

ITALY & SLOVENIA

It's been three years since we made a wide Italian offer: as I drink more and more Italian wine at home I feel this is long overdue. This list has whites to the fore, on pages 2-4 and 6-7; and is broadly set out geographically from northern Italy and Slovenia via Tuscany and the Marche to the far south of Italy. But there's plenty of variety, with fizz on page 4; and superb sweet wines (I feel these lesser known wines are somewhat under-rated) on pages 3, 5, 9 and 11.

The two most prestigious Italian red grapes are Sangiovese and Nebbiolo. For me, Sangiovese is comparable to Pinot Noir as a great food wine. It has many similarities: pale colour; red and black cherry fruit; highish acidity, and splendidly Pinot-like aromatics. But wholly distinctive to Sangiovese is that it often fairly swiftly develops a particular savoury flavour: sometimes this emerges as notes of grilled meat, gravy and cooked mushrooms, but at a subtler level one could compare it to *umami*, the Japanese term for the fifth basic taste (after sweet, sour, bitter and salty). This savouriness makes Sangiovese a truly wonderful partner to most meat dishes. We feature a dozen Sangiovese-based wines, including new examples from Tenuta Casali in Emilia-Romagna. Nebbiolo is the great grape of Piedmont: on pages 8-9 we list six Nebbiolos right up to grand single vineyard Barolo.

There are sound reasons for including wines from Slovenia with Italian wines in a list. Firstly, many of the grape varieties are common to both sides of the border: Rebula/Ribolla Gialla, Pinot Gris/Grigio/Sivi Pinot, Friulano and Malvasia among the whites; Barbera, Refosco/Teran (not one of my favourites), Pinot Noir, Merlot and the two Cabernets among the reds. Secondly, the climate is similar. Thirdly, after the fall of Napoleon a large part of northern Italy and present day Slovenia shared Austrian rule. Fourthly, and perhaps more controversially, northern Italians have more in common culturally with their neighbours to the east - industrious, independent-minded and prosperous - than they do with southern Italians over a thousand kilometres away.

Finally, do note the prevalence of organic cultivation amongst small-scale producers in Italy and Slovenia: three in this list are certified - Pasji Rep, Il Palagione and Fiorano - and two others - Tenuta Casali and Col di Lamo - are in conversion, i.e. practicing organics but awaiting certification.

Simon Taylor
June 2019

MIXED CASES

Each includes two bottles of each of the six wines listed, at a discount of 10%

Italia Fresca £118.00 Code IS119

(Three whites and three reds, all bright and fruity)

Araldica, Piemonte Cortese, 2018 (p.2)
Corte Mainenti, Cengelle, Soave, 2018 (p.3)
Tenuta Casali, Bassamarea, Bianco Rubicone, 2018 (p.4)
Begali, Valpolicella Classico, 2017 (p.5)
Michele Taliano, Dolcetto d'Alba, Ciabot, 2017 (p.8)
Talosa, Chianti Colli Senesi, 2018 (p.10)

Classy Italian and Slovenian Whites £147.40 Code IS219

(Six whites)

Tenuta Santa Seraffa, Gavi del Comune di Gavi, 2018 (p.2)
Il Palagione, Hydra, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, 2018 (p.2)
Corte Mainente, Tovo al Pigno, Soave Classico, 2018 (p.3)
Tenuta Casali, Cavaliere Bianco, Colli Romagna Centrale, 2017 (p.4)
Pasji Rep, Zelen, Vipavska Dolina, 2017 (p.6)
Zanut, Zakaj, Goriska Brda, 2016 (p.7)

Classic Italian Reds £154.95 Code IS319

(Six reds)

Begali, Valpolicella Ripasso, La Cengia, Italy, 2016 (p.5)
Michele Taliano, Blagheur, Nebbiolo d'Alba, 2016 (p.8)
Il Palagione, Caelum, Chianti Colli Senesi, 2017 (p.10)
Talosa, Rosso di Montepulciano, 2016 (p.11)
Fiorano, Terre di Giobbe, Rosso Piceno Superiore DOC, 2015 (p.12)
Filadoro, Aglianico, Irpinia DOC, 2012 (p.12)

Discover Super Wine Dozen £204.00 Code IS419

(Two whites and four reds, offbeat or off the beaten track)

Il Palagione, Ori, Vernaccia di San Gimignano Riserva, 2017 (p.2)
Zanut, Sauvignon, Goriska Brda, 2016 (p.7)
Tenuta Casali, Baruccia, Sangiovese San Vicinio, 2016 (p.4)
Begali, Tigiolo, IGT Veronese, 2014 (p.5)
Pasji Rep, Jebatschin Red, Vipavska Dolina, 2016 (p.6)
Boasso, Grappoli, Langhe Rosso, 2015 (p.9)

STONE, VINE & SUN

WINE MERCHANTS

WHITE

Araldica, Piemonte Cortese, 2018, 12% [Screwcap]

Bottle £7.95 Case with 10% off £85.86 Code ARA718

Cortese is perhaps the best known white grape of Piemonte. Pine-scented, yet with an exotically flavoured palate of tropical fruit and herby Vermouth-like hints. Now-2020

Bellamico, IGT Falanghina Beneventano, 2018, 12%

Bottle £8.75 Case with 10% off £94.50 Code BEM118

Named after the town, Benevento, in eastern Campania. Wine from the Falanghina grape is mid-weight, with hints of stone fruit and lime. A useful all-rounder. Now-2020

