



# CHEVALLER

ITALY  
LESS  
TRAVELED

JULY 2020





## ITALY LESS TRAVELED

**M**UCH INK has been spilled about the great wines of Italy. Entire books have been written about her two superstars, Barolo and Brunello; other appellations like Barbaresco, Chianti, and Amarone are right behind, logically sharing representation in the annals of Italy's vinous hall of fame. For the thirsty traveler, it is a similar story: Tuscany and Piedmont are obvious destinations, featuring thriving wine scenes complete with fine dining, luxury hotels, guided winery tours, and scenic vineyard *aperitivi*.

But far away from the fancy villas and swanky tasting rooms lies a wholly different side of Italian wine. This road less traveled will take you to a remote cellar lost in the countryside, where a wife and husband humbly produce a few barrels from the small vineyard around their home. It leads to a tiny village lost in time, home to an ancient wine tradition centered around a rare grape variety you have never heard of, and struggle to pronounce.

You may end up in the heart of an appellation whose existence you previously ignored, its wines paired with a dish completely foreign to you, surrounded by people thrilled yet surprised by the arrival of an overseas visitor.

The discoveries awaiting you include delightful quaffers far more intriguing and characterful than your average Pinot Grigio, and just as capable of quenching thirst—I Pàstini's ambrosial Minutolo represents one such eye-opening experience. Yet they also encompass grandiose red wines with the structure, complexity, and finesse to match the most celebrated bottlings from Piedmont or Tuscany; Montisci's epic Cannonau from Sardinia's bucolic mountaintops is as jaw-dropping as it is mouthwatering.

Ultimately, we have found that the kingdom of great Italian wines extends far beyond the tried-and-true classics. We hope you agree upon tasting these whites and reds—and a unique *rosato*—that these discoveries from Italy's less-traveled wine road are well worthy of a few words on these pages, and some hearty pours into your glass.

—ANTHONY LYNCH



## 2018 VALLE D'ITRIA "RAMPONE"

◆ I PÀSTINI \$24

PUGLIA IS THE LIKELY BIRTHPLACE of Italian wine, the vine originally having traveled here via Greek settlers who crossed the Adriatic channel. Today, out of Italy's twenty regions, it is the second-largest producer of wine, most of which is red. I Pàstini is a small, family-run winery in the Valle d'Itria in eastern central Puglia. Gianni Carparelli and his father, Donato, organically grow grapes on a limestone plateau co-planted to ancient olive groves overlooking the Adriatic Sea. Roughly between the coastal towns of Brindisi and Bari, the Valle d'Itria is perfectly suited to producing dry, aromatic white wines.

The magic of Rampone is the result of the intriguing Minutolo grape, a Pugliese originality, isolated and propagated by I Pàstini. It is distinguished by an incredible perfume of sweet lime blossoms as well as a gorgeous palate that balances savory, salty, floral, and fruit elements. Try it with simply prepared white fish, with great olive oil, wild herbs, and olives.



## 2018 SÜDTIROL EISACKTALER KERNER

◆ MANNI NÖSSING \$32

JUST SOUTH of the Austrian border, Manni Nössing's terraced vineyards blend in seamlessly with the picturesque scenery of Alto Adige, producing chiseled white wines that mirror the vertical, snowcapped Dolomites. In this alpine climate, the combination of high altitude with Manni's staunch perfectionism creates wines of true class characterized by exquisite aromatics and mouthwatering acidity. From a place that seems more Germanic than Latin, his wines possess a singularity that puts them in a class of their own.



The white Kerner grape has been around since 1929, when a German grape breeder created a cross between Riesling and Schiava. Today, it grows in Germany and Austria but truly thrives in the Valle Isarco, Alto Adige's northernmost subregion. Nössing's rendition is pure as a breath of brisk mountain air, with a crystalline stoniness recalling one thousand jagged Dolomite peaks.



## 2018 ETNA ROSATO “SUPERLUNA”

◆ MASSERIA DEL PINO \$55

YOU WON'T ENCOUNTER many rosés made like this one, literally born from the ashes high on the northern face of Mount Etna. Cesare Fulvio and Federica Turillo, proprietors of Masseria del Pino, produce a few barrels each year inside a reconditioned *palmento*—one of the ancient little farmhouses that dot Sicily's rural landscape, where growers once brought their grapes to be pressed. Their method of making rosé, explains Federica, much resembles what one might have encountered here hundreds of years ago:

We destem the grapes and leave them to macerate in wooden crates for about an hour—the time to eat lunch—and then press off the juice in our basket press. The must goes into *tonneaux* and fermentation begins naturally.

Recalling a pulp of fresh pomegranate and stone, this unfiltered rosé evolves and opens up considerably in the glass over the course of a few hours, so we recommend savoring it slowly, as challenging as that may be!



## 2015 ROSSESE DI DOLCEACQUA SUPERIORE “LUVAIRA”

◆ TENUTA ANFOSSO \$42

ANFOSSO'S VINEYARDS dramatically cling to sheer terraced mountainsides just inland of the Mediterranean coast, near Italy's border with France. The wines of Dolceacqua enjoyed centuries of prestige until the terraces were largely abandoned over the course of the twentieth century. Today, Alessandro Anfosso is among the few remaining growers here who honor traditional ways of working, farming his ancient vines by hand, without herbicides, and bottling his wines unfiltered only when they are ready.

The Rossese grape thrives in this extreme *terroir*, drawing structure, depth, and layers of singular aromas that make this Liguria's undisputed *grand cru* for reds. The ancient Luvaira vineyard (planted in 1905) yields a robust expression of this historic appellation, rife with suggestions of stones, herbs, leather, and game. You'll find savory, almost meaty aromatics rounded out by the sweet, earthy fragrance of faded rose petals—perfumed, silky deliciousness with hundreds of years of history!





