

Italian Wine Scholar (IWS) Detailed Curriculum

The Italian Wine Scholar program presents each Italian wine region as an integrated whole by explaining the impact of history, the significance of geological events, the importance of topographical markers and the influence of climatic factors on the wine in the glass. No topic is discussed in isolation in order to give students a working knowledge of the material at hand.

FOUNDATION UNIT:

The Foundation unit covers Italian wine law, grape varieties, viticulture and winemaking in-depth. It merits reading, even by advanced students of wine, as much has changed – specifically regarding wine law and new research on grape origins.

UNIT 1

VALLE D'AOSTA:

Discover the unique varieties of this alpine region. Do you know the difference between Petite Rouge and Fumin? Do you know why the viticulture of Valle d'Aosta is considered “heroic”? Have you ever heard of a passito style wine made from Pinot Grigio (labeled as Flettri)? This class delves into the unique varieties and wine styles that set Valle d'Aosta apart from other Italian regions.

PIEMONTE:

This famous wine region represents a kaleidoscope of varieties and unique terroirs. Are you familiar with all of the different expressions of Nebbiolo that this region has to offer? Find out how the variety expresses itself differently in diverse growing environments. Explore emerging varieties that are catching the eye of critics and consumers. This chapter will help you understand the intricate puzzle that is Piemonte.

LIGURIA:

Liguria is known for its breathtakingly beautiful coastline and picturesque fishing villages. Very little wine is exported; most of the production is consumed by thirsty tourists. The wines, however, deserve more than a vacation's worth of attention. Renowned since the Roman Era, the wines of Cinque Terre even warranted a mention in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*. Today, the terraced vineyards of Liguria are home to unique varieties such as Pigato, Bosco, Albarola and Rossese, each warranting investigation and ingestion!

LOMBARDIA:

Lombardia's capital city, Milan is the epicenter of Italian industry, finance, and fashion. The region is also home to Franciacorta – often considered Italy's best metodo classico (traditional method) sparkling wine. And there is much to discover beyond bubbles! Stunning Nebbiolo-based reds can be found in Valtellina; while, crisp, mineral whites, based on Turbiana, are the star of Lugana. Many native varieties were lost to phylloxera but that has not stopped Lombardia from becoming one of Italy's most dynamic wine regions!

EMILIA-ROMAGNA:

Emilia-Romagna features beautiful Romanesque and Renaissance architecture, some of

Italy's best sand beaches and is the epicenter of the luxury automotive industry. The region is also a heavy hitter when it comes to wine, generating almost 10% of Italy's yearly production. Emilia-Romagna is a major supplier of every-day table wines but also boasts many small, quality-minded estates working with diverse terroirs and native grape varieties. Widely acknowledged as one of the best food destinations in the country, the region's wines deserve just as much praise!

TRENTINO:

The wine industry of Trentino was strongly influenced by the Austrian Empire that ruled this part of Italy from the 18th to early 19th centuries. During this time, Trentino became a prime source of wine for the north-central European markets. This relationship led to Trentino's wine industry adopting a decidedly Teutonic approach, making it very responsive to market demands. As a result, Trentino has become a major producer of well-made, refreshing, varietal wines. In addition, many small estates are proving that the region is also more than capable of producing distinctive wines from a myriad of grape varieties. There is more to Trentino than ski slopes and hiking trails!

ALTO ADIGE:

Alto Adige considers itself the most independent of the Italian regions. In fact, it is the only region where Italian is not the primary language! You'll find a lot of Teutonic phonics on those wine labels! A qualitative revolution has taken place in Alto Adige's wine industry over the past 40 years. Hillside vineyards that naturally limit yields combined with a relentless drive for perfection have given the region a reputation for producing clean, consistent, and concentrated wines year after year – irrespective of variety.

VENETO:

Known as La Serenissima (the most serene), Venice was once a powerful Maritime Republic. It controlled much of northeastern Italy for 1,000 years and was the centre of maritime trade in the Mediterranean for just as long. For these reasons, the Veneti people developed a deep-seated commercial and cosmopolitan attitude. Wines were being widely exported from the region in the Middle Ages and foreign grape varieties were welcomed into the region's vineyards as of the early 19th century. Learn how this historic wine region continues to build upon its past as it preps for the future.

FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA:

Wedge between Austria, Slovenia and the rest of the Italian peninsula, Friuli Venezia Giulia became a crossroad of cultural diversity. No surprise that innovation followed. Friuli Venezia Giulia is considered the birthplace of modern Italian white winemaking. It could be seen as ironic that the region that led the way in crafting clean, fresh, fruity (as opposed to tired and oxidized) white wines, is now also the epicenter of production of top-quality, skin-fermented, amber wines. Modernists and traditionalists can all find something intriguing in this diverse corner of the country. It is ever evolving.

