

## introduction

Beautiful vineyards, alternating with olive groves and woodland, characterize the landscape around the capital of Tuscany: with the exception, in fact, of the plain to the west of the city, once marshy and now heavily built up, in the other directions the abundance of vines makes an immediate visual impact, an expression of a marked vocation for winegrowing in the Florence area and of the high quality of the wines made here. These are classified in various **DOCGs**, **DOCGs** and **IGTs**, respectively Denominazione di Origine Controllata, Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita, and Indicazione Geografica Tipica, which are differentiated according to production zone, grape variety and typology (red, white, vin santo, etc.):

**DOCG** Chianti Classico, Chianti and sub-zones - Colli Fiorentini, Rufina, Montalbano, Montespertoli, Carmignano.

**DOC** Colli dell'Etruria Centrale, Pomino, Bianco dell'Empolese.

**IGT** Toscana, Colli della Toscana Centrale, Alta Valle della Greve.

## vines

The most widespread grape varieties in the province of Florence are red. Of these the most important is undoubtedly **Sangiovese**. The vine is highly responsive to the environment (as the positive, but sometimes also negative, results in other regions and continents continue to demonstrate), and has adapted over the centuries to the soil and climatic conditions of the Florentine hills: terroir, then, is crucial



in determining the distinctiveness of the wines based on this grape. The historic co-star of **Sangiovese** is **Canaiole Nero**, the potential of which has been rediscovered in recent years by a handful of producers around Florence, with interesting separate vinifications. The same has been done with **Colorino**, once chiefly used in the so-called practice of *governo*. Amongst the generally less common traditional vines, it is worth recalling the scented **Mammolo** and the sweet **Malvasia Nera**, both invariably blended with **Sangiovese**. The cultivation of varieties of French origin is also significant, with modest quantities of **Cabernet Sauvignon** (known as *uva francesca* on the Montalbano), **Merlot** and **Pinot Nero** being imported to the area as early as grand-ducal times, especially in **Pomino**. Since 1980 these varieties have been used increasingly to complement **Sangiovese** and **Canaiole**, officially earning a place in production regulations, albeit in modest percentages. In the meantime they have proved capable, in appropriate circumstances, of stunning solo performances, almost always classified as **Toscana IGT**.



The classic white grape varieties, **Trebbiano Toscano** and **Malvasia del Chianti**, once more widely used both to make white wines and as part of the historic blend making up **Chianti**, are now principally used, with some exceptions in the Empoli area, to make a dried grape wine called **Vin Santo**, a Tuscan speciality. With the exception of **Pomino**, other white grape varieties such as **Chardonnay**, introduced in recent times as an element of improvement, are not now in particular favour with producers, who are rightly more concerned to maximize the value of the red wines that are the region's pride and glory.



## the Chianti area

The geographic area historically known as **Chianti** is bounded by the outskirts of Florence to the north, the **Monti del Chianti** to the east, **Siena** to the south and the **Pesa** and **Elsa** river valleys to the west. Extending over some 70,000 hectares, it straddles the provinces of **Florence** and **Siena**, taking in the municipalities of **Castellina in Chianti**, **Gaiole in Chianti**, **Greve in Chianti** and **Radda in Chianti** in their entirety, and parts of those of **Barberino Val d'Elsa**, **Castelnuovo Berardenga**, **Poggibonsi**, **San Casciano in Val di Pesa** and **Tavarnelle in Val di Pesa**. The **Chianti** winegrowing zone was established in 1932 by ministerial decree, which defined the territory as the 'most ancient zone of origin'. Since then its borders have remained unvaried. This is where **Chianti Classico DOCG** is produced, so named because it is made in the original and oldest zone. Paradoxically, here it is not possible to make **Chianti DOCG**, which comes from a wider area around geographical **Chianti**.



## Chianti Classico DOCG

Over the centuries this wine acquired considerable fame for its particular quality, linked above all to the nature of the terrain in the hills between **Florence** and **Siena**, consisting of well-drained, rather infertile sandstones and *alberese* (a mix of limestone and clay). Further factors of quality are a good average altitude and a general west/south-west aspect.



The appellation regulations, which since 1996 have been completely separate from those of **Chianti DOCG**, require a minimum of 80% **Sangiovese**, to which other authorized red grape varieties grown in the area can be added (white grapes were explicitly excluded from the blend in 2006). Other quality-improving restrictive criteria concern the maximum permitted grape production per hectare (75 quintals) and the average yield per vine (no more than 2 kg). The number of vines per hectare at the moment of planting must be at least 4,400. Ever since its foundation in 1924, the symbol of the **Consorzio del Chianti Classico** has been a black cockerel, the **Gallo Nero**, the emblem of a 14th-century military league.



