcetto wines have intense ruby red color with purple highlights. The nose is intense, with scent of cherry and macerated red fruit, sometimes with slight almond note, especially when drunk young. Other typical characteristics are the low acidity and the pleasant, slightly bitter aftertaste. These are wines to be drunk young, or after short ageing.

## **Falerno**

The Falerno is a descendant of the Aglianico grape. Imported to the Vulture area in the fifth century B.C. by the Greeks, its name derives from the vulgarization of the word Ellenico (Greek). The grape produces a typical southern Italian red wine, though it shows an almost Piedmontese character, with rich and complex structure that improves and ripens with ageing.

## **Fumin**

This native vine used to be typical of the Envers wine zone, and derives its name from the smoky notes that characterizes its wine (fumo = smoke, in Italian). The wine color is intense ruby red, with characteristic spicy scent, austere in the mouth, showing good acidity and rich body. The organoleptic qualities of the Fumin improve decidedly with ageing and refinement in the bottle, thus this is definitely a wine which mustn't be drunk young.

## **Freisa**

The Freisa is among the Piedmont historic vines. It is cultivated extensively in Monferrato Astigiano, as well as in the areas of Casalese and Chierese in the province of Turin, and around Alba in the province of Cuneo. It is found in the whole pre-Alpine arch which expands from Saluzzo, through Pinerolo and Canavese, to the Colli Novaresi (Novara Hills). Outside the region it is found in small quantities in the province of Vicenza. Though slightly tannic, the grape gives a pleasant scent of fruit with deep nuances of raspberry and wild berries. Lively, slightly sparkling, and at times, vaguely sweet wines, highlight this grapes characteristic. The color and structure are adequate to produce varietal dry wines, good for early consumption or moderate ageing, as well as blends with other varietals. Monferrato Casalese produces a traditional blend with Grignolino.

## **Gaglioppo**

The primary grape of Calabria Cirò yields a deeply colored juice that makes strong alcoholic wines.

## **Giro'**

The Girò is also one of grape-varieties brought by Spanish during their domination, but its best period was during the Piedmontese domination, to be precise in 1736 when the marquis of Rivarolo boosted the increase and improvement of vine growing through a new policy.

Girò has been successfully planted until the arrival of phylloxera around 1850, when all vineyards had been destroyed.

Today it's planted in the areas nearby Cagliari and in several towns of Oristano district; it's one of the more appreciated dessert wines: in fact, it constantly obtains important recognitions abroad.

The color is light and brilliant ruby, its flavors are delicate of fresh grape, and its taste is soft and velvety.

The aging required is 9 months, and it comes in different types:

## **Grignolino**

is a purple grape variety commonly grown in the Piedmont region of Italy. It makes light red wines and rosés with very fruity aroma and strong acid and tannins. It grows best in hotter climates and loose dry soils.

In the local Piedmont area dialect the Grignolino means "many pips". The strong, bitter tannin taste can be avoided if very gentle and slow pressing practices are used. The vine has a long-life and is remarkably resistant to disease. Grignolino matures late into the grape-harvest season. Fruity aromas are given-off, in it are detected floral, citrus, or spice flavors notes. Grignolino should be drunk in its youth for its acidity increases quickly after bottling. Rose and red wines are made using Grignolino. Little over 100 acres in California is Grignolino grown.

## **Guarnaccia**

Known in the province of Naples as Urnaccia and Cannamelu, this vine variety is found mostly on the island of Ischia. The wine is perfumed, alcoholic and ages well, however it's rarely bottled as a varietal.

## **Lagrein**

Technically Lagrein Scuro, or Lagrein Dunkel (dark Lagrein), an historic variety in Alto Adige, where it makes perfumed, medium-bodied reds and light roses, as well as some rich, dark, characterful red wines. Lesser clones of Lagrein also exist.

## **Lambrusco**

Lambrusco is the name of both a red grape and an Italian varietal wine made principally from the grape.

