

Wine Spectator

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Italian Whites

18 Top Wines
And 60 Great Values

2003 Bordeaux

500

Wines Rated

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Restaurants

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Noirs**

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JUNE 30, 2004

\$4.95 US \$5.95 CAN



the best vineyard sites in the region. The Vigneto du Lot Soave is aged for six months in oak barrels, half of which are new.

Inama also produces another excellent Soave *cru*, Vigneti di Foscarino, also from the Monte Foscarino site, and the superripe Sauvignon Blanc called Vulcaia Fumé, for which the estate first gained international notoriety.

Jermann

Venezia-Giulia Vintage Tunina

Recent vintage tasted: 2002

Score: 91 Price: \$56 5,000 cases made

Silvio Jermann, 50, is one of Friuli's leading winemakers, an iconoclast in his youth who has now assumed the role of elder statesman. He created the prototype for blended Italian whites when he first produced Vintage Tunina, in 1975. At that time, Jermann found most Italian whites ponderous and overly alcoholic, but he was able to break the mold and produce a more global style by blending international varieties with local ones.

Vintage Tunina remains a fresh yet complex blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Malvasia, Ribolla and Picolit. The grapes come from 40 acres of estate vineyards that surround the family home in Farra d'Isonzo, in the region of Friuli. The various grape varieties are picked and fermented together. The wine has been made without the use of oak, but Jermann says that starting with

the 2004 vintage, a portion of Tunina will be fermented in used 60-hectoliter Slavonian oak casks. Jermann's other top whites include the barrel-fermented Chardonnay called Dreams, and Capo Martino, a blend of Tocai Friulano, Malvasia, Ribolla and Picolit. All these wines improve with bottle age.

Maculan

Veneto Acininobili

Recent vintage tasted: 2000

Score: 93 Price: \$89/375ml 200 cases made

Fausto Maculan, 53, converted his family's bulk wine business in the Veneto region into a quality producer of international-style reds such as the Cabernet-Merlot blend Fratta. But his best bottlings are the sweet wines Acininobili and Torcolato.

Acininobili and Torcolato are both made from a selection of Vespaiole, Tocai and Garganega grapes, which are dried for three to four months in a temperature- and humidity-controlled room. According to Maculan, the difference between Torcolato and Acininobili comes after this drying process. The grapes that have remained green go to make Torcolato, while the grapes that have turned brown (i.e., those affected with botrytis) go to make Acininobili, which is Italian for "noble grapes." "If you get the temperature and the humidity right in the drying room," says Maculan, "botrytis has a field day." Acininobili is sweet without being cloying, after the style of top Sauternes, with delicious dried fruit and caramel flavors. It ages extremely well.

Movia

Pinot Grigio Brda

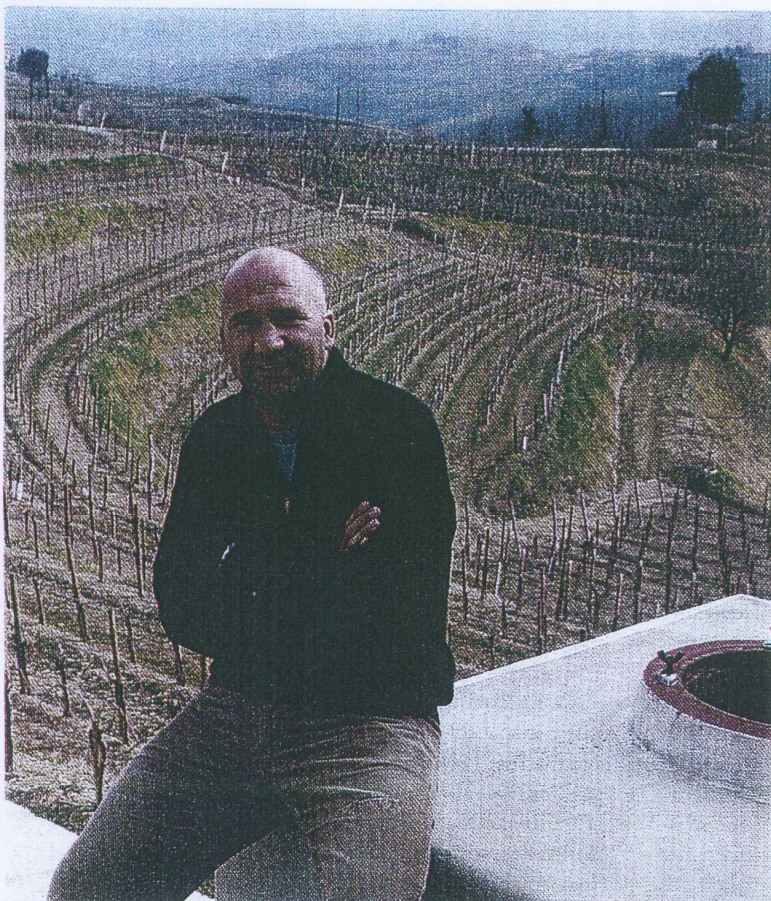
Recent vintage tasted: 2000

Score: 93 Price: \$24 665 cases made

Movia is a national monument in Slovenia. The winery makes fantastic quality reds and whites, all of them handcrafted from estate-grown grapes. Some of the grapes are grown in Slovenia and others come from vineyards located on the Italian side of the border. In fact, the two countries' boundaries cut right through some of Movia's best vineyard sites. Movia's Pinot Grigio Brda is actually 100 percent Italian fruit, meriting its inclusion in this list.

The Kristancic family has owned Movia since 1820. Today, Ales Kristancic, 36, runs the 44-acre estate, and he insists on aging his best wines, both red and white, for a minimum of two years in French oak casks on their lees. "Wines are living things, and they need the nourishment," he says. His excellent Pinot Grigio comes from a 4-acre hillside vineyard planted in 1963. The wine ages beautifully.

Movia also makes other fine whites, including Ribolla Gialla, Tocai Friulano Gredic and Veliko Belo, the last a blend of Ribolla Gialla, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc.



Ales Kristancic of Movia makes notable whites from estate vineyards in Italy and neighboring Slovenia, where his winery is located. The Pinot Grigio Brda comes entirely from the Italian side.

The Great White Wines of

Italy

Here's a pop quiz: How much of Italy's wine production is white?

Would you guess 50 percent? Amazing but true: According to Italy's Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, of the nearly 41.7 million hectoliters of wine Italy produced in 2003, 20.96 million hectoliters were red, while 20.73 million were white.

Of course, quantity doesn't translate directly into quality. But as European bureau chief James Suckling reports, Italy's white wines are rapidly gaining ground.

In the following pages, Suckling and *Wine Spectator* tasting coordinator Jo Cooke explore the country's distinctive, diverse, food-friendly white wines. They come from the northern mountains of Alto Adige, the windswept islands of Sicily and Sardinia and everywhere in between. They are made from deeply rooted indigenous grapes such as Garganega and Fiano di Avellino, and international varieties such as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The wine styles range from steely and crisp to oaky and voluptuous.

We have chosen 18 of the best wines to profile as leaders among the growing ranks of outstanding Italian whites. Many of them are made in small quantities, and their prices, while reasonable compared with those for top whites from France or California, reflect their status. But Italy also produces great value whites, and you'll find a list of 60 current releases that won't strain the budget. All in all, it's a perfect way to stock up for summer.

Contents

41 Overview | 47 Top Wines | 57 Values



Move over, Italian reds. Serious producers from all over Italy are applying their talents to white wines, with impressive results. Right: The country's white wine gems are based on varieties both indigenous and international, with quality bottlings at every price point.