

REGIONS OF THE MONTH



PUGLIA

Puglia, the heel and spur of the Italian boot, is rich in art and architecture, which reflect the many cultures that have dominated the region over the centuries. The Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Normans, Swabians, and Spaniards among others have all left their imprints there. The octagonal fortress in Castel del Monte was built by Emperor Frederick II in 1240. The towns of Otranto and Gallipoli evoke the Greeks. And much of Lecce is Baroque in style, having flourished in the 17th century. Alberobello is the capital of the “trulli,” which are whitewashed, circular buildings with conical roof tiles, and whose origins no one is certain of.

Known as Europe’s wine cellar, Puglia produces more grapes than any other region and normally surpasses Germany and all but six other nations. But it has sacrificed quality for quantity. Many of its wines are without distinction and are consumed locally or used for blending in the wines of other regions. But recently producers have been making good to excellent reds, whites, and rose’ from a range of grape varieties.

In the north, the terrain is hilly and the climate temperate. White varieties which dominate are Verdeca, Bianco d’Alessano, Malvasia, Tribbiano, and Bombino Bianco and in the Itria valley, Locorotondo and Martina Franca. Red wines are the native Uva di Troia and Bombino Nero, as well as Montepulciano and Sangiovese. The lading DOC zone of northern Pulia is Castel del Monte, which makes a fine rose and a full-bodied red. In much of the north, the emphasis is on red wines.

The traditional wines of Salento in the south are the powerful reds Negroamaro, Malvasia Nera, and Primitivo, related to California’s Zinfandel. Salice Salentino is the most prominent DOC zone in Salento and is noted for its rich red and for its rose, some of which ranks with Italy’s finest.

CAMPANIA

The capital of Campania, Naples was founded by the Greeks, enlarged by the Romans, and subsequently invaded by the Normans, Hohenstaufen, French, and Spanish among others. Established by the Greeks in the 11th Century BC, Naples was the earliest of a cluster of far flung settlements throughout southern Italy. Many important figures of the age, including Pythagoras, Archimedes, and Aeschylus lived in these settlements, and today some of the best ruins of the ancient Greek world can be found there. Along with mathematics, architecture, and drama, the ancient art of winemaking also flourished in the hills and valleys of the region as the cult of Dionysus spread. Aglianico and Greco, vines that the Greeks introduced, are still highly prized. The Greek historian Herodotus called this part of Italy Oenotria, the land of wine.

In the 16th Century, Sante Lancerio, the botler of Pope Paul III, raved about the wines of the Kingdom of Naples, and their reputation continued into the 19th century. But subsequently, viticulture went into decline for decades as growers left the land, and the majority of remaining producers ignored DOC regulations and instead chose to plant prolific vines rather than those that would produce premium grapes. In the last twenty years, producers have once again recognized the potential of southern Italy in general and have modernized their viticulture and winemaking techniques. Fiano di Avellino and Greco di Tufo are among Italy’s most distinguished white wines, while Taurasi from Aglianico has been called the “Barolo of the South” because of its aging ability. This is Campania’s only DOCG wine to date. Mastroberardino is a distinguished winery in the region as is Feudi di San Gregorio, Villa Matilde, Mustilli, and Casa d’Ambra.

