

REGION OF THE MONTH



VENETO



Venezia, a city built into the sea, is like no other, haunted by the princes and poets of its noble past and by centuries of tourists. The cities of Padova, Vicenza, and Verona, originally frontier posts on the Roman trade route between Venezia and Genova, grew into Renaissance splendor and are marvels in their own right. In the 16th century, the region's great architect Andrea Palladio worked throughout the area and his buildings are everywhere, in the cities and in the countryside. Nature exhibits its own marvels in the region, the spectacular Dolomite mountains in the north, the rolling Euganean hills in the south, vast Lake Garda, Italy's largest lake, on the eastern border, and to the west, the Adriatic with its beaches and ports.

Today, Veneto is a thriving agricultural center, a lush land of vines, ranking third after Apulia and Sicily in wine volume but the first with classified DOC wines. There are three general areas of premium production: the west-

ern province of Verona in the hills between Lake Garda and the town of Soave, the central hills in the provinces of Vicenza, Padova, and Treviso, and the eastern plains of the Piave and Tagliamento river basins along the Adriatic coast northeast of Venezia.

Verona is the leader in classified DOC wines and the site of Vinitaly, the largest wine trade fair in the world. A major part of the DOC wines in the region are Soave, Bardolino, and Valpolicella, a blend of Corvina, Rondinella, and Molinara. When young, Valpolicella is a full, fruity red, but when the grapes are partly dried, they are made into

Amarone, one of Italy's most noble wines. Bardolino is made from the same grapes as Valpolicella but is a lighter version. Similar to Soave, Bianco di Custoza is another DOC white as is Lessini Durello, a steely dry wine, usually sparkling.

The central hills produce whites similar to Soave as well as Tocai, the Pinots, Merlot, and Cabernet. Prosecco, a dry to lightly sweet white, is produced in the area as is the renowned Venegazzu, both usually sparkling.

The eastern plains have been dominated by Merlot and Cabernet Franc for decades, but the local red Raboso and white Verduzzo still have admirers. Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon, and Chardonnay are also gaining ground. ■

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YOUR ACCESS TO OUTSTANDING WINES FROM CALIFORNIA AND ITALY

*Italian Wineries of the Month*



Armani Winery

**Paggio**

After World War II, the Italian government encouraged small growers throughout Italy to form cooperatives and share a single winemaking facility and business strategy. Small farmers who had tiny parcels between .5 hectares and eight pooled their resources and became financially viable businesses. Some of these Cantine Sociali have produced highly acclaimed wines. One of the best of these consortiums is the Vitecoltori Alto Adige, a group of 15 small vineyards on both sides of the border between eastern Veneto and Trentino on the hilly slopes east of Lago di Garda. The group produces the classic white wines of the area, such as Pinot Grigio, Muller Thurgau, Traminer, and Sylvaner, and the red wines, Pinot Nero, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Marzemino.

**Nicolis**

Nicolis is located in Veneto in the historic Valpolicella area, whose four distinctive valleys extend to the northwest of Verona. The warm breezes from Lago di Garda blow through these valleys and meet with the cool air from the Lessini Mountains, creating perfect microclimates for grapes, cherries, and olives. For generations, the Nicolis family has been involved with cultivating vines and winemaking in the area. The family owns 20 hectares in the Valpolicella Classico zone and another 15 hectares in the Bardolino Classico zone. Today, the winery is run by three Nicolis brothers, Giancarlo, who is the viticulturist, Giuseppe the enologist, and Massimo who handles marketing.

**Vignalta**

Vignalta is located in the Colli Euganei area of Veneto. Just southwest of Padua and Venice, the area centers around the mineral bath towns of Abano Terme and Montegrosso Terme. Lucio Gomiero and Franco Zanovello, trained as architect and engineer respectively, joined forces to create their estate in the early 1980s. Calling their winery Vignalta, in English "the highlands," they bottled their first harvest in 1986. Their families had long grown French wine varieties brought to the region in the 19th century, and Gomiero and Zanovonello have in turn developed winemaking facilities and techniques to produce world-class wines from these grapes.

**Armani**

In 1603, Domenico Armani developed his vineyards in Val Lagarina, a sub zone of the Veneto region's Valdadige on the border of Veneto and Trentino. Since then, successive generations have tended the vines and made wine. Albino Armani is the present owner of the estate, which is now 220 hectares. The blue line on the label symbolizes the course of the river Etsch that runs through the property. Albino and his father have both made a special contribution to the family legacy by reviving the Foja Tonda grape variety, one of the oldest known indigenous winegrapes in Italy.



