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Schiller-wine.blogspot.com

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SCHILLER-WINE

In the Glass: 3 Easy Drinking Wines from the Soave Region in Italy



Picture: 2010 Runaris, Soave Classico DOC, Societa Agricola Fattori (12,5% alc., cork); 2009, Si Soave, Soave DOC, Invino (12,5% alc, screp cap, the wine is packaged in a very odd bottle); 2009 Re Midas, Soave DOC, Cantina di Soave (12% alc., screw cap)

When I used to live in Zagreb, Croatia, we basically had two options for going back to Germany to visit the family and friends: via Austria or via Italy. We would alternate and take advantage of getting to know different regions that lie between Zagreb in Croatia and Frankfurt am Main in Germany. On the Italian route, Venice was always a place high on the list for possible stops. And this was the region, where, among other wines, a Soave was often served, when you had lunch or dinner at a Trattoria, a Pizzeria or an Osteria. Soave wines tend to be easy drinking, fun wines for very day consumption. This is also the case for the three wines I am reviewing in this blog.

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This posting is part of the WeinRallye, a monthly blog event in Germany. Participating wine bloggers - mainly in Germany - are all releasing postings today under the heading "Bread and Butter Wines". Weinrallye is the brainchild of Thomas Lippert, a winemaker and wine blogger based in Heidelberg, Germany. The first wine rally took place in 2007. Thomas Lippert is the author of the wine blog [Winzerblog](#). This month's wine rally is organized by the [WeinReich-Blog](#).



Italian Wine

Italy is home of some of the oldest wine-producing regions in the world. Etruscans and Greek settlers produced wine in the country long before the Romans started developing their own vineyards. Two thousand years later, Italy is – with France and Spain – one of the 3 leading wine producers in the world, accounting for about 20% of world wine production. Italians also lead the world in wine consumption by volume, 59 liters per capita, compared with 8 liters per capita in the US. Wine is grown in almost every region of the country.

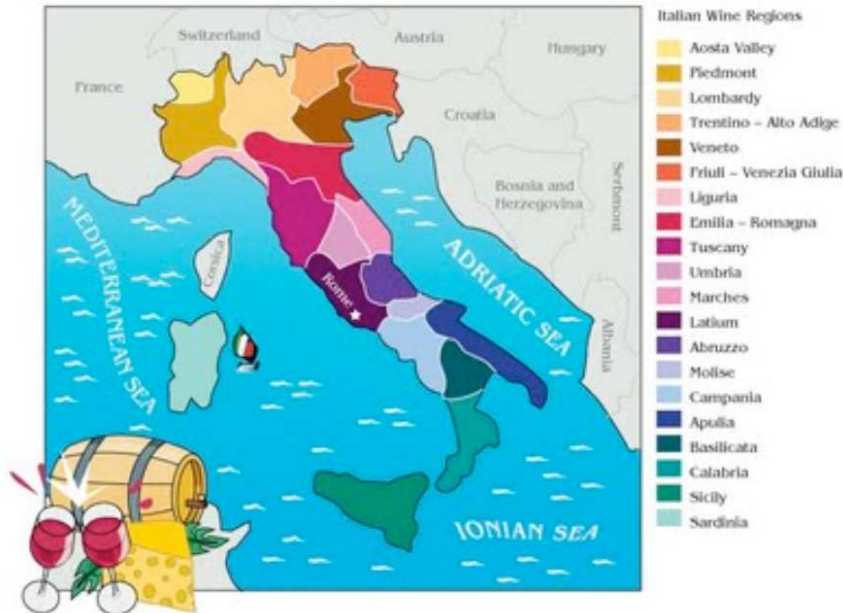
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Picture: The Wine Regions of Italy

There are several hundreds of indigenous grapes in Italy. Here are the most famous ones.

Red: Sangiovese is Italy's claim to fame, the pride of Tuscany. It produces Chianti and Brunello di Montalcino. Nebbiolo is the most noble of Italy's varieties. Nebbiolo is difficult to master, but produces the renowned Barolo and Barbaresco. Montepulciano - The grape of this name is not to be confused with the Tuscan town of Montepulciano; it is most widely planted on the opposite coast in Abruzzo. Barbera is the most widely grown red wine grape of Piedmont and Southern Lombardy, most famously around the towns of Asti and Alba, and Pavia. Corvina - Along with the varieties Rondinella and Molinara, this is the principal grape which makes the famous red wines of the Veneto: Valpolicella and Amarone. Nero d'Avola - Nearly unheard of in the international market until recent years, this native varietal of Sicily is gaining attention for its plummy fruit and sweet tannins. Dolcetto - A grape that grows alongside Barbera and Nebbiolo in Piedmont; a wine for everyday drinking.