Michele Taliano, Serni, Roero Arneis, 2017, 13.5%

Bottle £12.75 Case with 10% off £137.70 Code TAN617

Serni simply means "chosen". Arneis is an ancient white grape in Piedmont, a speciality of the Roero, the region just north of and the river Tanaro and the Barolo vineyards. Appealing scent - floral and pine woods; and then a ripe, rounded palate, redolent of lime, cream and herbs. Food friendly. Now-2020

Tenuta Santa Seraffa, Gavi del Comune di Gavi, 2018, 12.5%

Bottle £12.95 Case with 10% off 139.86 Code SER118

From a historic estate, this pure Cortese is strong: displaying a very open floral and citrus perfume; and then a refreshing, lemony mouthful. Very good length for a wine in this idiom. Now-2020

Il Palagione, Hydra, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, 2018, 13%

Bottle £13.50 Case with 10% off £145.80 Code PAL618

This stimulating Vernaccia is superb in this vintage: an enticingly herbal scent with hints of sage and mint; and then terrific to drink, both rounded and zippy. Lots of intensity and energy - green fruit and melon with a long stony finish. Keeps well too. Now-2021

Filadoro, Greco di Tufo, 2016, 13%

Bottle £14.50 Case with 10% off £156.60 Code FIM316

Greco is a grape which probably originated in the south of Italy, although it may have arrived with the ancient Greeks. Greco di Tufo is the DOCG for the vineyards around the village of Tufo, on volcanic

soils derived (unsurprisingly) from tuff or tufa. This is a very distinctive style of wine, not that giving on the nose, but offering a fascinating spectrum of flavours, from tangerine and apricot to a clear saline note. This builds well, rounded and refreshing, and shows a splendidly long dry finish: it's intense and characterful. Drink this year

Fiorano, Donna Orgilla, Offida Pecorino, 2017, 13%

Bottle £15.95 Case with 10% off £172.26 Code FIO617

Offida Pecorino is a DOCG for wines from Pecorino, an ancient grape of the southern Marche, in this commune of Ascoli Piceno. From organically farmed grapes (see p.11) and given a little skin contact, this has an open, herby scent. Creamy but incisive mouthful of fresh pears and lime with hints of fennel and menthol. Excellent depth - from six months ageing on the lees. Now-2020 *Limited stock*

Il Palagione, Ori, Vernaccia di San Gimignano Riserva, 2017, 13.5%

Bottle £17.95 Case with 10% off £193.86 Code PAL817

Vernaccia Riserva is from declared vineyards and has to be aged in barrel, here half in new barrels and half first fill. But it doesn't appear over-oaky at all; rather the barrels give volume and creaminess. Lovely silky texture; and plentiful greengage and apricot flavours. With a tang of lime and almonds on the finish, this is intense and impressive. Now-2022

STONE, VINE & SUN

WINE MERCHANTS

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Saturdays: 9.30am-4.00pm

CORTE MAINENTE, SOAVE

We have chosen a winner to work with in Soave with young Davide Mainente. His family own 12 hectares of vines, both near the town (the Cengelle vineyard) and in the Classico hillside sites such as Pigno and Tenda. His wines are winning rave reviews in Italy and here (Jancis Robinson described his 2017 Cengelle on jancisrobinson.com as "Chock-full of fine fruit. Racy and so refreshing and charming!"). Thanks to his wish to build his sales in this country with us, they remain extremely good value.

Soave, from the Garganega grape grown in vineyards east of Verona, is hugely under-rated here. It's one of those wines (like Muscadet) that the supermarket buyers murdered twenty years ago, pushing the co-ops to produce so much volume from the pergola-trained vines that the end result became mean and watery, albeit cheap. But true Soave, from top growers such Pieropan and Inama is such a delight - and Davide at Corte Mainente is challenging these luminaries.

Corte Mainente, Cengelle, Soave, 2018, 12.5%

Bottle £10.95 Case with 10% off £118.26 Code MAI118

From 90% Garganega (with 10% Trebbiano di Soave) on calcareous soils, this displays an enticing perfume of white flowers and greengages. Overtly fruity - green plums with stone fruit hints - and well-rounded, this offers a ripe and friendly glass, lovely to drink on its own or with a wide range of light dishes. Now-2020



Corte Mainente, Tovo al Pigno, Soave Classico, 2018, 12.5%

Bottle £13.50 Case with 10% off £145.80 Code MAI318

A top Soave - 100% Garganega grown on red and black volcanic soils in a single vineyard in Pigno, known as one of the best terroirs in the middle of the hilly Classico zone. This is altogether a big step up on the wine above, with more volume and more intensity. Well-textured, it shows hints of almonds and white pepper. Finishes vivid and fresh. Now-2021

"Another small estate with Davide Mainente, the winemaker, being tipped for great things. This wine is 100% Garganega grown on red and black volcanic soils in Pigno, on of the best terroirs in the central Classico zone. On the nose the fruit feels riper, more tropical; there is some complexity here and a sweetness in the bouquet. The palate is crisp, precise with a lively mineral edge, the fruit feels younger in the mouth than on the nose, the wine builds to a terrific citrus and almond finish", Peter Dean in **The Buyer**, 10th May 2019.

Corte Mainente, Netroir, Soave, 2017, 14%

Bottle £15.50 Case with 10% off £167.40 Code MAI417

Because Netroir is made from a selection of Davide's best grapes across all his sites, it's only a Soave rather than a Soave Classico. From grapes picked late for full maturity, it's left on its fine lees for a year to develop complexity. Very ripe and concentrated, with such intensity of stone fruit that it tastes almost like Viognier, and it also evinces ripe melon notes. Powerful and lightly savoury: a wine for white meat - chicken or veal dishes. Now-2021

Corte Mainente, Luna Nova, Recioto di Soave, 2017, 15% [37.5cl.]

