

# THE WINES OF ITALY



*In Italy we have over 2,400 different wines - both the largest wine production and greatest spectrum of diversity in the world. France classified its growths into a hierarchy of crus over a century ago, and did so with remarkable talent and exactitude. We still have not done so, and have only our D.O.C. – our own “appellation d’origine” - or our stricter D.O.C.G. to guide the wine world towards the appreciation of our great wines. It is patently not enough. In fact, the D.O.C.G. alone generates confusion; for example, one may taste Chianti wines of such boggling diversity that one wonders at the significance of an appellation that groups them all together. Moreover, more often than not, the laws governing the production of D.O.C. and D.O.C.G. wines hinder rather than help the imaginative and talented producer. Thus, many quality-oriented wine-makers have started making truly remarkable wines disregarding the D.O.C. laws. But alongside these we also have unscrupulous estates who, wanting to ride this highly esteemed “nouvelle vague”, have given us uninteresting wines at best. Furthermore, non-D.O.C. wines can only adopt proprietary names which are too often unknown. Thus, to the wine-lover both at home and abroad, the picture becomes all the more complex and nebulous. I should like to dissipate some of this confusion, to offer a direction. I am only interested in wines of outstanding quality. This does not mean only in the greatest wines, but also in “petits vins” of unusual character – pure wines that in their own class, and in their own right, are the best that one can possibly find. For, just as one would not drink great Bordeaux or top flight Burgundy daily, so one would not drink Barolo or Brunello on an everyday basis - while one ought to still demand and obtain very good wine with every meal.*

*To find a great wine one must first find a great cru. And although the Italian government has not classified them in any comprehensive way, the hundreds of years of trial and error in our vineyards, and the results that unequivocally followed, have. With a careful but also critical eye towards tradition and the experience that grows out of tasting and research, I have made my own classifications. My selections offer them to you.*

*Secondly - as a wine does not make itself - one must find a great wine-maker. And I pride myself on my collaborator-friends, whom I repute to be among the finest in Italy. They are the living matter of my selections.*

*Finally, perhaps my greatest pride has been the resuscitation of once great and famous appellations and their wines. To return dignity and pride to winemaking in Frascati, Valpolicella, Soave and Verdicchio; to help produce extremely fine wine where the will to do so had been systematically crushed by the mega-coop and industrial mentality, and the legislature that fostered and protected it. Please give these wines a try, and I’m sure you will be captured by the self-same excitement and pleasure that captivated the multitudes that once made these wines deservedly among the most famous in the world.* ♦