## Chianti DOCG

The wine denominated as **Chianti DOCG** comes from a zone which, like a ring, encircles geographical **Chianti**: the commercial success of this wine, undoubtedly Italy's most famous product, has led to an extension of the production zone to include much of **central and northern Tuscany**. Wines simply labelled as **Chianti** are generally the early-drinking version of the **Sangiovese**-based red, long associated with the celebrated **Putto** trademark. The modern delimitation of the production zone dates to a ministerial decree of 1932, and remained unchanged with the establishment of the **DOC** in 1967 and the transition to the **DOCG** in 1984. The production regulations have not changed much. White grapes such as the traditional **Trebbiano** and **Malvasia** can still be mixed into the blend with **Sangiovese**, albeit in limited quantities, in line with the original recipe. Also permitted is the practice of *governo all'uso toscano*, which consists of adding slightly raisined grapes from authorized varieties to the freshly vinified wine, triggering a second, small fermentation that slightly increases the volume of alcohol



and adds some zest to the taste. There are a number of sub-zones for the production of **Chianti**, which, due to their particular soil and climatic conditions, result in more limited production and specific qualities determined by the terroir.



## Chianti Colli Fiorentini DOCG

The hills circling **Florence** have been clad with vineyards for centuries, producing wine on the estates of noble families who had their country residences and hunting lodges here. The **Colli Fiorentini** sub-zone can boast some of the finest expressions of the wine produced around **Florence**. It is a "modern" wine, never excessively full-bodied, with a bright colour, fresh aromas and good balance. These are the most distinctive features of the **Chianti Colli Fiorentini** wines, though they obviously also vary according to specific areas, differences in terrain and microclimate, and the personal interpretation of individual winegrowers. The symbol of the consortium is the **Marzocco**, the lion supporting the pole from which the flag bearing the Florentine lily flutters on top of the tower of **Palazzo Vecchio**. It is released onto the market on 1 September, about a year after vinification.



## Chianti Montalbano DOCG

This **Chianti** takes its name from **Monte Albano**, the line of high hills rising up at the end of the plain about twenty kilometres west of **Florence**. It has always had a reputation for producing fine wines: back in the late 13th century the bishops of **Pistoia** claimed it as tribute to supply their dining tables. The style is very traditional: intended for early drinking, the wines are generally ruby red with vinous aromas and violet notes, and full-flavoured. **Chianti Montalbano DOCG** goes on sale from 1 March of the year following the harvest.

## Carmignano DOCG

Produced in the hills zones of the municipalities of **Carmignano** and **Poggio a Caiano** in the province of **Prato**, this ancient wine was cited way back in the 14th century in the correspondence of the celebrated merchant **Francesco Datini**, and, three centuries later, in **Francesco Redi's Bacco in Toscana**. It was also the subject of a decree issued by **Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici** in 1716, which laid down precise regulations for harvesting and specified the production zone - the first example in the world of a controlled appellation. Made from a basic blend of **Sangiovese** and **Cabernet Franc** and/or **Cabernet Sauvignon**, with the addition of other local grape varieties, it has an intense ruby-red colour and fruity, flowery aromas, with notes of red and black berries, pepper and liquorice. Endowed with an excellent structure, it lends itself to ageing.



## Chianti Rufina DOCG

**Rufina** is a sub-zone of **Chianti**, and lies along the valley of the **River Sieve**, bounded by the hills stretching towards the **Apennines**. The origins of winegrowing in this area are very ancient. Suffice it to mention that the wines made here were already renowned before the grand-ducal age. **Chianti Rufina** is a **Sangiovese** wine which starts out life rather rough around the edges, and needs time to stabilize, followed by a period of bottle ageing, in order to achieve its distinctive ruby-red colour with garnet highlights. The area's limestone marls and more rigorous climate give the wines structure, longevity and a nobly austere character. **Chianti Rufina** can be released onto the market as of 1 September of the year following the harvest.



## Pomino DOC

**Pomino** is a small part of the municipality of **Rufina**, which has always been the territory of the **Albizi** and **Frescobaldi** families. The semi-mountainous rural environment confers subtlety on **Chardonnay**, **Pinot Nero**, **Pinot Bianco**, **Pinot Grigio**, **Merlot** and **Sauvignon**, which go hand in hand with native varieties in the **Bianco** and **Rosso** typologies. The slightly acidic terrain and cool, dry climate of the more northerly areas yield very elegant, characterful wines with a rich array of aromas. The restricted growing zone and limited production have not prevented **Pomino DOC** earning an international reputation in all its different categories: **Rosso**, **Bianco**, **Riserva** and **Vin Santo**.

## Bianco dell'Empolese DOC

**Empoli** and a number of other municipalities on the western slopes of the **Montalbano** (**Carreto Guidi**, **Fucecchio**, **Vinci**, **Capraia e Limite**, **Montelupo Fiorentino**) have a more than average number of vineyards devoted to white grapes. The prevalent variety is **Trebbiano**, the basis for the delicate but flavoursome wines of the **Bianco dell'Empolese DOC**.