Half Bottle £13.95 Case (12 x 37.5cl.) with 10% off £150.66 Code MAI617

Sweet Recioto di Soave - made from bunches of Garganega dried on racks in the autumn - has an ancient pedigree. Davide makes this lustrous example from a selection of his first picked grapes (for the best condition and good levels of acidity). Perfume of orange peel - and that bitter marmalade orange flavour permeates this concentrated and opulent sweet wine with around 135 grams of residual sugar per litre. There's more than a hint of botrytis, noble rot, too. In the Veneto this style is drunk with cake, but it's delicious with cheese or on its own. Now-2021



TENUTA CASALI, MERCATO SARACENO, EMILIA ROMAGNA

Ask Monty Waldin, an English wine expert resident in Tuscany, where he would look for value in Italy, and he says Emilia Romagna - inspiring furious tasting and meeting the Casali family.

Based in Mercato Saraceno south of Cesena, the family have 20 hectares of grapes, mostly on hillsides on the edge of the Apennines. Their land is now worked to organic practice and the wines will be certified soon.

Ignore the complicated, little known names - these are all really well-made, fruit forward wines, smartly presented, and we are delighted to introduce them here.

Tenuta Casali, Bassamarea Bianco, Bianco Rubicone, 2018, 12%

Bottle £9.95 Case with 10% off £107.46 TEN118

This pure Trebbiano shows the simple virtues of the grape - citrus and peach flavours, nicely rounded, with a hint of white pepper. Honest, refreshing and tasty. Now-2020

Tenuta Casali, Cavaliere Bianco, Colli Romagna Centrale, 2017, 13.5%

Bottle £11.95 Case with 10% off £129.06 Code TEN317

Named after the vineyard which was planted in 1985, this is 100% Trebbiano (Romagnolo) given about six months on its lees. Pale gold. Lovely scent of ripe, pears tinged with sage. Rich, full-flavoured - pears and lime - with a hint of spice. Dry and lightly savoury. Very good with chicken or light pork dishes. Now-2020

Tenuta Casali, Valleripa, Albana Secco, Romagna, 2017, 14%

Bottle £14.95 Case with 10% off £161.46 Code TEN417

Albana, a local grape, given about 18 hours skin contact, giving an enticing strong golden hue, aromas of honey and dried appleskin; and a full-flavoured, very lightly tannic palate encompassing yellow plums, dried grapes and a hint of oranges. Complex, dry, savoury and penetrating. We don't expect to sell this to everyone but it's fascinating. Now-2021

Tenuta Casali, Bassamarea Rosso, Sangiovese Rubicone, 2018, 12.5%

Bottle £9.95 Case with 10% off £107.46 TEN618

Just a bright, young, country wine - vivid purple, fresh cherry perfume, all cherries and strawberries with a little fat. Perfect summer red drinking, light and juicy. Now-2020

Tenuta Casali, Baruccia, Sangiovese San Vicinio, 2016, 14%

Bottle £14.50 Case with 10% off £156.60 TEN816

From Sangiovese grown on white clay affected soils (and again named after its vineyard), given six months in large, old Slavonian oak vats, a really appealing, exuberant wine: sharply black-fruited, with notes of cherry liqueur and black olive, it's broad, fleshy, rounded and long. With a little grip, it's very food friendly - think spicy or creamy red meat dishes. Now-2023

DRUSIAN, VALDOBBIADENE, VENETO

We have been listing Drusian Prosecco for 16 years now, testament to its popularity with our customers, long before Prosecco became so popular. Drusian is a third generation family owned producer, with very good vineyard holdings, notably on the hill of Cartizze, acknowledged as the best site in the whole of the Prosecco zone.

Drusian, Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore, Extra Dry, NV, 11%

Bottle £14.50 Case with 10% off £156.60 Code DRU1NV

Their Extra Dry Prosecco (i.e. not bone dry) from 100% Glera grapes, was selected in **Decanter** magazine in 2013 as one of the top Proseccos. Deliciously sherberty, light, and with the merest hint of fruity ripeness, one can consume this charming example with alarming ease. Now-2020

Drusian, Rose Mari, Spumante Rosato, Extra Dry, Italy, NV, 12%

Bottle £15.50 Case with 10% off £167.40 Code DRU5NV

In summer do try their brilliant pink sparkler, from Pinot Noir grown in the cool hills of Alto Adige and made in the same way as Prosecco (i.e. in a closed tank). It's a gently fizzy, very pale pink glass of red fruit - wild strawberries. Very lightly savoury, showing true Pinot character, this makes a perfect aperitif, and a bottle vanishes very quickly indeed. Now-2020

BEGALI, SAN PIETRO IN CARIANO, VENETO

The Begali family - father Lorenzo, son Giordano and daughter Tiliana - farm 10 hectares just east of Lake Garda. Although small, this is a top Valpolicella estate, having won numerous *Tre Bicchieri* awards in the **Gambero Rosso** guide. Furthermore Begali are one of the thirteen "*Famiglie Storiche*", historic families of Amarone, an association dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of this famed style, whereby the wine is made from selected bunches of grapes dried in the autumn on straw to concentrate the sugars and dry extract. As such it's high in alcohol but not fortified.

All the wines (bar Tigiolo) are made from the same local grapes - Corvina and Rondinella - but made in four different styles. First up is the lively Valpolicella Classico; then the denser Ripasso; and then two examples of wines made from selected bunches of dried grapes: dry Amarone (high alcohol) and sweet Recioto (lower alcohol, with the grape sugar left unfermented).

