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## 6 AMAZING ITALIAN WINES TO DRINK RIGHT NOW

Because you deserve it.

MARK OLDMAN · OCT 7, 2016

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If you're going to [drink like a billionaire](#), you have to drink Italian [wine](#). No glass so ably matches the lusty flavors of Italian cuisine, be it the blissful combination of a piercing friulano with creamy burrata or a Barbaresco with a steaming plate of buttered pasta and shaved Alba truffles.

We all know the likes of prosecco, pinot grigio and Chianti, any of which can be deeply gratifying when well made, but this is just the tip of the tiramisu that is Italian wine. With more than 300 grapes and a dizzying number of wine regions, it is the wine world's crazy quilt of complexity. The good news is that this prevents even most experts from becoming experts on Italian wine, which takes the pressure off—and makes it that much harder for snobs to show you up. If you learn just a few good types, you'll be ahead of the game.



*(Photo: Getty)*

Another advantage of Italian wine is that compared to its counterparts in France and California, the most coveted versions aren't always the world's most expensive. Just as some vintage Alfa Romeo Spiders sell for only four figures, the Italians believe in delivering beauty at all price points. And the value of learning to pronounce a few special Italian wines should not be underestimated. Order an everyday-sounding merlot or malbec and your date will yawn, but purse your lips around the glamorous Etna Bianco or amarone—and you've already closed the deal.



## 1. Fiano (Fee-AH-noh)

A good introduction to Italy's best white wines is fiano, which hails mostly from southern Italy's Campania region. Its lemony acidity and medium weight makes it versatile with most dishes, especially pasta creations with nuts or basil, both of which are also signature scents in the wine. Sniff mindfully and you may even detect a floral bouquet, so if you forget to bring flowers, there's a good chance this wine will do it for you. Try: **Pietracupa Fiano di Avellino** (\$30).



## 2. Etna Bianco (ATE-nah bee-AHN-ko)

If anyone tries to give you grief about drinking white wine, tell them yours was wrought by a fearsome volcano, which is exactly how the best wines from Sicily—and specifically around the east coast district of Mt. Etna—came to be. The grapes raised on Mt. Etna’s high-altitude, volcanic soils, including ancient indigenous varieties such as carricante, create wines that are refreshing but have a distinct minerality and intensity. Try: **Benanti Etna Bianco Superiore Pietramarina** (\$40).



### 3. Amarone (Am-ah-ROE-neh)

A powerful, swaggering capo, this is a heady red made from dehydrated grapes grown in the Valpolicella district of Italy's Veneto region. Its bold, high-octane taste, which sometimes has hints of chocolate or minerals, often requires 10 or more years to mellow. Prestigious and powerful, it deserves to be drunk in a jewel-encrusted chalice. Try: **Giuseppe Quintarelli Amarone della Valpolicella Classico** (\$375).



#### **4. Friulano (Free-oo-LAH-noh)**

Let the pikers play with their pinot grigio while you favor friulano, a white that's the pride

of northeastern Italy but still relatively unknown outside of wine circles.

Uncommonly refreshing, friulano is crisp and medium-bodied, with an often pleasantly bitter aftertaste of minerals or almonds. While some versions edge over \$50, it often goes for about half

that. Try: **Livio Felluga Friulano Friuli Venezia- Colli Orientali** (\$30).



## **5. Barolo and Barbaresco (Bah-ROH-low, Bar-bah-RAY-sko)**

Italy's rich, regal expressions of the nebbiolo grape, Piedmont-based Barolo and Barbaresco can be astonishingly unique in nose and taste. Their signature scents are tar and roses, but leather and menthol often rise to the fore. Their ample acidity and tannins also make rich food a necessity, so unleash the osso buco.

Try: **Gaja Barbaresco** (\$200).



## 6. Aglianico (Ah-lee-AH-neh-ko)

Considered the top wine type of relatively humble southern Italy, aglianico delivers a savory black-fruited whoosh of sour cherry, leather, black olive or smoke. It is generally more affordable than its counterparts up north and is a willing match for porterhouse, rib eye and other meaty fare. Try: **Feudi di San Gregorio "Serpico" Irpinia** (\$80).