# Tim's Wine Market

*October 2025*
*By Tim Varan*

In the years following WWII the economy of Italy was in ruins. The allied invasion of the country in 1943 and ensuing battles with the German military decimated the infrastructure and left the mainly agrarian population scrambling to rebuild their lives. At that time most of the farms were tiny and wine grapes were just one of the products grown to support themselves. The farmers would keep some grapes and make what wine they need for personal consumption with the rest sold to big wineries or cooperatives. The grapes they grew before the war were typically a mix of historical favorites for the region, with diversity being necessary to ensure a crop each year. After the war the farmers began replanting their vineyards with grape varieties that offered the largest and most consistent crop, not those with the most character or flavor. For two decades very little was exported so the wines only needed to be cheap, not good.

In the 1970s the government hoped to expand exports and created the rules establishing the DOC (Denominazione di origine controllata) and DOCG (Denominazione di origine controllata e garantita) categories. These are rules outlining the basic quality for wines to list their place of origin on the label. For example, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo for DOC and Brunello di Montalcino for DOCG are wines where the producers are governed by where the vineyards must be planted and which grape varieties are to be grown, along with many other rules. While we like to think that they chose the "best" quality varieties for each region, the reality is that most of the time they chose the highest producing. Remember that until the 1990s the wines sold for practically nothing so quantity was more important that quality. For thirty years no one really questioned the goal of the rules as the market was growing and exports booming.

Then in the 21st century a number of young producers across Italy began researching the records before the wars and reviving old varieties that were almost extinct. In some instances these grapes offer far more character than the common varieties of a region. Thankfully a better understanding of viticulture and technology in the cellars allow many of these hard to produce grapes to suddenly become fashionable again. Our features this month look at two of these old historic grapes that are enjoying new popularity with winemakers and consumers.

**Tua Rita Perlato di Bosco 2023 | $25**

The famed winery Tua Rita is one of the leaders from the coastal Tuscan region of Maremma. They were established in 1984 by Rita Tua and Virgilio Bisti, who bought their original land only with the intention of raising their family in place where they could farm their own food. This was also when the "super Tuscan" craze was in its infancy and they watched as many of their neighbors began planting grapes eager to ride the wave of success of many of the local wineries. At this point they realized they had inadvertently landed in the middle of one of the hottest emerging wine regions in Italy and soon began planting their own vines. From a humble beginning of 5 acres, today they farm over 120 acres of vines producing 20,000 cases of wine including two of Italy's most revered bottles; Redigaffi and Per Sempre.

Around the time that the Tua Rita winery planted their vineyards, Vermentino was enjoying a renaissance in Italian viticulture. The earliest records of the grape appear from the island of Corsica in the 17th century, although legend has it growing there much earlier. It performs well on the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, where the windy climate allows for this grape to fully express itself. In other areas of France and Italy the site must be selected that does not have the danger of late spring frost, to prevent downy mildew after rains. These conditions are rare so most producers in the region plant thick skinned but relatively benign varieties like Trebbiano. It is only with the rise of modern viticulture in the 1980s that Vermentino began to receive attention as farmers learned how to work with the fickle variety. It is easy to see why this more aromatically complex variety does very well when planted close to the windy Mediterranean.

For our feature the vineyards are planted on a soil rich in iron, which imparts a strong sense of minerality on the finished wine. The fermentation and aging are in stainless steel to retain the freshness of this variety and capture the enchanting aromatics. You will want to decant this wine before serving to unleash the aroma and let it warm to 45 degrees before serving. Immediately the nose of underripe peach, fresh pear, persimmon, dried thyme, rosemary and sea salt leap from

the glass. The feel on the palate begins with some richness but then the modest acidity and firm sense of minerality rise up and provide frame into the finish. This is very much a seafood wine so serve with shrimp scampi or whole grilled snapper stuffed with lemon, rosemary and thyme.

**Monfort Teroldego di Rotaliano 2022 | $25**

Teroldego di Rotaliano is a very old variety, with the first documentation from a sales receipt, written in Latin, in 1460. It was from a town near current day Trentino in northern Italy. Being such an old variety the exact origin is a mystery but the name is thought to come from the Teroldeghe village, located in the municipality of Mezzolombardo. The name of this particular clone is taken from, Campo Rotaliano, which is an area on the alluvial plain between the rivers Adige and Noce. One surprising fact I discovered in my research is that Teroldego is a sibling of the French grape Dureza, which is a parent of the Syrah variety. In wine grape entomology this means that Teroldego is an aunt/uncle of Syrah and grandchild of Pinot Noir.

Since that time records show it was a very popular variety until the middle 20th century when high intensity viticulture in the region saw it removed for more prolific varieties. While Teroldego can be quite vigorous and produce a large crop in the right conditions that is not what makes the best wine. Additionally, the grape clusters tend to be tight and the skins thin so they are prone to mold in high humidity. To make matters worse the grapes tend to easily fall off the bunch in high winds, which is common in the valleys of the region. With all the challenges growing Teroldego it is easy to see why growers shifted to Pinot Grigio when its popularity soared in the 1990s.