Begali, Valpolicella Classico, 2017, 12.5%

Bottle £12.50 Case with 10% off £135.00 Code BEF117

2/3 Corvina and 1/3 Rondinella, offering a pretty and sappy mouthful of buckets of red cherries. More concentrated than usual, with a twist of cherrystem bitterness. Now-2021

Begali, Valpolicella Ripasso, La Cengia, Italy, 2016, 14%

Bottle £14.95 Case with 10% off £161.46 Code BEF216

2/3 Corvina and 1/3 Rondinella, crafted in the Ripasso style by which the wine is left on the skins of the desiccated grapes used after the production of Amarone for about 10-12 days to promote a second fermentation, giving enhanced texture and alcohol. La Cengia is the quarter where the family's vineyards for this wine lie. Once again superb, not raising but enticingly bittersweet, dancing with black cherry and brambly flavours, elegant and long. A great food pairing is with offal - particularly *fegato alla veneziana*. Now-2023

Begali, Tigiolo, IGT Veronese, 2014, 14.5%

Bottle £22.50 Case with 10% off £243.00 Code BEF314

45% Cabernet Sauvignon and Corvina with 5% of Merlot and Rondinella, made using some dried grapes. California Cab meets Amarone - pure,

intensely black-fruited, with the bittersweet bite of sharp blackcurrants. Intriguingly different. Now-2025

Begali, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico, 2014, 16%

Bottle £32.50 Case with 10% off £351.00 Code BEF414

See above for Amarone's production method. Very ripe and concentrated, with blackcurrant flavour tinged with dark chocolate. Super fresh finish. Amarone is a wonderful wine to sip with hard cheese (for example aged Cheddar) at the end of a meal, rather like port - but in Verona they will serve a carafe of Amarone with a steak or venison and it's hugely successful. Now-2023

Begali, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico, Monte Ca'Bianca, Italy, 2013, 16%

Bottle £49.50 Case with 10% off £534.60 Code BEF513

From a blend of Corvina, Corvinone and Rondinella, all grown in the single Monte Ca' Bianca vineyard, and all aged in French barriques, 1/3 new. This has the air of a very fine wine - surprisingly like a grand Bordeaux: smart oak, superb aromatics; and intense black fruit cut by fine acidity dancing around. This ages impeccably and for a very long time. Now-2029

Begali, Recioto della Valpolicella Classico, Italy, 2012, 13%

50 cl. bottle £27.95 Case (12 x 50cl cl.) with 10% off £301.86 Code BEF612

Recioto della Valpolicella is made after careful late picking of ripe bunches (of Corvina and Rondinella grapes), which are then left to desiccate in the autumn, thereby concentrating body and sweetness - 122 grams of residual sugar per litre. Morello cherries, intensely bittersweet. Wonderful wine, equally at home with strong hard cheese as with not-too-sweet chocolate puddings. The 2015 vintage follows. Now-2022



Tiliana Begali

SLOVENIA

Slovenian wine production is very much focussed on quality - only a quarter of local wine is classified as table wine, and it's very unusual to find indifferent wine in a restaurant (unlike France sadly). Almost all of their wine is consumed at home - just 6% is exported. The wines below aren't cheap but their quality and interest demand attention. Our two growers are both in the Primorska, the western and littoral zone nearest Italy.

Note that several of the whites have some skin contact, a time-honoured and now much revived tradition in Slovenia - i.e. the juice is left on the skins of the grapes (as in customary red wine making) for hours or days, gaining flavours, texture and even a whisper of tannin.

PASJI REP, VIPAVA VALLEY

We are in awe young Samo Premrn's command of winemaking, the purity and perfect linearity of his wines, the smartness of his labels and his general aura of genius. It's not often we come across someone like this: we had to be his first UK importer.

His vineyards lie on largely north facing slopes at the eastern end of the Vipava Valley (Vipavska Dolina), which is open to the Adriatic at the western end and cooled by downdrafts from the Julian Alps to the north. All wines are certified organic and made using near natural techniques - but without any of the faults one so often sees in natural wine!

Pasji Rep, Zelen, Vipavska Dolina, 2017, 11.5%

Bottle £13.50 Case with 10% off £145.80 Code PAS117

Zelen used to be highly rated, the grape for the aristocracy in the Vipava Valley, but as it's fragile and low-yielding it's now just grown in a few pockets there. This is given some skin contact, lots of lees stirring, malolactic fermentation, and a third goes into old, neutral barrels. Mid-weight, peach-fruited, creamy, with notes of sourdough and herbs. In some ways Zelen has Viognier and Muscat-like flavours, but it has a graceful personality all of its own and a depth of flavour which belies the lowish alcohol. Two days after visiting Samo I ate at Hisa Franko in Kobarid, arguably Slovenia's top restaurant. When I asked the sommelier for a glass of white wine before dinner I was brought a glass of this - that says it all. Now-2020

"Smart label. Smells of gingerbread men! Lots of excitement and some fine tannins. Interesting ... low alcohol too. 16/20", Jancis Robinson MW on jancisrobinson.com, 5th November 2018

Pasji Rep, Jebatschin Red, Vipavska Dolina, 2016, 14%

Bottle £19.95 Case with 10% off £215.46 Code PAS616

Merlot dominated, with about 15% Cabernet Franc and a little Barbera, well-oaked in a mix of new and old barrels, a beautifully ripe and flamboyant wine, delivering polished berried fruit with vanilla. Perfectly fresh, suave and clean, it's very akin to a very smart right bank Bordeaux - like a top Lalande de Pomerol for example. Impressive wine. Now-2022

Pasji Rep, Pinot Noir, Vipavska Dolina, 2016, 14%

Bottle £20.95 Case with 10% off £226.26 Code PAS816

The Vipava Valley is a sweet spot for Pinot Noir. Bright raspberries, very ripe and fleshy, concentrated, with a proper spine too. Very high quality Pinot. Now-2022

"Vipava's breezy climate suits Pinot Noir. Samo Premrn has recently taken over from his father and focusing on elegance in his wines. This refined version shows youthful raspberry fruit, gentle tannins and good length", Caroline Gilby, MW, *Balkan Reds*, *Decanter* magazine, February 2019.