## Vin Santo DOC

A traditional **Tuscan** dessert wine, **Vin Santo** though might better be described as the wine of hospitality, because it was once customary to offer it to guests in humble and aristocratic homes alike. Available on the market in only very limited quantities, it is a magnificent *passito* - dried grape wine - with an intriguing variety of styles. Following lengthy raising of classic **Trebbiano** and **Malvasia** grapes, the must is put into small traditional barrels called *caratelli*, where it slowly ferments and ages for years in contact with the lees (the so-called *madre*) without being racked. A few years ago the use of the name was limited by law to **DOC** wines alone, such as **Vin Santo dell'Empolese**, **Vin Santo del Chianti Rufina**, and so on. A speciality within the speciality is **Occhio di Pernice**, so named after its reddish colour - it is made, in fact, wholly or partly from **Sangiovese**. Also worthy of note is an untypical **Pomino Vin Santo**, which includes some non-traditional grape varieties in the blend.

## IGT wines

Three different **IGT** wines are made in the province of **Florence**: **Toscana**, **Colli della Toscana Centrale** and **Alta Valle della Greve**. The **IGT Toscana** covers the whole of the region, giving rise, in the province of **Florence**, to an array of wines in terms of type (red, white or rosé, most often dry though there are sweet versions as well), grapes (both native and the so-called international varieties) and quality, including popular early drinking wines and prized, top-quality reds suitable for prolonged ageing. **Colli della Toscana Centrale IGT** wines are produced in a more limited zone, which, in the province of **Florence**, includes the areas with the greatest vocation for winegrowing. Wines bearing the **Alta Valle della Greve IGT** appellation are made, as the name makes clear, in the upper stretches of the **Greve** valley. The creative flair of the **Florentines** and a desire to fully exploit the specific characteristics of a given area without having to comply, in the vineyard or winery, to rigid **DOC** regulations, has resulted in wines of comparable status to the classics, which often appear at the very top of the international wine rankings. These wines are known as **Super Tuscans**.



### recommended food matches

**Young, light-bodied Chianti with fruity aromas:** a wine to drink throughout a meal, it goes well with tasty soups, fish steaks and roast meats; a classic with the *Florentine steak*, but also with *ribollita*, *pappa al pomodoro* and *roast saddle of pork*.  
**Chianti with a moderate amount of ageing and more structure:** poultry and other white meats, grilled red meats.  
**Chianti with prolonged ageing and plenty of structure and body:** rich, tasty meat dishes, game, braised and roast meats, mature cheeses and local dishes such as *trippa alla fiorentina* and *peposso dell'impruneta*.  
**Carmignano:** red meat roasts, game and grilled meat.  
**Pomino Rosso:** meat dishes such as roast lamb or grilled pork, and tasty, semi-soft cheeses.  
**Pomino Bianco:** starters (including Tuscan cured meats), vegetables, soups and fish dishes.  
**Vin Santo:** pastries, traditional desserts (cantucci of **Prato**), dry **Carmignano** figs, chicken liver pate, mature cheeses (including **Tuscan pecorino**).

### common descriptive terms

**DOC - DOCG** The 'denominazione di origine' of a wine denotes the geographical name of a particularly good winegrowing zone, and designates a fine wine, the characteristics of which are closely connected to the area from which it comes. There are two categories: **DOC** (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) and **DOCG** (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita). The latter has more restrictive viticultural and oenological regulations.  
**IGT** The 'indicazione geografica tipica' (**IGT**) of wines specifies the geographical name of a zone used to designate the product and which has qualities, a reputation and specific characteristics attributable to the area in question.  
**The term 'riserva'** is used to designate **DOC** and **DOCG** wines that have undergone ageing, generally in the bottle as well, for the period determined by the relative production regulations. Storing or 'reserving' the best wine - traditionally red - of each vintage in order to taste it some years later is a very ancient custom. Clearly, the quantity of wine designated as 'riserva' will vary greatly, above all in relation to weather conditions in the growing season but also to producers' individual preferences.  
**The term 'superiore'** is attributed to **DOC** and **DOCG** wines deemed to be of superior quality due to enforcement of stricter regulations requiring lower grape yields per hectare and greater alcoholic strength.  
**The term 'novello'** can be applied to **DOC** and **IGT** wines, either still or semi-sparkling, produced by means of carbonic maceration, a technique which makes it possible to obtain a wine just a few weeks after the harvest. This practice yields brightly coloured wines with characteristic aromas and a refreshing fruity taste.  
**The term 'passito'** is attributed to still **DOC** and **IGT** wines obtained by fermenting grapes that have been dried naturally or in a conditioned environment. The off-the-skins fermentation is usually quite slow because it is carried out at low temperatures in order not to lose or damage the precious aromas. The dried grape wines so obtained are rich in alcohol and generally very sweet, although drier styles are also made.



## Chianti Montespertoli DOCG

The hills around **Montespertoli**, lying south-west of **Florence**, make up the production zone of **Chianti Montespertoli**. Established in 1997, it is the smallest of the **Chianti** wine's geographically specified areas. The particular terrain and favourable climate produce wines with excellent ageing potential. Smooth and elegant, with fairly intense aromas of wild berries and violet, it is quite full-flavoured, has good levels of acidity and matures quickly. It can be released onto the market as of 1 June of the year following the harvest.



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## A short guide to the wines

of the **FLORENCE** area,  
with excursions into the territory  
of **SIENA**, **PRATO** and **PISTOIA**