The grapes and the wine originate from four zones in Emilia-Romagna and one in Lombardy, principally around the central provinces of Modena, Parma, Reggio nell'Emilia, and Mantua. The most highly-rated of its wines are the frothy, frizzante (slightly sparkling) red wines that are designed to be drunk young from one of the five Lambrusco DOCs: Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro, Lambrusco di Sorbara, Lambrusco Salamino di Santa Croce (each of which corresponds roughly to its use of sub-varieties of the Lambrusco grape of the same name), Lambrusco Reggiano, and Lambrusco Mantovano.

Although traditional Lambrusco is an almost entirely cork-stopped, dry (secco) red wine, the Lambrusco Reggiano DOC is also used to make amabile (slightly sweet) and dolce (sweet) versions of Lambrusco through use of up to 15 percent of the Ancellotta grape. Sweet Lambrusco wine became hugely popular in the United States in the late 1970s when over 3 million cases were exported there each year. This valuable export market has led the vineyards to create cheap, flavorless white, rosé and low-alcohol versions that has led to the name Lambrusco being almost universally shunned by the new generation of wine drinkers. The first dry, cork-finished, limited production DOC Lambrusco was introduced in the United States in 1995.

## **Malvasia Nera**

The name Malvasia derives from Monembasia, a Byzantine stronghold perched on the rocks of a promontory in Greece. The stronghold was connected to the mainland by a single road leading to the main gate of the city whose name, Monembasia, literally meant "a single point of entry".

In 1248, the powerful Venetian Republic established commercial trade with the locals and started distributing the sweet wines produced in the area throughout Europe under the name Monembasia. In addition, the Venetian ships took the vine to Crete first, and later it was spread throughout Italy, which then promoted its growth in the whole Mediterranean basin. This wine was so popular that, at one point, Venice had a large number of osterie, locally called Malvase, dedicated to this wine variety.

The Malvasia Nera (Black Malvasia) from Basilicata is a sub-variety, and it is believed that it was originally brought from neighboring Apulia. In many ways it is similar to the Malvasia Nera from Brindisi.

## **Marzemino**

Marzemino is a red wine grape that is primarily grown around Isera, south of Trentino. The wine is most noted for its mention in the opera Don Giovanni. The vine ripens late and is susceptible to oidium. Wine produced from the grape has a characteristic dark tint and light plummy taste.

The origins; It arrived in Veneto and Lombardia from a town called Merzifon, Turkey (on the Black Sea), thanks to the people who fought in the Trojan war. Then it spread upon the Adriatic area and finally arrived in Trentino during the Venice Republic

dominion. In the Valle dell'Adige it found an ideal ground where to grow and became the Marzemino Gentile.

## **Molinara**

Known since the 18th century, this vine takes its name from the abundant pruina film that covers its grapes, making them look as if covered by flour. In local dialect, Molinara means 'grape from the flour mill'.

Currently this variety is cultivated mostly in the wine zones surrounding Lake Garda, as well as in Valpolicella and Valpantena. The wine color is bland, has medium alcoholic content and is lightly sparkling (frizzante).

## **Monica di Sardegna**

Although if we find this grape-variety only in Sardinia, we are sure that it's not an autochthonous variety: the Spanish originally brought it around the 1600 a.C. under the name "Morillo", later known with the name "Mora" and, after some linguistic influences, Monica.

This grape-variety is known as "Nieddera Manna" (Black Big), for its grapes, "Nieddera de Ispagna" (Black of Spain) and Monaca; in some places of inland zones it's still called Morillo.

Its cultivation is extended over almost the entire isle, but it gives the best results in the middle and southern part of the isle; it prefers hilly areas with an average slope which are exposed to the sun.

Monica di Sardegna is a D.O.C. table wine with 12°- 12,5°, and it can be served with any food; its color's light red, delicate fragrances, fresh and soft tastes, a good body.

The Monica vineyards almost always combine other varieties of grapes (15% max of non-aromatic authorized black-grape vines) which tend to increase its character. The aging period required is of six months.

## **Merlot**

Merlot, when grown under decent conditions, has an inherent plummy, silky suppleness that can make great varietals or else is blended, typically with Cabernet Sauvignon, to produce less aggressively tannic wines that are more approachable when young.