Samo Premrn

ZANUT, NEBLO, BRDA

Visiting Borut and Mateja Kocijančič at Zanut is a pleasure. The seven hectares of the family-owned vineyards, mostly terraced and all grassed, lie across the pretty, rolling hills of Brda in the far west of Slovenia; only a few kilometres from the Italian border, and just north of the Italian city of Gorizia (Goriska). Soils, rich in minerals, are composed of clay, slate and sandstone. As one would expect, given the location, the grape varieties grown - see below - are very similar to those grown across the border in Friuli.

All these whites are made and raised only in stainless steel tanks, using indigenous yeasts; all gain from long ageing on the lees and display an extraordinary intensity and drive. As tastings of older vintages confirmed, they keep well too.

Zanut, Rebula, Goriska Brda, 2017, 12.5%

Bottle £15.95 Case with 10% off £172.26 Code ZAN117

Rebula is the Slovenian name for the Italian Ribolla Gialla grape, but it's more widely grown in Slovenia than in Friuli. This wine gains colour, texture and intensity from 12 hours skin contact: it's light gold, well-weighted, dry, concentrated, and lightly savoury. Surprisingly full-bodied, it's a wine to drink with food, especially chicken or white fish in a sauce. Now-2021

Zanut, Sivi Pinot, Goriska Brda, 2015, 14%

Bottle £16.50 Case with 10% off £178.20 Code ZAN315

Sivi Pinot is the local name for Pinot Gris: as Jancis Robinson's monumental **Wine Grapes** attests, it "has a real Slovenian identity". This, from two small parcels, is superb: mid-gold, satisfyingly rich yet bone dry, and delivering complex nuances of stone fruit, honey, lavender and spice. It's up there with the finest of Alsace and Friuli - and the finish is remarkable. You could drink it with roast pork or turkey. Now-2020 *Limited stock*

Zanut, Zakaj, Goriska Brda, 2016, 13.5%

Bottle £16.50 Case with 10% off £178.20 Code ZAN216

Zakaj (pronounced Zakay), translated from Slovenian, means "why". The grape is what used to be called Tocai Friulano (a name not permitted since Hungary joined the EU), now known as Friulano or Sauvignonasse, originally a Bordeaux variety. Really pretty nose, redolent of lime blossom. Mid weight, this delivers both diverse fruit flavours, peach and tangerine, alongside subtle hints of rose water and white flowers. A brilliant, complex white. Now-2021

Zanut, Sauvignon, Goriska Brda, 2016, 13.5%

Bottle £20.50 Case with 10% off £221.40 Code ZAN416

We only shipped a little of this wine in the previous vintage, wary that our customers would balk at paying £20 for a Slovenian Sauvignon Blanc - an error. This pale, unoaked example, from the estate's highest vineyards, has the intensity of the very best Sauvignons from anywhere in the world. So open and expressive - true SB freshness, but with exotic hints of tangerine and mango. Rich and long. Not bone dry so makes a fascinating aperitif as well as accompanying a wide range of poultry or fish dishes. Borut attributes its success to his use of three different clones of Sauvignon, one unique to the estate: this is the sort of winemaker claim which it is very hard to take at face value, but when the wine is this good, one has to accept his justification! Now-2022

Zanut, Jama, Goriska Brda, 2012, 15%

Bottle £27.95 Case with 10% off £301.86 Code ZAN515

Pronounced "Yama", a single vineyard wine from Friulano = Sauvignonasse, only produced in the best vintages - and just 930 bottles in 2012. Very late picked - on the 23rd-24th October - the grapes were then left in tank to ferment on their skins for twenty days. That gives a deep yellow colour to the wine, and satisfying density and complexity. Floral (blossom), fruity (exotic fruits, dried fruit and Seville oranges) and spice flavours are all present; and the wine is hugely aromatic, powerful and structured, with a nip of tannin from the skins. Whilst the overall effect is perhaps comparable to an amphora-aged, natural wine there are no hints of the wine faults which so often mar natural wines. It's also like a great Savennières, dry, mineral, savoury and long-lived. Whilst this can be drunk with a wide range of dishes, from the finest veal to lobster, it can also be enjoyed on its own, or just with some hard cheese. Now-2021 *Limited stock*





The Taliano brothers

MICHELE TALIANO, MONTÀ D'ALBA

The brothers Alberto and Ezio Taliano, third generation growers, lack land in the grandest Piedmont sites, with 13 hectares assembled over quite a wide area, largely in Roero, which is just to the north of the river Tanaro, but also across the river in Langhe, source of their Nebbiolo d'Alba and Barbaresco. But their wines are transparent, true to the grapes and vineyards, and offer excellent value in an area where prices are often challenging. Apart from their excellent reds - and the terrific 2012 Roero Riserva is drinking superbly now - their Arneis is listed on p.2 - and the frivolous sweet sparkling Birbet below is fun too.

