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# Italian Wine

## Tasting Italy with La Madonna del Vino.

By Ted Scheffler

**Share** Recently, I had the opportunity to taste a slew of interesting Italian wines available here in Utah. The occasion was a visit from Dawn Gaudini, the Denver-based representative of Napa Valley's Dalla Terra Winery Direct, a major U.S. importer of Italian wines. With tongue firmly in cheek, Gaudini refers to herself as "La Madonna del Vino"—and, while I can't comment on her Madonna status, her wine knowledge is vast.



Gathered at a private tasting at Forage restaurant, we kicked off a luncheon sipping Inama Vin Soave Classico (\$16), a lovely white wine from the Monte Foscarino in the heart of the Soave Classico district. Made from Garganega grapes, the volcanic soil of the Soave Classico serves to impart both firm minerality and floral aromas to this stainless steel-fermented wine. The Inama Vin Soave Classico was beautiful with a dish of cooked and raw radish salad with brown butter and herbs.

Next up was Marco Felluga Molamatto (\$22), a blend of hand-picked Tocai Friulano, Pinot Bianco and Ribolla Gialla, wherein the Pinot Bianco is fermented in oak and the rest in stainless steel. The result is an elegant wine with a tropical fruit bouquet, hints of vanilla and a food-friendly minerality owing to the sandstone and loam rock terrain of the DOC Collio appellation. Marco Felluga's family has been making wine in Italy for more than a century and, if you're a Pinot Grigio lover, La Madonna del Vino says that Felluga's Collio Pinot Grigio (\$23) is a "wine drinker's Pinot Grigio," meaning that it actually tastes like something other than the insipid P.G. that dominates wine store shelves.



Although not served at this tasting, some of my favorite Italian white wines come from Alios Lageder, where traditional wine-making is combined with cutting-edge, modern techniques. Lageder's "beta delta" Chardonnay-Pinot Grigio (\$22) is a biodynamically produced blend with bright acidity that works wonders with fish, shellfish and a range of chicken dishes.

Meanwhile, back at lunch, we'd moved on to Masseria Li Veli Passamante Rosso Salento: 100 percent Negro Amaro from the Salice Salentino DOC. This is a soft, velvety red that tastes much more impressive than its \$13 price tag would suggest. Try it with your favorite pasta and red sauce or braised short ribs. Also great with those ribs is Aia Vecchia Lagone (\$18), a Bordeaux-style blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Wild berries and cherries dominate the flavors of this well-structured wine, although I thought it finished a tad hot.



What's that? You say you've already received your tax refund and you've got money to burn? Say no more. Allow me to point you towards a trio of Barolo wines that have arrived here in Zion, albeit in a very limited fashion: 18 bottles of each, and each priced at about \$125. These are Barolos from Vietti, a family-owned, fourth-generation winery in the small medieval village of Castiglione Falletto, in the heart of Piedmont. In ascending order of weight and power, they are: Barolo Rocche, Barolo Brunate and Barolo Lazzarito.

These wines are not for the faint of heart. They are big, tannic monsters, and it might behoove you to drink them wearing a suit of armor; phat, phatter and phattest is the way I'd describe them. By the time we got to the Barolo Lazzarito (recognized in Italy as a top Barolo cru since the 1700s), I felt like I had tiny pillows attached to my teeth, from the tannins. A colleague of mine said, "I'd like to taste this in about 20 years." How often can you say that about a wine?

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