However, as with Malbec, Merlot is very sensitive to growing conditions

There are huge amounts of Merlot planted in northern Italy, where it produces thin, vaguely fruity wines. In Italy, this variety typically makes medium-bodied wines, at best, with medium color intensity and flavors that are vegetal and herbal (symptomatic of overly high crop yields or inappropriately cool climates).

## **Montepulciano**

The first historic report of the Montepulciano grape in Abruzzo is found in 1793's King Ferdinand the Fourth archivist and librarian, Michele Torcia, book *Saggio Itinerario Nazionale pel Paese dei Peligni* (National Itinerary in the Peligni Country). During his 1792 journey, Torcia was introduced to the Montepulciano vine and tasted the wine made with it in the Sulmona countryside. How the vine arrived to Sulmona is unknown, however, according to historian and researcher, Professor Franco Cercone, most probably it was brought over from the Montepulciano municipality, in Tuscany, where it was known as Prugnolo, but the name was immediately changed into Montepulciano, as at the time often wines and vines were named after their place of origins.

What matters, however, is that during the beginning of the 19th century the Montepulciano grew in perfect isolation in the Conca Peligna area of Abruzzo, where it evolved and become a grape with unique characteristics and personality. In fact, Panfilo Serafini, a Sulmona historian (1817-1864) writes in his *Monografia Storica di Sulmona* (Sulmona Historic Monograph), published in 1854 in Naples' *Il Regno delle Due Sicilie Scritto ed Illustrato* (The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies Written and Illustrated): "The most common vine is the Montepulciano, harvested either when just ripen, or harvested late ..."

The Montepulciano grape has then been cultivated in Abruzzo for over two centuries. Thanks to the peculiar regional microclimate, the vine found a particularly good environment, in which the grape produces great full-bodied, robust wines which are at the same time elegant and pleasantly perfumed. Thus the Montepulciano can be considered an Abruzzo native vine, and currently accounts for around 50% of the regional vineyard, that is, about 18,000 hectares (about 44,500 acres).

It is a medium strength red vine, with medium-large five-pointed leaves, compact, conic pyramid-shaped bunch, often with wings, slightly ovoid berries with consistent skin. It's a late-ripening grape which is usually ready for harvest during mid October. The Montepulciano wine is usually ruby-red with purple highlights and perfume of violet, cherry, wild berries, licorice and tobacco. Though it is good drunk young, is a wine that ages gracefully in bottles.

## **Montepulciano D' Abruzzo**

Despite the name, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo is in no way linked with the *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*. The Tuscan wine is named for the town, while that of the Abruzzi bears the same name as the variety, which predominates in the grape mixture from which it is made.

It can be asserted without fear of contradiction that the Montepulciano variety originated in the Valle Peligna in the Abruzzi.

The variety was developed through selection by the growers and it displayed significant capacity for adaptation to different environments, which facilitated its spread to other territories nearby.

Today, it is cultivated in all four provinces of the Abruzzi--Chieti, L'Aquila, Pescara and Teramo--at altitudes not exceeding 500 meters.

## **Nebbiolo**

More than any other native or ancient Piedmont vines, the Nebbiolo is one that projected the region in the world of superior wines, in an ongoing competition with Tuscany for the leading position. It is cultivated in the province of Cuneo, in the Langhe and Roero areas, as well as the Canavese zone, but overall in the municipality of Carema, in the province of Turin. It is found around Biella, the Alto Vercellese (Vercelli Highlands) area, Novara and, minimally, around Asti. The vine takes its name from the fog (nebbia, in Italian) for two reasons: first because of its late ripening, it is harvested when the pre-Alpine hills are wrapped in morning fog and second, because the grapes are covered by an intense patina of pruina, which hides the natural purple color of the bunch under a gray-silver coat, as if each grape was wrapped in thick fog.

Historic mentions of this vine in the region date back to the 1300s. It is said that in the 1400s, the Bishop of Turin asked to be paid the rent for the fields owned by the Catholic Church in the area, with barrels of Nebbiolo wine, rather than money. Though sometimes these grapes are used to produce rare vini novelli, and, for almost a century, special wines which could be sweet, spumanti (sparkling), and spiked with extra alcohol, or natural aroma, the grape gives its best in the production of big bodied, structured wines. When aged for any length of time these wines acquire complexity and elegance so remarkable as to put them at the top, in the company of the best wines produced worldwide.

