

## Italy: introduction

6 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

Ah, Italy - what a beautiful, hedonistic, disorganised, frustrating country! Italy can provide wine lovers with so many distinctive, unique flavours and styles, bottles full of Italian verve and creativity. It also sluices forth rivers of disgracefully thin, characterless stuff to be sold under its most commercially useful names: Pinot Grigio, Soave, Valpolicella, Lambrusco, Frascati and the like.

Although the key to understanding Italy is to understand that it is a group of regions rather than a single homogeneous country, from the heady, often sweet, ferments of the deep south to the delicate sub- alpine essences of the north, it *is* possible to generalise about Italian wine styles to a certain extent. Reds have a certain bitterness that is by no means unpleasant. In fact it is so addictive that I find Italy is the one country I come home from positively determined to continue to drink its wines (rather than, as usual, desperate for a complete change). Italian white wines, once distinguished by their lack of aroma and lack of obvious fruitiness (very un- modern), are now generally very well made, offering an attractive combination of fruit and refreshment.

See also [Understanding Italian labels](#).