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7 Sensational Secrets to Loving Italian Grape Varieties

By Marisa D'Vari on July 27, 2020

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Italian Grape Varieties

Love Italian wine? Curious about Italian grape varieties?

You probably already know Italian grape varieties like the white wine Pinot Grigio and the red wine Sangiovese.

Experts count over 1000 Italian grape varieties in Italy. (You can read about them [here](#)).

Many of these Italian grape varieties come from Italian regions unfamiliar to most Americans.

For my studies with the **WSET, Court of Master Sommeliers, Society of Wine Educators**, and **Wine Scholar Guild**, I had to study the most famous Italian grape varieties.

Not all 1000.

But close!

Gambero Rosso Masterclass – enjoy Italian grape varieties.

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Gambero Rosso Masterclass

This explains why I felt overjoyed [Gambero Rosso](#) invited me to attend their virtual Masterclass on Italian wine varieties.

[Gambero Rosso](#), the global authority on Italian wines, publishes the annual Vini d'Italia guide. The masterclass was hosted by Marco Sabellico, the guide's editor-in-chief.

[Click Here to read about the Italian Grape Varieties used in the wines or keep reading and scroll down](#)

Discovering Italian Grape Varieties Through Podcasts

Italy has many wine regions and grape varieties.

For this reason, it is best to begin the discovery process by focusing on a single region or grape.

Once you master one of the Italian grape varieties, you can go on from there.



Why Can A Podcast Help You Learn Italian Grape Varieties?

Italian grape varieties are delicious, but challenging to learn.

First, the pronunciation of these Italian grape varieties are better “heard” than read in a book.

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Second, the geography of the regions where Italian grape varieties grow are intricate and best heard in a lively discussion.

Though almost all English-language, wine-oriented podcasts have an episode or more touching upon Italian wine, the [Italian Wine Podcast](#) focuses solely on Italian wine.

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Italian Grape Varieties Podcasts

Producer Monty Waldin hosts these episodes with interesting, colorful guests.

In each podcast, listeners hear an assortment of producers and even social media influencers.

One of the Italian Wine Podcast's most memorable guests Elena Walch.

Elena Walch married into one of the oldest winemaking families in the Italian, high-altitude, Alto Adige region.

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Then, even though she had a profession of her own, she devoted herself to bringing modern concepts to the traditional family winery.

Now the keys to the winery have passed to Karoline Walch and her sister Julia, now the fifth generation.

On the Italian Wine podcast, you can also hear Marilisa Allegrini of Allegrini Estates in Valpolicella teach wine expert Steve Kim how to make an elaborate pasta dish. As they cook, they sip wine made from Italian grape varieties.

Podcasts Often Featuring Italian Wine



Wine For Normal People

Love Italian grape varieties? So does Elizabeth Schnieder, producer and host of the show.

Elizabeth Schneider has professional wine credentials from the **Court of Master Sommeliers**. She has also written a book with the same name, **Wine for Normal People**.

When you check out her list of podcasts, you can find many focusing on classic winemaking regions and Italian grape varieties.

Inside Winemaking

Jim Duane's podcast focuses on California winemakers, but he occasionally features European producers.

This is an excellent podcast series to understand the basics of winemaking.

I'll Drink to That with Levi Dalton

Host Levi Dalton interviews some of the most important winemakers in the world.

When you check out his list, try to listen to the ones featuring the Italian grape varieties made by **Gaia Gaja**



Where to Take Virtual Classes About Italian Grape Varieties

In 2013, [Italian Wine Central](#), an online wine school, was born.

Its creator, GERALYN BROSTROM, worked in several sectors of the wine trade.

She led trips to Italy with the **Society of Wine Educators**, managed a wine shop where she was also the Italian wine buyer.

Then she served as VP of Education at Winebow for several years. Here she trained the internal staff, developed content for the Winebow website, and gave presentations to distributors.

Italian Wine Central offers an introductory course called *Discovering Italian Wine*.

The second course, the *Italian Wine Professional* offers a tightly curated curriculum focusing Italian grape varieties in depth.

400 people, mostly members of the trade but lovers of Italian wine varieties, passed the course.

Now in its 5th edition, the study guide accompanying the *Italian Wine Professional* course, [*Into Italian Wine*](#), is available from Amazon



Regional Travel to Discover Italian Grape Varieties

Michele Shah serves as the go-to expert for Italian wine regions. She offers tours showcasing Italian wine varieties to journalists and wine lovers.