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Picture: 2010 Runcaris, Soave Classico DOC, Societa Agricola Fattori (12,5% alc., cork)

White: Trebbiano - Behind Cataratto (which is made for industrial jug wine), this is the most widely planted white varietal in Italy. It is grown throughout the country. Moscato is grown mainly in Piedmont and used in the slightly-sparkling (frizzante), semi-sweet Moscato d'Asti. Pinot Grigio - A hugely successful commercial grape, known as Pinot Gris in France and Grauburgunder in Germany. Produces crisp and clean wines. Typically mass-produced wine in Italy. Arneis - A crisp and floral varietal from Piedmont, which has been grown there since the 15th century. Garganega - The main grape varietal for wines labeled Soave, this is a crisp, dry white wine from the Veneto wine region.

The Soave Zone

Soave is a white wine produced in the surrounding area of the fascinating middle age village of Soave, between the picturesque cities of Venice and Verona in the eastern part of the province of Verona in Italy's Veneto region.

The majority of the vineyards are in the hills. Beautiful centuries-old castles, churches, bell towers, and aristocratic villas are all part of the rich history and traditions of this area, and indicative of the region's principal product, Soave wines. There are about 3000 growers and 120 wineries, ranging from boutique producers making wine from tiny plots to a few large cooperatives, which make credible wine at attractive prices.

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Soave has developed a reputation of producing simple, crisp which pair very well with Italian but also other food. Soave wines tend to have low acid. It is one of the top selling wines in Italy, exported all over the world.

The prevailing grape is the Garganega, the fifth most planted white grape in Italy. Soave must contain at least 70 percent of Garganega, and the rest can be Trebbiano, but Chardonnay and Pinot Bianco are also allowed.

Classification of Soave Wines

All Soave wines – as all Italian wines – belong to one of the following 4 quality levels.

(1) **Vino da Tavola (VDT):** A very basic wine, made for local consumption; the bottle label does not indicate the region or grape variety. This is the wine you typically get served in a Pizzeria or Trattoria in Italy, when you ask for the “house wine”. Simple, cheap and decent. I can tell, sitting late in the evening at a Piazza in Soave and eating Pizza with a Vino da Tavola, served in a 1 liter jug, is just great.

(2) **Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT):** Wines that are considered to be of higher quality than simple table wines, but which do not conform to DOC and DOCG regulations. In the case of Soave, the label would only indicate the region, Veneto. So, you would not recognize it as a Soave. Sometimes, these are premium wines of winemakers who dropped the DOC designation and instead carry the broader Veneto IGT designation, allowing them to try to improve quality by using nontraditional grapes, blends, viticultural practices or vinification techniques that are not included in DOC and DOCG standards.

(3) **Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC).** Soave is currently the largest DOC appellation in Italy, with 15,500 acres of vines. All the 3 wines tasted are DOC wines.

The Runaris from Societa Agricola Fattori is a Soave Classico DOC. Classico indicates that the wine is from the “classical zone” around the villages of Soave and Monteforte d'Alpone, like the well-know Chinti Classico. Soave Colli Scaligeri DOC is wine made from grapes grown in the hills outside the classical zone. Wines made with grapes grown outside the classical zone and the Colli Scaligery are labeled as Soave DOC.

(4) **Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG).** DOCG wines are a tick higher in terms of quality requirements than DOC wines (maximum yield for example), which is the highest category in Italy's wine-classification system. About 13,000 acres of vine of the 15,500 acres of the DOC appellation also qualify for DOCG.

In the Soave, there are 2 DOCG appellations: First, the Soave Superiore DOCG, which can come as Bianco (normale), Classico (from the classical zone) and Riserva (aged a minimum of two years). Second, there is Recioto di Soave DOCG, which can come as Bianco (normale), Classico (from the classical zone) and Spumante. These are sweet-style straw wines, where the grapes are dried indoors in open plastic containers for from four to six months, during which they lose over 50% of their moisture, followed by a long, slow fermentation, often in small barrels. Straw wines are typically sweet wines, capable of long life, but do not have to be sweet. For example, the straw wines from the blend of red wine grapes typical of Valpolicella can come as dry or sweet: If fermentation is complete, the result is a (dry) Amarone della Valpolicella; if fermentation is incomplete, the result is a (sweet) Recioto della Valpolicella. Fermentation may stop for several reasons including high alcohol.

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