

Sardinia

5 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

In a nutshell: Developing.

Main grapes: Cannonau, Carignano (red); Vermentino, Nuragus, Torbato (white).

Sardinia, Sardegna in Italian, is more than an island, it is only just part of Italy. For much of its modern winemaking history it was governed from Spain, and many of its distinctive local grape varieties such as Bovale (Bobal), Carignano (Cariñena), Cannonau (Garnacha), Monica, Vermentino and possibly Torbato are Spanish in origin. (This is just one of scores of examples of social history being reflected in a country's vineyards.)

The island lies between Corsica and Sicily, both in terms of geography and wine. Like [Corsica](#), it experienced a late 20th century boom and bust in heavily subsidised new vine plantings. Like [Sicily](#), it now shows signs of real potential and determination to make the most of its own raw ingredients (the Centro Enologico Sardo is an active wine research station).

Most of its produce is varietally labelled, some of it is aggressively modern and characterless (the co-operatives ruled without vision until recently). **Vermentino** is often a creditably light, appetising white nowadays made particularly in the north of the island, though its potentially more concentrated expression, **Vermentino di Gallura**, was the island's first DOCG. **Nuragus di Cagliari** can occasionally be a worthy modern dry white example of one of the island's oldest grape varieties. **Carignano di Sulcis** from the south shows just how juicy the tough red Carignan can be if exposed to enough warmth, while **Cannonau** is the local strain of Grenache, or rather Spanish Garnacha. **Vernaccia di Oristano** is western Sardinia's answer to sherry - interesting but unlikely to be a big commercial hit.

Sella & Mosca, owned by Campari, is one of the few notable producers independent of the co-operatives. By far the most sumptuous wines are made by Argiolas, whose Turriga blend of Cannonau and Carignano from ancient vines is sought after all over the world. The Santadi co-op's Terre Brune is also reliably interesting.

Some favourite producers: Argiolas, Barrua, Capichera, Contini, Ferruccio Deiana, Santadi, Sella & Mosca.