



Tim's Wine Market

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Charles de Gaulle once claimed it was impossible to govern a country that produces a thousand different cheeses. The same applies to Italy, a land of a thousand wine grapes varieties. Many are local specialties and only consumed in their immediate vicinity. Then there are obscure grapes and wines produced even in popular regions. While many American wine drinkers may know of Tuscan wines, very few know of the white varietals that make up a significant percent of local production. Likewise, in the Veneto, Amarone and Soave Classico have attracted wine drinkers from across the globe, but the numerous sub-zones of the region remain a mystery. With this month's Explorer's Club selections, we will examine two little-known gems from two of Italy's most renowned regions.

2019 Cantina Morellino Trebbiano "Cala Civetta" (\$15)

Trebbiano is one of Italy's most widely-cultivated white varietals. The Trebbiano grape has a strong presence across the Mediterranean, with significant plantings in Corsica as well as mainland France. Its natural vigor and thick skins produce white wines that are very resistant to disease, resulting in very high yields. However, outside of Italy, these factors typically regulate it to an easy-drinking, inoffensive table wine or a key ingredient in Cognac due to its natural acidity. It is within Italy that Trebbiano truly thrives, and in the coastal Tuscan commune of Scansano, we will find our first feature.

Cantina del Morellino is a family-run estate located in the heart of Scansano, where the gently sloping hills and Mediterranean breezes combine to produce favorable conditions for grape growing. The region is mostly known for its local clone of Sangiovese, called "Morellino," and it is from this that the winery takes its name. However, winemaker Paolo Caciorgna still cultivates small plantings of old vine Trebbiano, which he uses to craft this versatile, citrus-driven wine. He believes that the concentration from his 40 year old vines and carefully controlled yields will help to shed the grape's negative reputation. The vines themselves are planted in limestone and sandy soils facing the coast, which enhances the minerality of the finished wine.

Harvest typically begins at the end of September, with dedicated teams of vineyard workers harvesting each plot by hand. The grapes are brought to the winery, where they are hand-sorted and de-stemmed to assure quality. Often, sub-standard fruit will be used as compost or made into vinegar, rather than simply thrown away. The grapes are then pressed and racked to stainless steel tanks, where fermentation takes place at cooler temperatures. The winery keeps the cellars cool to block any malolactic conversion in the wine, preserving the bright acidity and primary fruit notes. For this same reason, the wine will not see any maturation in oak. After fining and filtering, the wine rests in bottle for three months before release.

When you open this wine, you will be greeted with immediate notes of Meyer lemon, honeydew, lemongrass and a hint of sea breeze. On the palate it is fresh and light. Serve this wine well chilled and drink now through 2022. Served with shrimp cocktail, lemon risotto or classic Pasta Carbonara.

2017 Salvatore Lovo Colli Euganei Rosso (\$20)

For our second feature, we turn to the Veneto, one of Italy's most prolific wine regions. Low in altitude, with rolling hills and south-facing vineyards, the Veneto is home to a number of indigenous varietals as well as "international" grapes such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. This wine is sourced from the Colli Euganei, a volcanic sub-zone located near the city of Padova, a region with a unique geological history. Once a string of prehistoric submerged volcanoes, the Colli Euganei grew dormant as the waters receded some 2 million years ago. Today, the unique combination of volcanic and calcareous soils, as well as slight altitude, produces wines with uncommon minerality and depth. The Colli Euganei were first classified as a DOC in 1969, with a separate DOCG for the Moscato wines of the region in 2010.

The Lovo family, at the behest of their patriarch, Salvatore Lovo, has recently diversified their portfolio beyond sparkling wine. The family's mineral-driven, dry Prosecco is well known on the export market, and a particular favorite in the Orlando store. Likewise, their Fior d'Arancio sparkling Moscato enjoys its popular position

as a rare sparkling dessert wine. Now, the family is focusing their attention on red red wines, and the natural place to purchase their vineyards is the nearby Colli Euganei.

With a background in oenology as well as an extensive career in winemaking, Salvatore and his daughter Silvia produce several red cuvees using Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Carmenere. Although the Carmenere grape is most famous for wine production in Chile, it was most likely brought to Italy from Bordeaux in the Middle Ages. Much like its re-discovery in Chile, the varietal was misidentified as Cabernet Franc for decades before an Italian winemaking team noticed that the wines it produced were higher in tannin and distinctly smoky, the calling card of Carmenere. Properly identified in the 90s, this grape is now widely cultivated in the Colli Euganei, with volcanic soils and elevation that create the ideal growing environment.

This wine is produced from a blend of 50% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Carmenere. All of the fruit is estate-grown from some of the family's highest altitude vineyards, about 900 feet above sea level. Grapes are hand-harvested and sorted by hand at the winery. After a 10-day skin maceration, the grapes are co-fermented in stainless steel. No oak maturation is used during the winemaking process, similar to our first pick. In fact, the DOC regulations of the Colli Euganei do not stipulate any mandatory barrel-aging, unlike many other Italian wine regions. This allows the wine to preserve not only its primary fruit notes, but also the mineral-driven aromatics that make the Colli Euganei so unique. After three months in bottle, the wine is released in very small amounts— fewer than 1,000 cases are bottled annually.

When you open this wine, I strongly suggest decanting for at least half an hour. Once this wine has a bit of time to open up, you will be greeted with notes of dried blackberries, tobacco, dried plums and a touch of woodsmoke. On the palate, this wine is nicely deep and savory, with the generous fruit framed by moderate tannins. Drink now through 2024 with grilled pork tenderloin, a platter of cured meats or Pasta Carbonara.

Pasta Carbonara

3 oz thinly sliced pancetta, chopped
1 ¾ cups water
6 large egg yolks
2 tsp cornstarch
6 oz Pecorino-Romano cheese, finely grated, about 3 cups (plus more to serve)
12 oz spaghetti
2 tbsp Kosher salt
2 tsp fresh ground black pepper (plus more to serve)

The foundation of this dish is similar to Cacio e Pepe, which is sometimes called the Roman mother pasta. This dish only differs in the addition of pancetta. For this I urge you to buy pancetta, which is available at Publix in the deli counter. While some argue bacon is just as good, the strong smoky/sweet flavor overwhelms this subtle but complex dish. Also, take note this dish does not include cream, which is a mistake many Italian restaurants make in order to save time.

In a 10-inch skillet over medium, cook the pancetta, stirrings until crisp, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a paper towel-lined plate. Measure out and reserve 3 tablespoons of the rendered fat; if needed, supplement with olive oil. Set the pancetta and fat aside.

In a large pot, bring 4 quarts water to a boil. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, whisk the water, egg yolks and cornstarch until smooth. Add the cheese and stir until evenly moistened. Set the pan over medium-low and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture comes to a gentle simmer and is airy and thickened, 5 to 7 minutes; use a silicone spatula to occasionally get into the corners of the pan. Off heat, whisk in the reserved pancetta fat. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Stir the pasta and salt into the boiling water and cook until al dente. Reserve about ½ cup of the cooking water, then drain the pasta very well. Return the pasta to the pot and let cool for about 1 minute.

Pour the pecorino-egg mixture over the pasta and toss with tongs until well combined, then toss in the pepper. Let stand, tossing the pasta two or three times, until most of the liquid has been absorbed, about 3 minutes. Crumble in the pancetta, then toss again. The pasta should be creamy but not loose. If needed, toss in up to 2 tablespoons reserved pasta water to adjust the consistency. Transfer to a warmed serving bowl and serve, passing more pecorino and pepper on the side.