

HOW TO READ AN ITALIAN WINE LABEL

Typical Italy - the rules serve to produce many wonderful exceptions! The patchwork of Italy has more regions and varieties than all of Europe put together. However, this intense localisation means to know the area (Appellation or DOC) is to be pretty sure of the grape.

For the same reason, grapes sometimes appear in the Appellations themselves (e.g. Montepulciano d'Abruzzo). Globalisation is spreading much varietal naming, but for Italian classics some insider info is still needed.

RESERVE

This particular wine is a riserva or 'reserve'. Unlike in many new world wine regions where the term reserve can be used at the producer's discretion, in Italy, its use is regulated by law.

Wines bearing 'riserva' must meet some specific criteria in addition to those determined by the appellation. In Brunello di Montalcino, that means an extra year of aging before release.

THE TYPE OF WINE

Generally an appellation relating to an area. Knowing this give us a clue as to the grape varieties in the bottle as the permitted varieties for each wine type and the geographical area the wine can come from are defined by law.

'Brunello di Montalcino' DOCG can only be made from the brunello (sangiovese) grape grown in specific areas around the town of Montalcino.

ITALY'S APPELLATION SYSTEM

This appellation defines the grape varieties, production methods and region of production required to bear the wines name.

DOCG - Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita - is the strictest classification and requires tasting by government personnel before bottling.

DOC - Denominazione di Origine Controllata is next in the quality ladder.

DO - is the loosest and is rarely used.

IGT - Indicazione Geografica Tipica is another classification, often used by winemakers who don't want to be restricted by the DOC/DOCG requirements. They may be using international grape varieties or want to experiment with different winemaking methods.



APPELLATION

THE VINTAGE

THE PRODUCER

MADE IN ITALY

ALCOHOL