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Anna Maria Knapp, Owner  
75 Pelican Way G1  
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February 2004

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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES



Paggio Winery

**Paggio Winery  
2002 Pinot Grigio**

Paggio 2002 Pinot Grigio is 100% Pinot Grigio from the Viticoltori Alto Adige vineyards on the Veneto side of the border with Trentino in the Valdadige zone. This superb wine is full bodied and full flavored with an aroma of flowers and the taste of baked apples, cinnamon, and spice. The wine is vibrant and well balanced with crisp acidity and a clean finish. Serve chilled with hors d'oeuvres, first courses, and main courses of fish, and poultry.



**Paggio Winery  
2000 Merlot**

This wine is 100% Merlot from vineyards in the Colli Ugani zone. With intense Merlot aromas and flavors, the wine is balanced with soft tannins, acid, and delicious berry fruit flavors. This wine is versatile and would beautifully complement the main course on this month's menu of pasta (penne) with a sauce of crumbled Italian sausage and fennel seeds

WINEMAKER SERIES

**Armani Winery  
2001 Foja Tonda**

This wine is a blend of grapes, most of which is Foja Tonda, an ancient grape variety from the Valdadige area. Albino's father Antonio describes the wine as "full and deep in color with a lively tickle in the nose, clean with the smell of fruit, intense, rich with tannins and a touch of plum." Its deep spicy flavors are reminiscent of the wines of the Rhone region of France. The wine was aged in French oak barrels for one year and then for six months in bottle before release from the winery. Serve at cool room temperature.



**Armani Winery  
1998 Corvara**

This wine is a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Corvina, and 20% Merlot from estate vineyards. Deep ruby red in color, the bouquet is full, warm, and rich with fruit and spicy notes. On the palate, the wine has dark berry flavors with chocolate on the finish. The wine was aged in French oak barrels for two years and for an additional year in bottle before release from the winery. Serve at cool room temperature with grilled or roasted meats and pastas with savory sauces.

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES



Vignalta Winery

**Vignalta Winery  
2000 Colli Euganei Gemola**

This wine is a blend of 75% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Franc from a single estate vineyard on the slopes of Mt. Gemola in the Colli Euganie zone. The winery made just 300 cases of this wine, which has repeatedly won the prestigious "Tre Bicchieri" award from the Gambero Rosso guide. Aged for two years in French and American oak barrels, Gambero Rosso describes this wine as follows: "Vignalta confirmed its leading position in the Colli Euganei with a phenomenal Gemola.... It has a beautiful dense ruby red colour. The nose is spicy and balsamic with clearly defined cherry fruit subtly surrounded by hints of hay, then shows concentrated, rich and quite long on the palate."



Nicolis Winery

**Nicolis Winery  
1998 Amarone Ambrosan**

This wine is also a winner of the Gambero Rosso "Tre Bicchieri" award. A classic blend of 70% Corvina, 20% Rondinella, and 10% Croatina, the grapes are harvested in late September and placed on straw mats in a well ventilated room to dry until January, at which time they are pressed and fermented into the noble Amarone wine. A princely full-bodied, elegant wine with intense garnet red color, the wine is dry, generous, and robust but delicate with vanilla hints. The perfume is a compound of flowers, wood, and leather. Serve at room temperature with game, roasts, and full-flavored cheeses.

PICK & CHOOSE

JUST RED? JUST WHITE?  
JUST CALIFORNIAN?  
JUST ITALIAN?  
HOW ABOUT A COMBINATION?

CALIFORNIA WINES

Artisan Series:  
\$29.50/month, a red and a white  
Winemaker Series:  
\$59.50/month, 2 reserve reds  
Artisan red-Winemaker red:  
\$46/month

ITALIAN WINES

Artisan Series:  
\$32/month, a red and a white  
Winemaker Series:  
\$62/month, 2 reserve reds  
Collector Series:  
\$112/month, 2 collectable reds  
Artisan red-Winemaker red:  
\$48/month  
Winemaker red-Collector red:  
\$87/month

CALIFORNIA-ITALIAN COMBINATIONS

CA Artisan red-IT Artisan red:  
\$33/month  
CA Artisan white-IT Artisan white:  
\$29.50/month  
CA Winemaker-IT Winemaker:  
\$62/month  
Alternate CA & IT Artisan Series:  
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