UNIT 2

TOSCANA:

Few regions of Italy have been so immortalized in film and literature as Toscana. The region's contribution to the country's cultural heritage is enormous. Toscana is a bastion of tradition,

yet it also gave birth to the Renaissance. It stands at the forefront of viticulture and winemaking too and is widely regarded as the one region that is capable of rivaling the wines of Piemonte in quality and prestige. While Sangiovese is king here, the grape expresses itself differently on different terroirs and a delightful range of lesser-known, autochthonous varieties round out the wine scene.

UMBRIA:

Umbria is defined as il cuore verde d'Italia (the green heart of Italy), thanks to its stunning combination of gentle rolling hills, wood-covered mountains, valleys, pastures, olive groves and vineyards. While wine has been produced here since the time of the Etruscans, it is only recently that they have achieved recognition. Today, the region's winemakers are embracing the area's diverse soils and grape varieties to craft wonderful wines such as botrytis-affected Grechettos, and powerfully tannic Sagrantinos. Umbria deserves a deep dive.

MARCHE:

Marche was created when several historically autonomous territories were joined together to create one region. The union did not create homogeneity of culture. Several unique wine districts have developed independently through the years, each strongly linked to its own traditional grapes. As you study this under-rated wine region you will discover the fascinating story behind the revival of grapes such as Pecorino and Lacrima and the complicated genetic past of the famous Verdicchio variety. There are lots of "grape" stories here!

ABRUZZO:

Despite its relatively small geographical size, Abruzzo looms large on the Italian wine scene. Each year, it rivals Toscana as the third-most productive region in central and southern Italy. The vineyards of Abruzzo are dominated by Montepulciano, Trebbiano Toscana, and Trebbiano Abbruzzese. We will dive into the Trebbiano family and discover the unique trellising technique that is making a comeback in some of the region's most prized vineyards. A number of Italy's most iconic estates can be found in this rugged and beautiful region. It merits study and exploration.

LAZIO:

Lazio is defined by the imposing presence of Rome - the city has shaped the destiny of the region and the country. Historically, Rome represented an insatiable market for the region's wine producers. There was little incentive to work toward quality. For this reason, Lazio did not undergo the quality wine revolution that rocked much of the peninsula in the late 20th century. Today, things are turning around. Young producers are working with local varieties such as Cesanese and Malvasia del Lazio to craft high-quality and distinctive wines that are worthy of attention. Many critics claim that Lazio now represents one of Italy's most exciting and dynamic wine regions. Its wine industry is on the "grow."

CAMPANIA:

Campania possesses one of Italy's most ancient viticultural and winemaking traditions. Some of the wines made today still follow precedents set by the Greeks, Etruscans, and

Romans more than 2,000 years ago. Learn about the ancient wines of Falernum and how volcanic activity continues to shape the landscape and wine styles of today.

CALABRIA:

It was Calabria that the ancient Greeks initially named Oenotria (Land of Vines) when they first set foot in southern Italy. Over time, viticulture took a back seat to crops such as olives and citrus fruit; however, focus is now returning to the vine. Producers are currently exploring the enormous potential Calabria's ancient and native grapes such as Gaglioppo and Greco Bianco... and the future looks bright as Calabria pours history into the wineglass.

BASILICATA:

Despite having one of the smallest areas under vine in Italy, Basilicata's vinous reputation is large. The region produces one of the top expressions of the famous Aglianico grape. When grown in the extraordinary volcanic soils of Monte Vulture, the variety takes on a character different from any other Italian Aglianicos. These are wines that reflect their terroir in a singular and distinctive fashion. They are well worth discovering!

SARDEGNA:

Sardegna is home to one of the world's largest populations of octogenarians. Some credit the pristine environment, others the slower pace of life. We think it is the wine! Vines are cultivated everywhere on the island, from the sandy coastal plains to the remote, granitic hills. The wines are often marked by characteristic nuances of Mediterranean scrub coupled with a salty-briny note that gives these wines a strong sense of place. Discover the rich ampelographic heritage of Sardegna and learn about the vines and wines that are unique to this beautiful island.

SICILIA:

Sicilia's strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea has resulted in waves of colonization and foreign rule. It is a melting pot of different cultures and traditions. Today, the island lays claim to one of Italy's largest concentrations of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. While its archeological treasures may steal the show, savvy wine lovers know that Sicily is also home to many vinous treasures ranging from fortified Marsala, to the distinctive reds of Etna and the incredible passitos of Pantelleria. Sicilia has so much to offer!

PUGLIA:

Puglia's link to vines and wines has very ancient origins. Throughout history, wine, table grapes, and olive oils have remained some of Puglia's principal agricultural products. Today, Negro Amaro, Primitivo, and Nero di Troia represent tremendous assets for Apulian producers as they journey away from bulk production toward terroir-driven wines and distinctive rosatos.

MOLISE:

Until 1963, Molise and Abruzzo formed one single region known as Molise e Abruzzo. Today, the region is independent and often overlooked by wine lovers. Molise's flagship variety, Tintilia, is of disputed origin, but none contest the fact that it possesses amazingly distinctive aromatics. Does the variety have the potential to propel Molise's wine industry to stardom? Only time will tell.