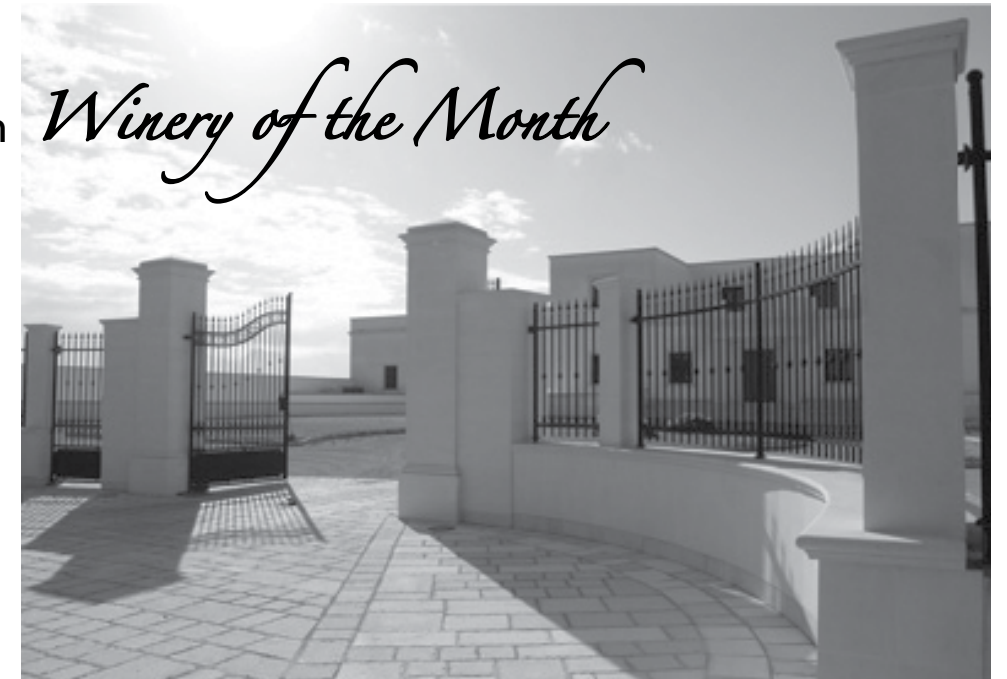


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Italian

Winery of the Month



Cantele Winery

Drinking Wine with Pliny the Elder

Cantele

Towards the end of the 1970s, Giovanni Batista Cantele and his wife Teresa Manara decided to transfer 30 years of experience in the wine world of northern Italy to the region of Puglia, and the Salento zone in particular, where they saw tremendous potential. The area is home to some of the most fascinating expressions of Greek varieties, which have grown there for 28 centuries. The Salento peninsula is the southernmost point of Puglia and extends for over one hundred kilometers between the Adriatic and Ionian seas. Its natural border to the north is formed by the Murge hills, which reach four hundred meters above sea level before descending gradually to meet the broad Salento plain.

During the 1980s, sons Augusto and Domenico took over from their parents. From the beginning, the objective was to develop the potential of the local, historic varieties of Primitivo and Negroamaro and to add the international varieties of Chardonnay, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

The Amativo, a blend of Primitivo and Negroamaro is the winery’s flagship wine and has won wine guide Gambero Rosso’s highest *Tre Bicchieri* award twice in the last seven years. The family has planted 30 hectares of vineyard and constructed a new winery complex in Guagnano that holds 800 French oak barrels where the wines mature. Gianni, Paolo, Umberto, and Luisa, the first generation of the Cantele family to be born in Salento, now participate in the business and are driven by the same love and respect for the land, which first hosted and finally adopted their fathers.

Terre del Principe

Located in Campania north of Caserta, Terre del Principe was founded by Peppe Mancini, a lawyer by profession but winemaker by passion, who began his enological adventure in the early 1990s when he accidentally discovered exemplars of three ancient grape varieties that had been com-

See WINERIES next page



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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

Cantele

2006 Salice Salentino Riserva

The name of the wine, Salice Salentino, is that of a small community located to the north of Lecce in an area of vineyards and olive groves with scattered farmhouses and ancient watchtowers. A blend of 85% Negroamaro and 15% Malvasia Nera, this Riserva is full bodied with a deep ruby color and a complex bouquet. The flavor of ripe fruit is accented by notes of vanilla from six months of aging in French and American oak barrels. Serve at room temperature with grilled vegetables and red meats.

Cantele

2009 Negroamaro Rosato

Dry and crisp on the palate, this Cantele Rosato is 100% Negroamaro. The wine has intense fruity aromas with hints of strawberry and cherry and is a perfect warm-weather wine, suitable for appetizers, entrée salads with grilled chicken and salmon, and pasta primavera. Rosé is made like white wine, except that with white wine, the juice is immediately separated from the grape skins, which would otherwise give it color. But for rosé, the juice is left for a short time with the skins, just long enough to give it a tinge of color before fermentation. Red wine is fermented with the skins, which give it its dark hue. Serve rosé chilled like white wine.