Fully mature Nebbiolo wine presents a decidedly lively perfume of fruit, underscored by the scent of dry flowers, spices and, at times, tar. to the palate it discloses moderate tannins and well developed body. Usually used to produce varietals, in some areas it is blended with other native vines, such as Vespolina, Croatina and Uva Rara. In the old times, a small percentage of Barbera grapes were blended with Nebbiolo.

## **Negroamaro**

Literally, "black and bitter," a native variety that's widely planted in the South, especially Puglia; it makes flavorful, high-alcohol wines.

Often written Negro Amaro, this dark skinned southern Italian grape variety is most common in Apulia and is particularly associated with Salento. Negroamaro means "black, bitter" and is generally used for blending. But it can also be used to produce red wines which require ageing, and some rose wines.

## **Negroamaro Precoce**

In doing research for a program to improve the genetic heritage of the Salento vines, in 1994 the Istituto Sperimentale per la Viticoltura (Experimental Institute for Viticulture) discovered a Negroamaro vineyard which presented an evidently shortened

ripening period compared to the surrounding vines. The following analysis confirmed that those vines had the ampelographic, ampelometric, productive characteristics and DNA typical of the Negroamaro variety, but had a decidedly shorter ripening period by at least 20 days, which clearly positively affected the chemistry of the grapes at harvest time (Calò 1999).

The wine made with this grape is elegant, harmonious, with intense red color. The perfume is of ripe red fruits, the flavor is full, balanced and with good tannins. The vine was selected by the Istituto Sperimentale per la Viticoltura in Apulia from old vineyards in the Salento wine zone, the typical Negroamaro production area. It's registered among the varieties suitable for cultivation in all the Apulia provinces, with the exception of Foggia.

## **Negroamaro Nero**

This ancient vine, whose origins are unknown, has been cultivated for very long time in Apulia. According to some, the name is derived from the local dialect 'niuru mani', with reference to the bitter flavor of its wines. The most credited theory though, has the name derived by the combination of the latin word NIGRA and the Greek MAVRO. Both terms mean 'black', and it is believed that the name highlights the deep black color of both the grape skin and the wines made with the fruit. It is believed that this grape was cultivated as far back as the 8th or 7th century B.C., at the time of the Greek colonization.

The grapes are used exclusively to produce wine, both as varieties and blended with other varieties.

The wine has intense, garnet red color, with round flavor, slightly bitter and dry. Blended with Malvasia Nera produces an excellent rosé wine. The variety is cultivated in the whole region, but especially in the Salento area, It is registered among the grape varieties suitable for cultivation in all the Apulia provinces. this is the most cultivated vine in the provinces of Lecce and Brindisi, where it's used in most local red and rosé DOC wines. It's also used to make some VQPRD wines.

Nero Buono di Cori (Good Black from Cori)

Red native vine from Cori, recovered and re-proposed thanks to research and experiments which showed its high quality characteristics. It produces an intense ruby red wine, with characteristic perfume and alcoholic flavor.

## **Nero d'Avola**

This high quality variety ? known as Calabrese in its native Calabria ? is important mainly in Sicily. It makes deeply colored, age-worthy wines that are full-bodied and moderate in tannin, with heady flavors of ripe fruit and herbs.

Mandrolisai

Mandrolisai is a DOC wine bears the same name of the area of cultivation it comes from, situated between the Barbagia (geographical zone near Nuoro) and districts which include Samugheo's province.

This wine is a blend of three grape-varieties: Cannonau (20-35%), Monica (20-35%) and most of all, Bovale, which make it so

special.

The Bovale has been probably imported by the Aragonese during their domination in XVIII century a.C. and since then it's been called "Muristellu": sardinian wine-growers appreciate it a lot for its adaptability to particular difficult climates of growing zones and to granitic lands.

Vineyards are about 400 and 600 meters of height, surrounded by forests of olms, oaks and cork-forests.

The wine's fragrance ethereal, the tastes velvety and a slightly bitter aftertaste.