In terms of learning Italian wine varieties, Ms. Shah suggests consumers start with a simple variety, like Barbera from Piedmont, and move on from there.

She also loves Nerello Mascalese. This is one of the main Italian grape varieties used in volcanic Mount Etna's Etna Rosso wine.

Note: Here are some free ways of learning Italian grapes via **Forbes** (my article on the Guild of Sommeliers and their many resources)

Exploring Italian Grape Varieties with Gambero Rosso

Receiving a case of Italian grape varieties for this Virtual Masterclass was such a joy!

Imagine, the opportunity to taste wines from regions all over Italy.

And discuss them with other wine experts via Zoom.

Structure of the Masterclass

In the Masterclass, we taste twelve wines in total. For convenience, let's divide them into two parts.

The first part would be the first four white Italian grape varieties. Then we'll discuss the second set of eight red Italian grape varieties.



The White Italian Grape Varieties

White Wine 1 – Giovanni PANIZZI Vernaccia di S. Gimignano 2019

This wine, produced from one of the classic Italian grape varieties called Vernaccia, grows in the Italian hill town of San Gimignano in Tuscany.

Flavorful with fresh acidity and aromas of almond flowers and acacia.

White Wine 2 – BOCCADIGABBIA Colli Maceratesi Ribona Le Grane 2018

Ribona is one of the “secret gems” of Italian grape varieties. It grows near the Adriatic Sea in Civitanova Marche.

This rich, savory wine can pair well with pasta in a white sauce with spring vegetables.

White Wine 3 – FCO Pinot Bianco Myò 2018

Pinot Bianco thrives as one of the most classic grapes of Italy. This 100% Pinot Bianco, very rich, offers an impressive deal of vibrant acidity. Fantastic.

White Wine 4 – Casalfarneto Castelli di Jesi Verdicchio Cl. Crisio Ris. 2016

This excellent example showcases the richness and complexity possible from one of the classic Italian grape varieties, Vernaccia,

It comes from the best vineyards and aged in small wood casks in the classic town of Castelli di Jesi Verdicchio.



Red Italian Grape Varieties

Red Wine 5 VELENOSI – Montepulciano d’Abruzzo Prope 2017

This delicious red wine from Abruzzo is

100% Montepulciano, rich, fruity and vibrant. Pairs great with pasta and different meats

Red Wine 6 – Conte Leopardi Dittajuti Conero Pigmento Ris. 2016

From Marche, this structured full-bodied wine offers ripe fruit and firm tannins. Aged in small oak casks this is an elegant wine suitable for fine dining.

**Red Wine 7 – CONTE EMO CAPODILISTA LA MONTECCHIA Colli Euganei
Cabernet Sauvignon Ireneo 2016**

It surprises many people that Cabernet Sauvignon grows so well in Italy.

The Giordano Emo Capodilista's estate sits on the slopes under the warm Mediterranean sun.

This wine ages 12 months in barrique barrels, then 6 months in a bottle. The resulting wine has firm, structured tannins and pairs well with steak.

Red Wine 8 – Colli di Conegliano Rosso Stefen 2015

The producer makes this toothsome wine from one of the more unusual Italian grape varieties, Marzemino, close in flavor and texture to the Lagrein grape. The wine spends 36 months spent aging in barrique, then another 18 months in bottle before release.



Red Wine 9 -Tenuta Monteti Caburnio 2015

This Bordeaux style wine from Maremma, is made from 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, and 25% Alicante Bouschet

The vineyards are in Capalbio, the southern part of Maremma. Aging of the wine takes place in small wood barrels resulting in a clean, rich, appealing wine.

Wine 10 – COPPI Gioia del Colle Primitivo Senatore 2015

This succulent dark wine offers firm tannins that can soften and improve with age. It's made from 100% Primitivo grape in Puglia, then ages in Slavonian oak barrels for 12 months.

Wine 11 – CÒLPETRONE Montefalco Sagrantino 2012

The producers make this palatable wine from 100% Sagrantino. It ages in French oak barrels for a year, then rests in bottle for 6 months.

Wine 12 – TENUTA SANT'ANTONIO Amarone della Valpolicella Campo dei Gigli 2015

Italian grape varieties include Corvina and Corvinone 70%, Rondinella 20%, and Croatina 5%.

The Italian grape varieties, harvested by hand, undergo the appassimento method of partially drying out the grapes for about 100 days. Then the grapes experience slow pressing, fermentation, and aging in cask for 3 years.

The Gambero Rosso Masterclass of Italian Grape Varieties

This was an excellent event to try Italian grape varieties