

# WINE AND DINE

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## Say Ciao to Summer with Italian Wines

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September is a month that brings mixed feelings. We are sad to say good-bye to Summer, sorry that our summer vacation has ended and some are not overly excited about the start of another school year. On the other hand, the weather cools down, the Fall leaves start turning beautiful colors and football season kicks-off! Mixed feelings indeed.

Americans like to celebrate Autumn and September is a nice time to have a party. You can toast your blessings from the past Summer and toast to new adventures in the Fall. As the Italian word Ciao means both hello and good-bye, it seems appropriate to toast September with something Italian. As it's still warm outside, I'm going with Italian whites. Let's check them out.

### Italian Wines

The Greeks first cultivated grapes for wine production in Italy around 800 BC. During the Roman Empire, wine production flourished and was a major source of trade during Rome's reign. Today, Italy is a major wine producer and leading exporter of wine world-wide.

Italy is considered to be one of the most complex and challenging countries to master their extensive wine assortment. Italy's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry acknowledges that today, over 850 grape varietals are used to make Italian wines. Most are small production wines that never leave the country. Because of the vast numbers of wines produced, Italy saw the need to implement a classification system. The goal is to standardize the grape varietals used in a region's wines (i.e. Chianti wine in the Tuscany region must use between 75 – 100% Sangiovese grapes to gain DOC status) and to provide consumers with a quality grading system.

Italian wines have these four broad classifications:

- VDT, basic Italian table wine
- IGT, denotes wine from a specific region in Italy, but not adhering to Italian wine laws
- DOC, refers to specific appellations in Italy and only using grapes approved for use in that wine region
- DOCG, wines that have DOC status and are winners in blind taste tests, making them the highest quality wines of a region

Italy has 20 major wine regions. For red wines, the Piedmont and Tuscany regions produce the world-famous Brunello di Montalcino, Barolo (nick-named the King of Italian reds) and Barbaresco wines. The Sangiovese grape is used to make the Brunello wines of Tuscany, while the Nebbiolo grape is used to make the Piedmont's noble Barolo and Barbaresco wines.

## Italian White Wines

Other than Pinot Grigio, most Italian white wines are not as well known as their more famous red wine cousins. Italian white wines tend to be soft, acidic and pleasant. They are great partners with food or enjoyed by themselves as good sipping wines. Northern Italy produces some of Italy's best white wines. The three major regions are Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Trentino Alto-Adige. Italian white wines are affordable, so give these wines a try:

- Soave - from Veneto, is dry and crisp with flavors of peach and apple
- Pinot Grigio - Italy's most well known white, is light, dry and crisp with lemon and citrus notes
- Verdicchio – from Marche, is a medium-bodied, dry and crisp wine with pronounced mineral and lemon flavors
- Orvieto – from Umbria, is medium-bodied, dry and crisp with aromas of apple and pear
- Gavi – from Piedmont, is medium-bodied, dry and crisp with notes of floral, melons, mineral and honey
- Arneis – from Piedmont, is light to medium-bodied, dry and has aromas of pear and almonds
- Prosecco – from Veneto, Italy's famous sparkler, is slightly sweet with lemon, almonds, melon and honey flavors

## Food Pairings

Offering world-class cuisine, Italian wines were designed to be food friendly and approachable. Geography always plays a role in food pairings. As Italy is surrounded by water, many wines pair well with seafood and fish. Those include Pinot Grigio, Gavi, Soave, Arneis and Orvieto wines. Salads pair well with Prosecco and Pinot Grigio wines. Grilled chicken pairs well with Orvieto and Pinot Grigio wines. Light pasta dishes pair well with Prosecco, Pinot Grigio, Arneis and Verdicchio wines. Verdicchio and Soave wines also pair well with basil/pesto sauce, fish and creamy risotto with vegetable dishes.

## Italian Pasta Recipe

### Spaghetti Cacio e Pepe (Cheese and Pepper Pasta)

Easy to prepare and tasty - a My Chef Catering favorite

### Ingredients

- 1 lb Spaghetti
- 6 Tbsp Heavy Cream
- 1/2 Cup Freshly grated Pecorino Romano Cheese
- 1/2 cup Freshly grated Asiago Cheese
- 1/2 Tbsp Coarsely ground Black Pepper
- Salt to taste

### Directions

- In a large pot of boiling, salted water, add spaghetti and cook until al dente; drain but do not rinse.
- Place cooked spaghetti back into pot
- Add 2 tablespoons of heavy cream over the spaghetti while stirring in 1/3 of the two cheeses
- Repeat this process two more times (2 Tbsp cream and 1/3 of cheeses), until all the cream and cheeses are mixed
- Once the spaghetti is coated with cheese, sprinkle the black pepper and stir to mix
- Salt to taste
- Transfer to serving bowl and Mangia!

The peppery character of this pasta dish calls for a fruity red wine, like Barbera.

## Bill's Italian White Wine Picks – with suggested retail prices

2009 Zenato Lugana San Benedetto	90 pts. R. Parker	\$13
2009 Tamellini Soave	88 pts. R. Parker	\$14
2010 Terredora Falanghina	88 pts. R. Parker	\$14
2008 Inama Soave Classico	89 pts. R. Parker	\$14
2010 Tiefenbrunner Pinot Grigio	Not Yet Rated, Quality Producer	\$13
2008 Broglia Gavi la Meirana	90 pts. R. Parker	\$18

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### ***Wine of the Month:***

***2008 Inama Soave Classico***

***Suggested Retail Price: \$14***

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There are many great Italian white wines to choose from, so I selected a winery that consistently produces quality wines. The last 5 vintages all received scores around 90 points. This winery has volcanic soil, so these wines have a complex, mineral flavor. Robert Parker gives the 2008 89 points and said "The 2008 Soave Classico makes a great introduction to the Inama house style. Smoke, minerals, flowers and peaches come together in a mid-weight yet richly-textured style. As is often the case, Inama's Soave Classico delivers tons of value for the money. Anticipated maturity: 2009 - 2013." Cheers!

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**Bill Garlough is the founder and owner of My Chef Catering in Naperville, the winner of the 2007 U.S. Chamber's National Small Business of the Year. Bill is a level 1 master sommelier and pairs food and wine for My Chef's customers. He can be contacted at [www.mychef.com](http://www.mychef.com).**