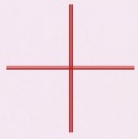


Decanter

PASSIONATE ABOUT WINE SINCE 1975

MAY 2022



352

wines tasted
in this issue

ITALY Special issue

Starring Chianti Classico, Valpolicella,
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Super-Italians

The best of modern Italian
winemaking in 12 wines

Campania whites

20 delicious Greco di Tufo
and Fiano wine buys

Venice travel guide

Why the 'floating city' is a wine
lover's dream destination

FIANO & GRECO

20 top Campania whites

In Italy's historic central south, these two DOCG regions offer dry whites that are both immediately drinkable and impressively ageable. Drink them on their own or pair with foods ranging from light bites and starters to richer pasta dishes

INTRODUCTION & SELECTION JAMES BUTTON

Away from the dazzling Amalfi coast, the archaeological hotspots of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Paestum, and the bright lights of Naples, visitors can find a quieter Campania. Truffles, chestnut and olive trees and, of course, vines grow in a spectacular landscape of hills and mountains which contrasts with the coastal plain. The most important among an assortment of largely indigenous white grape varieties are undeniably Fiano and Greco. Found in wines throughout the region, as well as beyond Campania's borders, these reach their apogee in the DOCGs of Fiano di Avellino and Greco di Tufo, widely considered to be two of Italy's finest white wine denominations. Established as DOCs in 1978 and 1970 respectively, they were both recognised as DOCGs in 2003.

Located in Irpinia in the province of Avellino, about an hour's drive northeast from Naples, the vineyards of predominantly clayey-calcareous soils with volcanic, sand and mineral deposits range in altitude from 250m to about 650m, while the surrounding mountains reach to 1,577m. This gives the grapes grown here an advantage in the form of large diurnal temperature variations (up to 20°C cooler at night in some locations), allowing for full ripening but preserving aromatics and acidity, aided by cool winds blowing in from the Tyrrhenian sea which also reduce disease pressure in the vineyards.

COMPLEMENTARY STYLES

Fiano di Avellino is the more accessible of the two wines; its elegant floral, mineral character is filled out with apple, pear and hazelnuts and vibrant acidity. Drink as a *vino da meditazione* or pair with food: it's remarkably versatile, but goes especially well with local specialities such as black truffle (Tartufo Nero di Bagnoli Irpino) shaved over egg pasta, or the world-famous pizza Napoletana

topped with local San Marzano tomatoes and DOP Mozzarella di Bufala Campana.

Greco di Tufo can be described as a 'white wine with a red soul', such is its weighty, sapid and often viscous character accompanied by rich and exotic scents. Its acidity is markedly higher than even Fiano di Avellino, and its phenolic structure is typically complemented by skin contact and lees ageing during production. So while it's possible to enjoy Greco di Tufo in its youth, it's often wiser to wait at least a couple of years for it to gain some weight and balance. Alternatively, well-matched cuisine can tame young Greco di Tufo: try it with spaghetti al baccalà, a local tomato-based pasta dish with capers and salt cod, or with seared tongue of beef with fennel.

Annual production from Greco di Tufo's eight permitted villages (636ha) was 3.56m bottles in 2020, while Fiano di Avellino's 26 permitted

'The most important among an assortment of largely indigenous white varieties are Fiano and Greco'

villages (419ha) produced 2.06m bottles (*source: Consorzio Tutela dei Vini d'Irpinia*). Commonly matured on the lees in stainless steel tanks before additional time in bottle, a small proportion are matured in oak barrels and even amphorae.

Both DOCGs have a Riserva category and these are well worth seeking out in many cases, as they tend to be made from a winery's top plots with additional ageing (minimum of 12 months). Greco's high acidity also makes it ideal for sparkling wine production, and the Greco di Tufo DOCG allows for spumante and spumante Riserva metodo classico variants.



James Button is Decanter's regional editor for Italy

FIANO DI AVELLINO

Di Meo, Alessandra, Fiano di Avellino 2012 95

dimeo.it

Named after Roberto di Meo's eldest daughter, Alessandra is made with slightly overripe grapes macerated on their skins and matured for 18 months in stainless steel. The latest vintage release of this impressive, ageworthy bottling, the 2012 features a rich nose of salty almonds, ripe apricot, peach skin and forest mulch. Intensely mineral with savoury truffle character and smoky, nutty notes on a peach skin-textured palate. Balance and length, a persistent saline finish and a lick of juicy peach. **Drink** 2022-2032 **Alcohol** 13%



Di Meo, Fiano di Avellino 2020 94

US\$29.99 Zachys

From northeast-facing vines at about 520m, Di Meo's 'standard' Fiano di Avellino is anything but: it's a full, aromatic style with aromas of straw, stone fruits, passion fruit, green apple and a stony edge. Green and yellow fruits mingle on the broad, slightly viscous palate, given definition and depth by mineral acidity and a really fresh, long finish. Delicious.

Drink 2022-2035 **Alc** 13%



GRECO DI TUFO

Di Meo, Vittorio Riserva, Greco di Tufo 2008 96

dimeo.it

Roberto's patience in releasing this wine has paid off. Sourced from northeast-facing vines at 750m in Montefusco, this extraordinary Riserva was matured in stainless steel for 10 years then in bottle for a further 30 months. It has a slightly wild, funky vibe, accompanied by aromas of pineapple, apricot, peach skin and fig. Super-intense and fresh, its saline frame contrasts with leesy phenolics and roast pineapple richness. Poached pear and sweet spices emerge on a long balsamic, mineral finish. Superb. **Drink** 2022-2028 **Alc** 13%

