

REGIONS OF THE MONTH



LE MARCHE

Le Marche is a remote area between the Adriatic Sea and the Apennine mountains, a quiet region, whose inhabitants drink more wine per capita and live longer than other Italians. Its pre-Christian inhabitants were the Piceni, who were assimilated by the Romans, and its coastal capital Ancona was established by the Greeks. In the Middle Ages, the region marked the southern boundary of the Holy Roman Empire, from which it got its name, "Le Marche" or "boundary."

In the 15th century, Urbino became one of the leading cultural centers of Europe, and its Palazzo Ducale is one of Italy's most beautiful Renaissance palaces. Ascoli Piceno is almost as extraordinary with its Piazza del Popolo. But the smaller towns of San Leo and Urbina are also remarkable medieval monuments. Visitors also come to Le Marche for its beaches on the coast and for its skiing on the peaks of Monti Sibillini.

The Castelli di Jesi DOC zone in the hills west of Ancona is the home of Verdicchio, which has been dramatically increasing in quality in the last ten years, so much so that many now consider it central Italy's best wine for fish, but Verdicchio should not be confused with the unrelated Verdeca, Verdona, Verdello, or Verduzzo, whose names all

refer to their green skins. Verdicchio di Matilica is grown at a higher altitude and can have even more intense flavors. The wines from both DOC zones also make fine sparkling wine. Other whites such as Bianchello del Metauro and Falerio dei Colli are also good with seafood.

The red wines of Le Marche are based mainly on Sangiovese or Montepulciano, the most important Rosso Piceno, is mostly Sangiovese. Rosso Conero is based on Montepulciano.

ABRUZZO

Abruzzo has its fair share of art and architecture throughout its hill towns and mountain villages, but the Apennine mountains dominate the region, taking up two thirds of the area and attracting hikers and skiers to resorts. The vast Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo is one of Europe's most important nature preserves.

Decendants of various hill tribes, who settled the region in the Bronze Age, the Abruzzesi were difficult to unite, although the Greeks, Romans Swabians, Aragonese, and Bourbons all tried. Before the advent of modern transportation, the inhabitants were isolated in hill towns and villages clinging to the sides of mountains. After the 12th century, the Abruzzesi were ruled by a succession of dynasties based in Naples to the south. As a result, their diet, speech, and customs are more similar to their southern neighbors than to their neighbors to the north or west.

See **ABRUZZO** inside

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Wineries of the Month



Drink well, live long in Le Marche

Fattoria Laila

Located in the Marche region, overlooking the Adriatic Sea on the east coast of Italy, Fattoria Laila in Corinaldo lies in the rolling hills 40 km northwest of Ancona. In 1990, Andrea Croceni took over this 30-hectare estate, preserving many of the traditional methods of farming but introducing new technology in the cellar and improved plantings in the vineyard, to bring a centuries old estate up to date. Twenty-three hectares of the indigenous varieties Verdicchio and Montepulciano as well as Sangiovese are cultivated under the guidance of Lorenzo Landi, who is the winemaker and has helped Andrea Croceni focus on a style unique to this winery.

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Nicodemi

Located in the Abruzzo region, this 38-hectare estate is at the center of the new DOCG zone, Colline Teramane, a subzone of Montepulciano

d'Abruzzo. At a lower altitude and closer to the seaside than the rest of the Montepulciano d'Abruzzo zone, Colline Teramane was created in 2003 because of its superior climate. Founded by Bruno Nicodemi, the property has now passed to the second generation, sister and brother Elena and Alessandro Nicodemi, who are exploring the potential of this area. Their consulting winemaker is Paolo Caciorgna.