## **Ormeasco**

The Ormeasco variety is cultivated in around 20 municipalities in the province of Imperia, but the core production is concentrated in Pornassio, Pieve di Teco and Vessalico. The cultivation of this local variation of the Piedmontese Dolcetto vine dates back to the 14th century, when the Marquis of Clavesana promulgated an edict ordering the Podestà (local authority) of the town of Pornassio to grow exclusively this grape variety, under pain of decapitation. Despite the vine derivation from the Dolcetto variety, this wine has developed original characteristic different from the original Piedmontese. The wine produced is the DOC Ormeasco di Pornassio, whose color is bright ruby red with persistent, winy perfume. In the mouth it's dry, with medium body and characteristic bitterish nuances.

## **Petit Rouge (Little Red in French)**

This variety is among the most cultivated in the central part of the Aosta Valley, from Saint-Vincent to Arvier. News about this vine go back to the 18th century, when it was grown in all the wine producing zones of the region, with the only exception of the Morgex and La Salle areas. The wine is ruby red in color, perfume of wild rose, characteristic, with velvety flavor and medium body.

## **Piedirosso**

Vine found exclusively in the Campania region, where it has been cultivated for centuries, and is popularly known with its dialect name, Pèr 'e Palummo (Pigeon's Foot), because of the red color that the stem turns to when the grapes are ripe. The wine has good alcohol content, intense ruby red color, good tannins in a strong body and is fragrant to the palate. When aged, the wine acquires a pleasant violet perfume.

## **Pinot Nero**

This variety is significant throughout northeastern Italy and in Lombardy, in the Northwest, for both still and sparkling wines.

Because it's one of the world's major red varieties, winemakers in various other regions, including Piedmont and Tuscany, are trying their hands with it.

## **Premetta**

The first written information about this vine were penned by scholar Lorenzo Gatta, who pointed out its early ripening, the large size of its juicy grapes, whose color reminded of deep coral red.

Currently it is cultivated in a limited area comprised between Aosta and Avise. The wine made from its grape is very characteristic. The color is deep pink with tendency toward orangey notes, the scent is fine, intense and characteristic, with lightly tannic flavor. Moderate ageing improves the complexity of the aroma and lowers its tannic notes.

## **Primitivo**

Of unknown origin, the introduction of this vine to the region may date as far back as the times of the Phoenician colonization, or to the subsequent Greek invasion. It is documented that, toward the end of the 18th century, Don Francesco Filippo Indellicati, from Gioia del Colle, selected the Primitivo vine from old local vineyards (Musei G., 1913), thus spread the cultivation and winemaking of the variety. It is noteworthy that the selection was made from 'old vineyards', therefore, whatever the origin of the vine, in the late 1700s it had already been cultivated in the area for a long time.

Around the end of the 19th century this vine cultivation expanded to the province of Taranto as well.

The Primitivo grape has the same DNA as California Zinfandel. In addition, DNA studies conducted in Italy by the Istituto Sperimentale per la Viticoltura, and in the US at the University of California at Davis, proved that the DNA is shared by the Croatian grape Crljenaki as well. Another Croatian vine which shows similar characteristics, the Plavac Mali, was recently proved to be the result of crossbreeding between California Zinfandel and Dobricic, another Croatian vine, (Maletic E. et al. 2002).

The production is qualitatively excellent, however the quantity is not consistent. This vine variety fares better in deep, clay-calcareous soil. It gives the best enological results when grown as medium-low plants, with abundant, short trimming, as is the case with the alberello pugliese (Apulia-style little tree) method, with four or five spurs. The female plants are extremely fertile, and produce a second, belated maturation, which produces between 20 and 30% of the main harvest. The plant presents medium resistance to peronospora and oidio, but does not fare well with root rot or spring frost. In addition, drought and high summer temperatures can be very damaging to this vine, whose grapes may parch and burn.

## **Raboso Piave**

This vine native of the Treviso zone takes its name from the characteristics of the wine made with its grapes. In fact, its high acidity and tannin content makes for an enraged (rabbioso) impact to the palate. Currently it is cultivated in the provinces of Treviso, Vicenza, Venice and Padua. The wine has intense ruby red color, and is acidic and tannic in the mouth.