Michele Taliano, Dolcetto d'Alba, Ciabot, 2017, 13.5%

Bottle £12.50 Case with 10% off £135.00 Code TAN417

The Dolcetto grape, literally "the little sweet one", crafted like this makes a bright, sappy red for summer drinking, perfect to accompany salumi. Bright cherry scent - and that red cherry character makes for a lively and juicy wine, Now-2020

Michele Taliano, Barbera d'Alba, A Bon Rendre, 2017, 13%

Bottle £12.95 Case with 10% off £139.86 Code TAN117

About 1/3 of the wine is aged in old vats. This is crafted in a supple, easy-drinking style, with forward and pretty raspberry and curranty fruit, creamy, with just a nudge of tannin. A crowd-pleaser. Now-2021

Michele Taliano, Blagheur, Nebbiolo d'Alba, 2016, 14%

Bottle £14.95 Case with 10% off £161.46 Code TAN316

A *Blagheur*, in the local half-French dialect, is one who exaggerates. But this is no bluffer - this is a delicious Nebbiolo, just rounded by a year of ageing in a mix of old vats and used oak French barrels, that tastes better than cheap co-op Barolo. Soft pale and transparent tone; pretty strawberry scent; and the same juicy and bright red fruit dominates the palate, fragrant and silky. This is bright and classy. Now-2022

Michele Taliano, Roche dra Bossora, Roero Riserva, 2012, 14.5%

Bottle £19.95 Case with 10% off £215.46 Code TAN212

Magnum £42.50 Case (6 x 150cl.) with 10% off £229.50 Code TAN212M

Named after large ravines which score the Roero hills. Roero Riserva must be aged for a total of 32 months before release, including a minimum of six months in barrel (here about 30% new, 70% old). This wine was lauded by both the 2017 *Gambero Rosso Vini d'Italia* - "*davvero brillante il vino roerino di punta dell'azienda*", and the 2017 *slow wine* guide - "*vivo e vibrante al palato, con tannino reattivo e contrasto succoso*". Soft, mature tone. Lifted strawberry perfume. Red fruit with blackcurrant notes over a classic Nebbiolo tannic structure, giving a fine grained texture. Very aromatic - lending dramatic length - with hints of leather, pepper and liquorice. This has great keeping potential: the 2001 vintage was terrific in 2017, bittersweet and meaty, wreathed with sealing wax. Now-2025

Michele Taliano, Ad Altiora, Barberesco, 2013, 14.5%

Bottle £25.95 Case with 10% off £280.26 Code TAN513

Ad Altiora implies aiming higher. This is from 100% Nebbiolo grown in the famed, calcareous Bris Montersino vineyard, picked late in October for full ripeness. Open, gorgeous perfume - floral and red-fruited. This is a powerful wine, displaying a mix of fresh and cooked red fruits, over a firm base. Tobacco notes. Rather grand. Now-2024

Michele Taliano, Birbet, NV, 5.5%

Bottle £9.25 Case with 10% off £99.90 Code TAN916

This frothy sweet red, a speciality of Piedmont is made like a sparkling Moscato, but from the red Brachetto grape. With about 110 grams of residual sugar, it's very sweet, but with refreshing red-fruited bite too. Amusing to drink with strawberries or raspberries or with light cake. Drink this year.

AZIENDA AGRICOLA BOASSO, SERRALUNGA

The Boasso family's cellar, in the tiny hamlet of Gabutti, lies just above the steep slope of their top vineyard, facing the little hilltop village of Serralunga across a deep valley. The cellar is tiny but spotless and perfectly equipped.

Nebbiolos from Serralunga have a famed reputation for quality, but also for firm tannins: these Barolos can be enjoyed now - and they really benefit from double decanting, i.e. into a jug and back in the bottle - but they will arguably improve and will keep for many years.

Boasso, Grappoli, Langhe Rosso, 2015, 13.5%

Bottle £17.95 Case with 10% off £193.86 Code BOA215

Grappoli are bunches of grapes - one adorning the label of this splendid blend: about 50% Nebbiolo, 40% Barbera and 10% Dolcetto, all grown around Serralunga, given a year in old vats. Like so many 2015 reds this is a delightfully winning wine, with the juiciness of the Dolcetto and ripeness of the Barbera softening the more austere Nebbiolo. Melting red fruit scent; and dominated by cherry flavours, with a suggestion of cherry liqueur. Elegant, refined wine, with good supporting structure. Now-2021

Boasso, Barolo, Serralunga d'Alba, 2012, 14%

Bottle £30.50 Case with 10% off £329.40 Code BOA312

From several sites in the commune of Serralunga, this offers a pale hue; a delightfully open perfume of raspberries and roses, and a plush, concentrated but svelte palate. Lush strawberries underpinned by crunchy acidity and good tannins. Textbook example, vital and with a long finish. Now-2025

Boasso, Barolo Gabutti, 2013, 14%

Bottle £36.50 Case with 10% off £394.20 Code BOA413

We love the Barolo Gabutti 2013 - exciting, authentic, long-lived Barolo - and so did the writers of the leading Italian wine guide, the 2018 **Gambero Rosso**. They gave this, along with a handful of other Barolos, the top *Tre Bicchieri*, three glasses, rating and described it thus (our translation!):

"Top spot goes to the Gabutti, which won the three glasses prize thanks to its purest expression of the most classic Barolo qualities, from quinine to raspberry, from blackberry to liquorice; the palate shows power and harmony: unmissable".

The wine comes from the single Gabutti vineyard just below the family cellar, a one hectare, steep, south-east facing site on calcareous marl at about 330m of altitude. From 100% Nebbiolo, this is largely aged for three years in traditional large Slavonian oak vats, with a small proportion in smaller French oak barrels. Gorgeous strawberry and cherry core, fleshy, rich and substantial. Plenty of structure but that luscious fruit shines through. Savoury and liquorice notes dance around. Exotic wine. Enjoy now or right through to 2028.