Cataldi Madonna

The estate is located in Abruzzo in the village Ofena near L'Aquila. Baron Luigi Cataldi Madonna founded the winery in 1925, and son Antonio expanded it in 1968. Since then, another son Luigi has managed the winery and is now the winemaker. The vineyards are located on alluvial hilltops over 1,450 feet above sea level in an area well known for its abundant sunshine and considerable changes in temperature. Vineyards span See **CATALDI**, inside

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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

Laila Winery
2001 Rosso Piceno

Rosso Piceno is the name of one of the zones, where the Montepulciano grape is grown in the Marche region, not to be confused with the Montepulciano zone in Toscana, where Vino Nobile is produced from Sangiovese. This delicious wine is mostly Montepulciano with a small amount of Sangiovese from estate vineyards. Aged for eight months in barrel and four months in bottle before release from the winery, the wine has a fruity bouquet, soft, elegant tannins, and delicious fruit flavors with a mild acidity in the balance. Serve at room temperature with roasted meats and fish and pasta with flavorful tomato sauces.



Andrea Crocenzi, owner and winemaker at Fattoria Laila

Laila Winery
2003 Verdicchio

Aged for five months in barrique and two months in bottle, this wine is 100% Verdicchio from estate vineyards. Notes of ripe grapefruit lead into a rich mid-palate and sustained acidity, all of which give this wine a balance that complements food in a big way. Serve chilled as an aperitif and with various fish and Mediterranean white meat dishes.

WINEMAKER SERIES

Laila Winery
2002 Lailum Rosso

From estate vineyards, this wine is 100% Montepulciano with marked concentration, the result of painstakingly low yields in the vineyard. Aged for 16 months in barrel and four months in bottle before release from the winery, the wine is deeply colored with notes of blackberry jam on the palate, ripe, round tannins, and a spicy finish. Serve at cool room temperature with roasted meats and pasta with flavorful tomato sauces.



Nicodemi Winery
2002 Notari Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

This wine is 100% Montepulciano d'Abruzzo with 1/3 of the grapes from the estate Neromoro vineyard in the new Colline Teramane DOCG subzone of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. The wine was aged for 14 months in barrique and six months in bottle before release from the winery. With distinct aromas of peaches and coffee, the wine exhibits chocolate and dark berry flavors on the palate. Serve at cool room temperature.

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

Nicodemi Winery
2001 Neromoro

This wine is 100% Montepulciano from 60 year-old vines on the estate Neromoro vineyard, located in the new Colline Teramane DOCG subzone of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. Aged for 14 months in barrel and 12 months in bottle before release from the winery, the wine shows aromas of dark berries with dark chocolate and roasted coffee on the palate. The winery produced just 500 cases of this wine. Serve at cool room temperature.

Cataldi Madonna Winery
2000 Toni Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

Aged for three years in French oak barrels, this wine is 100% Montepulciano d'Abruzzo from the estate Toni vineyard at 450 meters above sea level. With a deep ruby hue, the 2000 Toni offers aromas of ripe fruit, roasting coffee, and chocolate enriched by hints of spice. The palate perfectly mirrors the bouquet and vaunts an admirable fusion of woody tones with sour cherry, black currant, and licorice lingering on the finish.

CATALDI, from cover

about 18.5 hectares, and farming methods vary, depending on the location and exposure. In addition to the traditional grape varieties of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo and Trebbiano d'Abruzzo, plantings include Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon. But in an effort to reestablish the complexity of traditional viticulture in Abruzzo, which for a long time had been limited to Montepulciano d'Abruzzo and Trebbiano d'Abruzzo, the winery has also recovered some indigenous varieties like Malvasia, Pecorino, Falanghina, and Fiano. The winery is located near the vineyard, and the aging cellars are located in the village under the family's baroque 17th century home.

ABRUZZO from back

The hills in the region are highly favorable for grapevines. The two classified wines are Trebbiano and Montepulciano, not to be confused with the town of that name in Toscana, where Vino Nobile is made. When grown on the lower hills, Montepulciano has an irresistible character, full bodied and smooth with the capacity to age. In the higher areas, the vines produce a lighter version, Ceraruolo, which is a sturdy, cherry-colored rose. The white Trebbiano d'Abruzzo has been described as a phantom vine, since its origins are unclear. At its best, the wine can develop a Burgundy-like complexity after four or five years of aging.

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JUST CALIFORNIAN?
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