### **Raboso Veronese**

Cultivated in the Treviso area since the 19th century, this vine mustn't be confused with the similarly named Raboso Piave. Found currently in the provinces of Venice, Vicenza and Rovigo, this grape produces an intense ruby red wine, fairly acidic and slightly tannic.

### **Refosco**

A specialty of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, this variety makes velvety-textured, medium- and full-bodied wines with ripe plum flavors ? many of which are quite good.

### **Rondinella**

This vine is cultivated mostly in the Valpolicella and Bardolino wine zones as well. The wine obtained has intense ruby red color, high alcohol and tannic content, with intense perfume. It is usually blended with other native varieties.

### **Rossese**

The Rossese, not to be mistaken with the white-berried Rossese Bianco, has a long history in Liguria. Cultivated mostly in the province of Imperia, this vine is believed to have arrived in Italy from France toward the end of the 18th century, grown by the Doria family in their Ligurian property of Dolceacqua. The grapes produce the DOC Rossese di Dolceacqua, a ruby red colored wine tending to garnet-red when aged. The perfume is winy and the flavor is delicate, aromatic and warm.

### **Ruché**

Ruché is a wine grape from Italy's Piedmont region. It is largely used in making Ruché di Castagnole Monferrato, a small production red varietal wine which was granted DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) status by presidential decree on October 22, 1987. There is some debate about the origins of the Ruché grape. One leading theory is that the varietal is truly indigenous to the hills

northwest of the town of Asti. Another theory is that the grape is a local variation on a French import. It has been grown in the area for at least one hundred years but has only recently been marketed and consumed outside of the immediate vicinity of its production. Ruché has now been "discovered" and production is increasing accordingly.

The current DOC, or EU recognized area of production for the wine, covers only about 40 hectares (100 acres) of vines around the villages of Castagnole Monferrato, Refrancore, Grana, Montemagno, Viarigi, Scurzolengo and Portacomaro.

Ruché di Castagnole Monferrato is, therefore, one of the lowest production varietal wines in Italy.

The grape is also grown to some extent in the neighbouring province of Alessandria.

Ruché di Castagnole Monferrato is a very distinctive, medium bodied wine with clear notes of pepper and wild berries. The wine is quite floral on the nose. Its body is characterized by a pleasant acidity and soft tannins. It pairs well with slow-cooked beef and formidable northern Italian cheeses and mushrooms like gorgonzola and porcini, respectively.

## **Sangiovese**

The indigenous Sangiovese (san joe VAE sae) is the most planted red variety in Italy's vineyards.

It is the major grape of Chianti and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, and the only variety in Brunello di Montalcino; many critically acclaimed Super-Tuscan wines also derive largely from Sangiovese. (Super-Tuscans are Sangiovese based wines blended with a non-native grape and aged in French Oak.)

Common blending partners for Sangiovese include the native Canaiolo grape, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot.

Dozens of clones, or sub varieties, of Sangiovese exist, some finer than others.

Sangiovese is powerful in the glass but delicate in the vineyard. It produces wines with powerful berry bouquet and remarkable grace and elegance but it achieves very different results in different microclimates.

It has a thin skin, is susceptible to gray rot and mold and it likes sites with calcium-rich alkaline soils.

When weather and soil condition are ideal, it produces wines of remarkable richness, depth, complexity and elegance.

The characteristics of Sangiovese include only a medium intensity of color, high acidity, firm tannin, and aromas and flavors of cherries and herbs.

The more serious wines based on Sangiovese are capable of developing forest-floor aromas and a seductive smoothness and harmony with age.

## **Sagrantino**

There are different theories about its origin. Some believe that the original vine was planted in the Montefalco area by Franciscan monks Muslim invaders in the Middle Ages. This variety is fairly limited in its production zone, but is responsible for the dark, intense, age worthy red called Montefalco Sagrantino, from Umbria.

A native to Umbria, it is only planted on 250 hectares, but the wines are world-renowned. Inky purple, with rustic brooding fruit and heavily tannic, these wines can age for many years. The wine is dry, with intense ruby red color, at times with purple nuances tending toward garnet when aged. The characteristic perfume is reminiscent of blackberries. Dry to the palate. Under Italian law, the term "Montefalco Sagrantino Secco" defines a wine obtained exclusively from Sagrantino grapes, exclusively in the Province of Perugia, in the Umbria region of central Italy (although not necessarily in the comune of Montefalco). The word "secco" in the name is Italian for "dry". The wine ages for 30 months, of which at least 12 in oak barrels. This wine is a DOCG, the highest-ranking category of Italian wine denominations.