TUSCANY

IL PALAGIONE, SAN GIMIGNANO

Giorgio Comotti owned a number of driving schools in Piedmont in and around Turin. But he had a dream (see, it's not just confined to Brits) to own land and make wine in Tuscany. For many years he commuted from north to south at weekends, but now he is firmly established at Il Palagione with 10 hectares of vines and olive groves, all farmed organically, a well-equipped cellar and a superb B & B. His land lies just south of San Gimignano and east of Volterra.

Giorgio is a charming, open and convivial soul, and a wonderful host. Here are bright, modern style wines of dramatic vivacity and punch. Both his reds and, more surprisingly, his Vernaccias (see p.2 of this list), age very well.



Il Palagione, Caelum, Chianti Colli Senesi, 2017, 14%

Bottle £13.50 Case with 10% off £145.80 Code PAL117

100% Sangiovese aged in older barrels, this is always a concentrated, powerful example. Vital purple. Perfume of sweet oak and cherries – and then a warming, complete and spicy gush of black cherries and plums. Very ripe, with moderate tannin and lively fruit on the finish, this is so likeable, perfect for all red meat dishes, with or without pasta! Now-2020

Il Palagione, Antajr, IGT Toscana, 2011, 14%

Bottle £19.50 Case with 10% off £210.60 Code PAL411

70% Sangiovese with 15% of each of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, with lots of new French barriques. Surprisingly youthful, showy, intense and oaky, with a bittersweet, cassis heart. Lipsmacking, vital, this delivers immediate pleasure yet can be kept for years. Now-2022 *Limited stock*

TALOSA, MONTEPULCIANO

In terms of reputation the wines of Montepulciano, a DOC since 1980, rank somewhere in between those of Chianti and Montalcino, although the “Nobile” adjective was only added by an astute piece of marketing in the 1920s.

Talosa, owned by the Roman Jacorossi family, is a medium-sized estate, with thirty-two hectares of vines just north of the town near Pietrose. Their cellars, in the centre of this precipitous hill-side town, are extraordinary. A visit starts in a shop just below the square, and ends three storeys down (via an Etruscan tomb) in a vaulted cellar opening onto a cliff face. All the reds offer excellent value – and the Vin Santo is sensational!

Talosa, Chianti Colli Senesi, 2018, 13.5%

Bottle £11.75 Case with 10% off £126.90 Code TAK318

The 2016 vintage of their great value Chianti Colli Senesi was praised by Jancis Robinson, MW in the **Financial Times** last December. From the younger vines in their Montepulciano vineyards, this is 85% Sangiovese with 15% mixed between Merlot and local Canaiolo and Mammolo. Juicy and spicy mouthful of red cherry and blueberry; a charming Sangiovese, showing some pleasing fat and a bright, fruity finish. Now-2020

Giorgio Comotti at Il Palagione

Talosa, Rosso di Montepulciano, 2016, 13.5%

Bottle £13.95 Case with 10% off £150.66 Code TAK116

The 2016 vintage was distinguished by lovely sunny weather but also marked diurnal differences of temperature – perfect for quality in Tuscany. This is a big and youthful red, offering classic Sangiovese sour cherry and berry flavours; and there are good tannins there too, covered by the lush fruit. Attractively fat on the palate, it offers excellent concentration for a Rosso di Montepulciano and has the stuffing to keep well. With notes of that attractive savoury Sangiovese character, it's food friendly with everything from robust meat pasta dishes to roast pork or strongly flavoured poultry. Now-2022

Talosa, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, 2015, 14%

Bottle £19.50 Case with 10% off £210.60 Code TAK215

90% Sangiovese and 10% Merlot given two years in oak, the first in 500l, new, first fill and second; and the second year in large vats. Sumptuous in this great Tuscan vintage, fleshy, excitingly aromatic, expansive, big and spicy, with plenty of ripe tannins: "noble" indeed. Now-2025

Talosa, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano Riserva, 2013, 14.5%

Bottle £25.50 Case with 10% off £275.40 Code TAK613

100% Sangiovese. 2013 was a cool vintage, so this is from grapes picked in late October. This combines plenty of power with splendid aromatics - all cooked cherries, asian spice and good tannins. Winner of a Silver medal in the **Decanter World Wine Awards**. Now-2023

Talosa, Vin Santo di Montepulciano, Italy, 1995, 14%

Half Bottle £23.50 Case (12 x 37.5cl.) with 10% off £253.80 Code TAK895

From a careful selection of the best Trebbiano, Malvasia and Grechetto grapes picked in Tuscany in early October and dried for about four months before long ageing in small barrels. Yes it's expensive but the grapes were vinified 24 years ago! Scent of cooked toffee. Wonderfully complex caramel and dried fruit flavours with a fresh citrusy edge. Reminiscent of the delicious oozing apple juice off a Tarte Tatin. Too good for biscotti dunking, but a lovely drop to drink with cake - or any cheese, especially mild blue cheese. Now-2029
Limited stock

COL DI LAMO, MONTALCINO

Brunello di Montalcino stands at the summit of Tuscan wines: it has to be aged in barrel for two years and a further two years in bottle before being released; and it has to be 100% Sangiovese (following a series of scandals regarding the inclusion of Cabernet and Merlot).

The Neri family vineyards lie at Torrenieri, just north-east of Montalcino, where soils are based on sandstone and clay, with some of the *alberese*, the limestone-rich land which Sangiovese loves. After the death of her father in 1991 the young Gianna Neri, a law graduate, chose to follow his lead in making wine. She split the vineyards with her brother, later planting other parcels, released her own bottles in 2003 and has opened a smart new cellar beside here vines. Cultivation here has been organic since 2015, with certification to follow for the 2018 vintage. Gianna's wines are very ripe, fleshy and well-textured. The Rosso is splendidly expressive in the 2015 vintage and excellent to drink now, and her Brunello has the power and structure for long ageing.