## 2018 TERRE SICILIANE NERELLO MASCALESE “LATO SUD”

◆ GROTTAFUMATA \$45

THE HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM of Grottafumata began with a focus on olive oil, producing one of Sicily’s best examples from indigenous olive varieties planted on Mount Etna’s western face. More recently, the couple has applied their craft to the vine, making a white and a red sourced from three stunning vineyards on the volcano’s southern and eastern faces. They work incredibly old vines planted in sandy decomposed lava rock, using organic viticulture and low-intervention winemaking to create wines of a rare purity and authenticity.

This *rosso* showcases the more elegant side of Etna, with low alcohol and vivid flavors of red fruit. The hints of cracked pepper, smoke, and sour cherry come into perfect focus with a nice chill, making this vibrant red the ideal substitute for a *cru* Beaujolais when you’re leaning more Italian.

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## 2017 CANNONAU DI SARDEGNA “BARROSU”

◆ GIOVANNI MONTISCI \$60

MAMOIADA MAY NOT BE a household name in the way that Châteauneuf-du-Pape, for example, is synonymous with world-class Grenache. And yet, with vineyards that reach 2,500 feet above sea level, this tiny village in the heart of central Sardinia’s highlands is emerging as a top site for Cannonau, as the grape is known locally. The mountain *terroir* is unparalleled in Sardinia or elsewhere, endowing Cannonau with extraordinary concentration while preserving precious freshness that allows its wines to elegantly toe a delicate balance.

Giovanni Montisci, who farms just two hectares of stubby old vines, remembers the traditional wines of Mamoiada—sweet, alcoholic, rustic brews served with the region’s similarly rustic cuisine—and refined things a bit, taking inspiration from Quintarelli, Rayas, and the best in Barolo. He crafts dry Cannonaus of a regal caliber that channel these legends through the lens of Mamoiada’s high-elevation, sandy granite soils. The sweetly perfumed nose of rose petals, wild strawberry, and juniper prefaces this deep and powerful, yet exquisitely finessed Cannonau, definitively putting Mamoiada on the map for lovers of Grenache and great Italian reds in general.







2018 Valle d'Itria "Rampone" <i>I Pàstini</i> PUGLIA	Minutolo	Vines planted in 2001 Red clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Sage, lime blossoms, preserved lemon, yellow peach Crisp, savory, saline, medium- bodied	Drink now
2018 Südtirol Eisacktaler Kerner <i>Manni Nössing</i> ALTO ADIGE	Kerner	5- to 15-year-old vines Sandy, granite	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Decant optional	Tropical fruit, citrus, fresh herbs, flowers Crystalline, precise, mineral, fleshy	Drink now through 2025
2018 Etna Rosato "SuperLuna" <i>Masseria del Pino</i> SICILY	90% Nerello Mascalese, 10% Nerello Cappuccio	120-year-old vines Volcanic	Serve <i>cool</i> 50–54° F Decant optional	Pomegranate, cherry, wildflowers Stony, mouthwatering, round, pulpy	Drink now
2015 Rossese di Dolceacqua Superiore "Luvaira" <i>Tenuta Anfosso</i> LIGURIA	Rossese	Vines planted in 1905 Flysch	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Earth, spices, leather, game Stony, broad, generous, focused	Drink now through 2025
2018 Terre Siciliane Nerello Mascalese "Lato Sud" <i>Grottafumata</i> SICILY	90% Nerello Mascalese, 10% Nerello Cappuccio	40- to 100-year-old vines Volcanic	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 56–60° F Decant optional	Sour cherry, smoke, black pepper Lean, bright, crunchy, juicy	Drink now
2017 Cannonau di Sardegna "Barrosu" <i>Giovanni Montisci</i> SARDINIA	Cannonau	60-year-old vines Sandy granite, clay	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F Decant recommended	Wild strawberry, juniper, licorice, Mediterranean herbs Rich, deep, silky, delicate	Drink now through 2030

front cover: Ancient olive tree in Puglia. © GAIL SKOFF  
gatefold: Old vines in volcanic soil on Etna. © DIXON BROOKE  
far left: Manni Nössing and his cellar hand.  
© PETER LORENZ  
near left: In Montisci's cellar. © GAIL SKOFF

back cover, top: The perfect SuperLuna pairing at Cave Ox,  
Etna's celebrated watering hole. © SANDRO DIBELLA  
back cover, bottom: Roast *maialetto* (suckling pig) at casa Montisci.  
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“Our rosé recalls the complexity of a red wine and a white wine at the same time, so we prefer to enjoy it with dishes in which we find a complexity of different flavors. For example, at home we drink it with traditional Sicilian dishes like *caponata*, cooked fish, or *crudo*. We asked some of our restaurant clients how they pair our rosé, and they told us they often recommend SuperLuna with couscous with vegetables, meat or fish (even squid ink), or with dishes that use squash blossoms, mozzarella, cured anchovies, lemon zest, and extra virgin olive oil.” —FEDERICA TURILLO, MASSERIA DEL PINO



Sardinia may be surrounded by water, but in Mamoiada, the landscape is rugged and mountainous, with cold, harsh winters. The local cuisine reflects this, and specialties are from the land rather than the sea. The rich, powerful wines produced here perfectly complement this hearty, rustic, earthy cuisine. Featured dishes of the area include *culurgiones*—large ravioli stuffed with potatoes, pecorino, and wild herbs—as well as pastas with porcini mushrooms and wild game, which can be found in abundance. Giovanni Montisci’s cellar is dotted with hanging legs of prosciutto, to be sliced up and served during a tasting; the luckiest guests will have the fortune of enjoying his wife’s crispy, tender roast suckling pig—a match made in heaven with an exquisite Cannonau.