Then in the late 1990s a young winemaker in the Alto Adige, Elisabeth Foradori, began research into the Teroldego variety. What she discovered is that over the centuries many clones of Teroldego had evolved. For over a decade she worked with researchers and finally discovered that the “old” clone, called Teroldego di Rotaliano, offers the highest quality wines. Elisabeth is also a leader in the “natural” wine movement and her success has brought a spotlight onto the variety that now many other producers are also enjoying.

Our club selection is from the Monfort winery, founded by the Simoni family in 1945. Like most wineries in the region they farm many varieties in several disjointed sites within the Alto Adige region, with plantings determined by the conditions of the location. Their Teroldego is farmed in the famed Piana Rotaliana sub-zone. Here the soils are alluvial, formed by the two nearby rivers, with plenty of organic material lying on top of a deep bed of gravel. Due to the conditions the family aggressively works to reduce the yield then only picks perfect clusters at harvest. This wine is also aged in older oak barrels for ten months before bottling, then held another year in bottle before release.

When you are ready to serve this wine you will want to decant it for a half hour and chill to cellar temperature. Teroldego tends to be a bit reductive so the bouquet can be muted without a healthy dose of oxygen. Once you let the wine open it offers a charming combination of fresh blueberry, black currant, graphite and violets. On the palate the fruit is punchy and forward, with soft tannins framing the edges. Despite the deep color this is not a “big” wine so it works great with everything from baked salmon to grilled sausages and even slow braised pork shank. Drink 2025-2028.

**Recipes**

It is hard to find one recipe for this month so I focused on the white wine and one of my favorite recipes for shrimp scampi. This is a very long recipe with multiple steps but it is not hard and the results are worth it. My apologies to those who print this write up as it is not three pages, but if you make the recipe you will not be sorry.

**Shrimp Scampi**

Most recipes for this dish are fine, with shrimp and garlic dominating the dish and usually lost in a bed of pasta. Then several years ago I discovered this version from America's Test Kitchen and ever since my opinion has changed. It takes several steps and while you can serve over pasta I do not recommend it. Rather, bake or buy a very good loaf of crusty bread to sop up the incredible sauce. Serve with salad to round out the meal.

Two notes before you dive in. First, you will be making a quick shrimp broth using the shells so do not discard them. Next, this recipe calls for brining the shrimp so avoid buying those that contain sodium tripolyphosphate (STPP.) If you buy frozen then check the bag, or fresh you will need to ask the fishmonger/counter person. If you buy shrimp with STPP then skip the brining step because they will be very rubbery. Also, it is a quick brine and more time only makes them salty. Trust me, I learned from my mistake.

**1½ pounds shell-on jumbo shrimp (16 to 20 per pound)**
**3 tablespoons salt**
**2 tablespoons sugar**
**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
**1 cup dry white wine**
**4 sprigs fresh thyme**
**3 tablespoons lemon juice, plus lemon wedges for serving**
**1 teaspoon cornstarch**
**8 garlic cloves, sliced thin**
**½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
**¼ teaspoon pepper**
**4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces**
**1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley**

Peel (shells and tails) and devein 1½ pounds shell-on jumbo shrimp; reserve shells.

Dissolve 3 tablespoons table salt and 2 tablespoons sugar in 1 quart cold water in large container. Submerge shrimp in brine, cover container, and refrigerate for 15 minutes. Remove shrimp from brine and pat dry with paper towels; set aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil in 12-inch skillet over high heat until shimmering. Add shrimp shells and cook, stirring frequently, until they begin to turn spotty brown and skillet starts to brown, 2 to 4 minutes.

Remove skillet from heat and carefully add 1 cup dry white wine and 4 sprigs fresh thyme. When bubbling subsides, return skillet to medium heat and simmer gently, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes.

Strain mixture through colander set over large bowl. Discard shells and reserve liquid. (You should have about ⅔ cup.) Wipe out skillet with paper towels. Combine 3 tablespoons lemon juice and 1 teaspoon cornstarch in small bowl.

Heat remaining 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, 8 thinly sliced garlic cloves, ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes, and ¼ teaspoon pepper in now-empty skillet over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until garlic is fragrant and just beginning to brown at edges, 3 to 5 minutes.

Add reserved wine mixture, increase heat to high, and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to medium, add shrimp, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until shrimp are just opaque, 5 to 7 minutes.

Remove skillet from heat and, using slotted spoon, transfer shrimp to bowl.

Return skillet to medium heat, add lemon juice–cornstarch mixture, and cook until slightly thickened, 1 minute. Remove from heat and whisk in 4 tablespoons butter (cut into ½-inch pieces) and 1 tablespoon chopped parsley until combined. Return shrimp and any accumulated juices to skillet and toss to combine. Serve, passing lemon wedges separately.