Col di Lamo, Rosso di Montalcino, 2015, 13.5%

Bottle £18.95 Case with 10% off £204.66 Code CDL115

100% Sangiovese, aged in old vats, with even more punch than usual: first, an open perfume with cigarbox and cinnamon; then a lovely cooked strawberry and clove mouthful, with a little peppery spice and proper tannic support. Definitive mini-Brunello. Now-2022

"Some nuanced ruby colour. Light and rather delicate and flirtatious with some almost Nebbiolo-like tarriness on the end. Really good wine. Nicely balanced with some evolution. 16.5/20", Jancis Robinson, MW, jancisrobinson.com, 5th November 2018

Col di Lamo, Brunello di Montalcino, Italy, 2012, 14%

Bottle £34.00 Case with 10% off £367.20 Code CDL312

Brunello is aged in barrel for two years and a further two years in bottle before being released.

Dramatic aromatics: red fruits subtly spiced with nutmeg, cinnamon and tobacco. This vigorous, powerful wine builds beautifully on the palate. Good tannins there for keeping too. The 2013 vintage will follow at £35.50. Now-2025

FIORANO, COSSIGNANO

We started working with Paolo Beretta (formerly a dentist) and Paola Massi (a research pharmacologist) in 2015, with immediate success. Their wines exemplify perfectly the virtues of small-scale - they tend just 10 hectares of vines - organic cultivation. All exhibit an entrancing purity of fruit, and all are bottled with minimal sulphur levels. See also their delicious white Pecorino on p.2.

Paolo and Paola bought the farm in 1991, and consider their grass-covered vineyards, a beautiful amphitheatre, lie in a special spot: about 250-350 metres up on the eastern side of the Apennines, about 15 kms. from the Adriatic, surrounded by their own olive groves, on a mix of clay, limestone and sand. (Stunning B & B too - highly recommended).

Fiorano, Sangiovese, IGT Marche, 2017, 13%

Bottle £12.95 Case with 10% off £139.86 Code FI0117

The latest vintage of this Sangiovese is as delightful as ever, appealing to all who enjoy youthful and juicy reds. As ever, bright red cherries to the fore, ripe, perfumed and sappy. Pure and supple; a fast-disappearing bottle. Perfect with *salume*. Now-2020

Fiorano, Terre di Giobbe, Rosso Piceno Superiore DOC, 2015, 13.5%

Bottle £15.50 Case with 10% off £167.40 Code FI0315

80% Montepulciano and 20% Sangiovese, aged in old French oak barrels. Deeply hued. A big sweetly oaked wine, punchy and concentrated, all black fruit with balsamic, black chocolate and quinine accents. Drink with any roast or grilled red meat. Now-2022

REDS FROM THE SOUTH

Conviviale, Primitivo, IGT Salento, 2017, 14% [Screwcap]

Bottle £8.25 Case with 10% off £89.10 Code CNV117

From the huge Adria Vini enterprise, a hearty example of this gutsy grape of Croatian origin (there known as Tribidrag), genetically identical to Zinfandel. Bittersweet black fruit, generous, punchy and bold. Now-2020

ROCCA

Rocca is a family owned and named enterprise of considerable scale - based in Piedmont but owning a wide range of vineyards across the south of Italy. Their reds are deeply coloured, old fashioned and characterful, to be drunk with meaty pasta and hearty dishes.

Rocca, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, 2017, 12%

Bottle £8.50 Case with 10% off £91.80 Code ROD617

Solid deep garnet. Ripe and fleshy with plenty of substance. Spiced raspberries and plums. Good fresh finish. Perfect pasta wine. Now-2020

Rocca, Negroamaro, Salento, 2017, 13.5%

Bottle £9.95 Case with 10% off £107.46 Code ROD217

Well-made example of this masculine southern grape, hearty with some structure but also ready to drink. Deep, and lightly hazy. Lively cooked strawberry and black cherry core. Crowd-pleaser. Now-2020

FILADORO, LAPIO, IRPINIA

The vineyards of Irpinia lie across rolling hills at around 500 metres of altitude about 50 kms inland from Naples. The reds are mainly from Aglianico, a grape often engendering ageworthy wines of marked tannin and acidity. Giancarlo Ioanna of Filadoro is our man in the Campania: his reds, whilst showing real local typicity and guts, also benefit from well-managed tannins.

Filadoro, Aglianico, Irpinia DOC, 2012, 13%

Bottle £13.25 Case with 10% off £143.10 Code FIM612

100% Aglianico, and unoaked. Garnet hue. Aromas show some maturity: both cooked and dried brambly autumnal fruit. A gutsy, autumnal wine, textured and evincing plenty of ripe tannins, with savoury notes of leather and game around a blackcurrant and blackberry core. Very aromatic. Now-2020

Filadoro, Taurasi, DOCG, 2012, 14%

Bottle £22.50 Case with 10% off £243.00 Code FIM812

Taurasi is one of the historic reds of the south, a DOC since 1970. This is again 100% Aglianico, aged in 3 year old French barrels, and Giancarlo only releases it when he thinks it's a very good vintage. Very deep and youthful tone. High-toned aromas of ripe black fruit on the nose. Immediately very powerful and grippy, showing intense black fruit, not sweet, with hints of dried fruits and spice. This is an authentic, old-fashioned wine - call it the antithesis of new world Merlot! - a pair to really robust food (wild boar?) and a keeper. Now-2022 *Very limited stock*