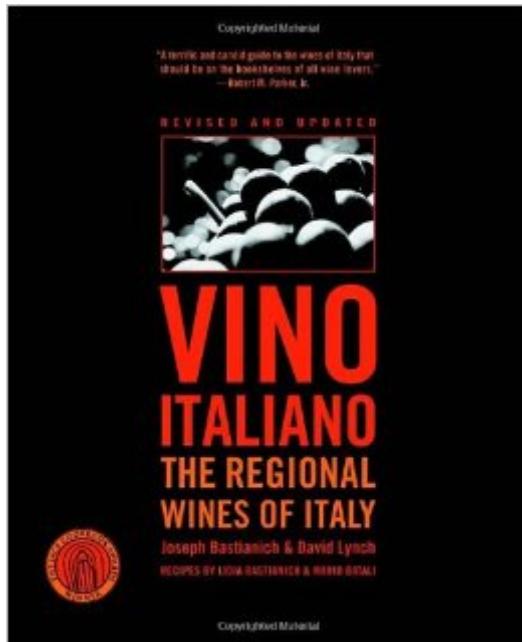


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Vino Italiano: The Regional Wines Of Italy



Synopsis

At one time, Italian wines conjured images of cheap Chianti in straw-wrapped bottles. More recently, expensive à œSuper Tuscansâ • have been the rage. But between these extremes lay a bounty of delicious, moderately priced wines that belong in every wine drinkerâ ™s repertoire. *Vino Italiano* is the only comprehensive and authoritative American guide to the wines of Italy. It surveys the countryâ ™s wine-producing regions; identifies key wine styles, producers, and vintages; and offers delicious regional recipes. Extensive reference materialsâ "on Italyâ ™s 300 growing zones, 361 authorized grape varieties, and 200 of the top producersâ " provide essential information for restaurateurs and wine merchants, as well as for wine enthusiasts. Beautifully illustrated as well as informative, *Vino Italiano* is the perfect invitation to the Italian wine experience.

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Customer Reviews

Vino Italiano is a difficult book to describe. It's part wine guide, part travelogue, part cookbook, and part cultural history. It's a love song to Italy and Italian wine that has the flavor of a coffee table book, but without the color plates and oversize format. It's a reference work and a highly personal account of a subject the authors know well and enjoy sharing. In short, it's a classic. The book lovingly covers all of the regions of Italy. Each chapter is a self-contained essay on an individual Italian region, with wine as the focal point. But don't think that the wine commentary is the only reason you will enjoy owning this book. It's full of absorbing discourses on Italian life, told through anecdotes that illustrate the character of a region's wines, food, people and history. For example,

you'll go on a Tuscan boar hunt, watch a soccer match between Lazio and Roma, learn about the art of making Balsamic vinegar in Emilia-Romagna and discover where the Italians hid Mussolini under house arrest in the mountains of Abruzzo. Each chapter is organized in the same fashion: an introductory essay that illuminates something telling about the character and history of the region; a simple map locating the DOC areas; descriptions of white, red, sparkling and sweet wines grown, highlighting significant producers; wine production statistics, including recent successful vintages; a few select restaurant recommendations; a guided tasting that compares and contrasts flights of wines within the same DOC's; and a recipe or food indigenous to the province with wine selections to match. Throughout are portraits of key people and properties that set the tone for the Italian wine scene today. A data bank at the end lists all major grape varieties grown in Italy and an index of 700 producers who represent a solid if subjective list of Italy's best. One of the most interesting aspects of Italian wine today is the emergence of (and backlash against) the so called "international style." In most regions, this means a shift in emphasis from native grapes and vinification techniques towards extracted wines made from classic French varietals (e.g., cabernet, merlot, syrah) and the use of new oak. *Vino Italiano* tackles the subject head-on in an even-handed and relatively dispassionate manner, including several passages on the style of the prolific modernist consultant Riccardo Cotarella. Is he a force for good or evil? *Vino Italiano* gives you the background, you get to make the decision. There is also a wonderful little digression on the improvements wrought by adoption of modernist techniques on the wines of Barolo and Barbaresco. As, usual, *Vino Italiano* makes the subject clear and entertaining. Negatives? Well, the words are so vivid I would have paid twice as much for the same book with some beautiful color plates that capture the places, people, and food described. Some of the recipes were a little too complex for me, but maybe not for you. If you love Italian wine, food, and/or Italy itself, this is the kind of book you can grab off a nightstand, open at random, and happily lose yourself in for hours. Put another way, if the authors ever sponsored a wine and food tour of Italy, I'd be first in line. Highly recommended.

Vino Italiano is not the best book if what you need is an introduction to Italian wine. But if you already know there is a big difference between a *Vino Rosso di Montepulciano* and a *Montepulciano d'Abruzzo*, then you'll no doubt appreciate this informative and easy-to-read book as much as I do. This book gives the lover of Italian wine, food, and culture a lot to be excited about. It is divided into chapters that cover an Italian region (or in one case, two minor regions) and each chapter contains more information than some lesser books contain in their entirety. Included are regional recipes, maps and other essential information (e.g. significant producers, grapes grown, etc.)

related to its wines, and stunning black-and-white photos that make it tempting to regard this as a coffee-table book. But I think the best part of each chapter is a well-written and entertaining essay that includes anecdotes that frame the character of the people, history, and culture of the region being described. Of course, the centerpiece of it all is wine. But authors David Lynch and Joseph Bastianich understand that even in Italy, that subject cannot stand alone, and so they bring in discussions of hunting, and football, and fashion, and Mussolini, and cars, and artisan vinegars, oils, and cheeses. Reading over what I have written here, I feel that I have not done this book justice. There is such a range of well-researched information here presented in such an accessible way that a different reader might pick it up and enjoy the book just as much as I do but for an entirely different set of reasons. Perhaps the best way to conclude, then, is with my own brief anecdote: Italy is a country very understandably proud of its culture of food and wine, and the domestic Italian best-seller lists always have a few new books on those subjects listed on them. And yet every time - without fail - that I show this book to my Italian friends, their comment is, "Why can't we have a book like this in Italian?"

As owners of a small American vineyard who love to travel through Italy picking up ideas, enjoying new tastes, and just plain enjoying the people and their wine, this is simply the best book we've found in years. Each region is treated with equal respect, each wine is described fairly and in detail, the producers are interviewed wherever possible, and everything is organized so that you can travel with confidence while there or through the shelves of your favorite local wine store. Authors Bastianich and Lynch season their book with excellent recipes thought through so most readers can find ingredients to make them work, and show how any of us can learn a wine by pairing it with the food of its region. You can be sure we'll take this along on our next drive through the wine growing world of Italy.

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