WINERIES from cover

pletely forgotten and abandoned in the area north of Caserta, where Mancini grew up. "My grandfather always talked about Pallagrello Bianco and Nero and Casavecchia, but no one was making wine from them anymore. We thought they had ceased to exist," said Mancini. But Mancini stumbled upon a few plants well over 100 years old that local farmers had maintained for family con-

WINEMAKER SERIES

Cantele

2005 Amativo

This delicious wine is 40% Negroamaro and 60% Primitivo, which is the same grape variety as Zinfandel. The name *Amativo* was coined by Giovanni Cantele with the idea that if the wine was to be a blend of the most historic grapes of Puglia, the name should also be a blend. The result was *ama* from Negroamaro and *tivo* from Primitivo. Aged for 10 months in French oak barrels, the wine has intense ruby color with mature red fruit and spice aromas, followed by a hint of vanilla. On the palate, the Amativo is rich and warm with finely textured tannins that contribute to a lively finish.

Cantele

2004 Varius

Varius, Latin for "diverse," is Cantele's tribute to the terroir of the Salento peninsula, in particular for its ability to express the highest quality via a whole range of grape varieties. In fact, the area manages to infuse both indigenous and international varieties with its own unique character. The 2004 Varius is ruby red with hints of orange, and its perfume begins delicately but gradually reaches an intensity of fruit, toasted almonds, and black pepper. Serve at cool room temperature.

sumption. With the help of Luigi Moio, a young professor of enology at the University of Naples, who studied and experimented with the grapes and later became the estate's enologist, Peppe Mancini developed Terre del Principe and cultivates 12 hectares of vines at 750 feet above sea level, focusing solely on these three ancient varieties. No chemical products are ever employed in the vineyards although they are not certified.

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

Terre del Principe

2006 Centomoggia

Some of the Casavecchia grapes used to make this wine are sourced from an old vineyard in Castel Sasso with vines from 80 to 100 years old. Very little is known about this grape variety, apart from a legend developed around an old vine, which local farmers said was 40 cm. in diameter and from which they took cuttings and grew new plants. The name *Casavecchia* or "old house" refers to the abandoned farmhouse where the mythical vine grew. Scholars speculate that the vine, whose original name has been lost, was the basis for *Trebulanum*, which Pliny the Elder described in his monumental work, *Naturalis Historia*, as one of the best Italic wines to come from the area. Deep ruby red in color, the nose shows intense wild and gamey notes and then develops into a succession of aromas ranging from blackberries, blueberries, and sweet spices such as cloves and liquorice. Aged for 12 months in French oak barrels, Centomoggia is rich and full on the palate and has beautiful tannin texture and a long finish. Peppe Mancini, responsible for rescuing the varietal from extinction, presents us with this link to the far distant past as are the rest of Italy's ancient grape varieties.

Terre del Principe

2005 Vigna Piancastelli

The Vigna Piancastelli is a blend of 30% Casavecchia and 70% Pallagrello Nero, which Peppe Mancini and winemaker Luigi Moio crafted as a *meditation* wine, allowing 10% of the grapes to slightly dry on the vine to create a full and richly elegant wine, which can be appreciated even served with aged cheeses, nuts, and dried fruit in the company of dear friends instead of a with a meal although the wine is certainly appropriate for that purpose too. Each year, the wine is given a new label, created by different local painters. Deep ruby red in color, the nose presents aromas of prunes, blackberries, chocolate, and black pepper, enhanced in their complexity by hints of coriander, spice, and earthiness. The Vigna Piancastelli was aged for 12 months in French oak barrels and an additional 24 months in bottle before release and shows mouth-filling fleshiness, balsamic notes, and fine tannin texture and a long finish. The wine pairs beautifully with grilled or roasted meat and game.

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