## **Schiava**

The most common variety in Alto Adige, where it generally makes light- to medium-bodied, easy-drinking red wines. German-speaking locals call it Vernatsch. Several sub-varieties exist.

## **Sciascinoso**

The Campania region represents an ideal environment for this vine variety, which is known locally as Sanginoso a Livella, Olivella and Uva d'Avellino (Avellino's Grape). Used mostly in blends, brings deep color, acidity and a slightly astringent quality to the wine.

Syrah also known as Shiraz. Thought to be of Persian origin, this is a very popular grape in Australia as well as in the Rhone Valley. Given the resistance of this grape to intense heat, it is gaining popularity throughout Italy and especially in Sicily, the Tuscan Maremma, Latium, and other areas where the summer heat can be intense. It is used in both blends and varietal bottlings.

## **Susamaniello Nero**

This vine of unknown origin was maybe brought over from Dalmatia, and currently is particularly cultivated around Otranto and in the province of Bari. In 1947, F. Carpentieri wrote about the Lacrima di Puglia (Apulia Tears, or the Susumaniello grape) grown in the provinces of Bari, Brindisi and Lecce, which "give brilliant red wine, with direct flavor, harmonious, full, which gets better if the grapes are mixed with those from the Montepulciano vine." The fruit is used exclusively to make wine, and almost exclusively blended with other grape varieties. The wine has intense color, with red foam and rich acidity, it's dry and austere to the palate.

The vine has been cultivated in Apulia for long time, and in the past it was certainly widespread, as there are numerous regional synonyms for it. Currently is found mostly in the province of Brindisi, where in the past it was used to make sweet filtered must, because of its ability to give an intense, ruby red color and good acidity to the wine to which it was added. It is registered among

the grape varieties suitable to be cultivated in all the Apulia provinces, with the exception of Foggia. It is used in the Brindisi and Ostuni DOC wines.

## **Teroldego**

Teroldego is a red Italian grape variety grown primarily in the northeastern region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol. Wine has been produced since ancient times in "Campo Rotaliano", an alluvial plain between the rivers Adige and Noce. Teroldego takes its name from its traditional method of cultivation, trained on a system of "tirelle" or wire harnesses, an explanation that's more likely, if less pretty, than its legendary association with German dialect for gold of the Tirol. It has recently been discovered to be a full sibling of the Dureza variety from France, which is one of the parents of Syrah.

The grapes ripen around the last week of September or the first week of October.

The wine Teroldego Rotaliano, which is made with this grape in the Province of Trento, has had DOC status since 18 February 1971. It is planted on 390.5 hectares and is cultivated by over 300 producers.

Some California authorities compare Teroldego to zinfandel, with its spicy red fruits, and hints of tar, pine, and almond, but few tasters would confuse the two varieties in a blind tasting. Its snappy acidity makes it a versatile food wine.

## **Tintilia**

Tintilia grape Tintilia is a vine native to Molise and is considered the most intimately linked to the peasant culture of the region. It is an ancient cultivar belonging to the ampelographic tintorie family, a red grape variety with deeply colored juice and skin.

Because of its excellent conformation to the Molise environment, at the end of the 19th century, it was the most widely cultivated grape in the region.

In the past this grape was used mainly to produce a truly robust varietal. Currently, thanks in part to the 1998 recognition of the Molise DOC, there has been the hope of bringing the Tintilia grape production back to significant levels. In the process, the local administration wants to fully recover the culture and tradition of this valuable Molise native vine.

The main characteristics of the grape are the strong depth of the coloring substances and the tannin content. These characteristics are passed on to the juice integrally when crushed, thus the young wine shows deep red-purple highlights.

## **Uva di Troia**

Thought to have been brought over from Greece, it was named after the ancient city of Troia (Troy). Interestingly aromatic, it is used mostly in Castel del Monte blends.