



ALTO ADIGE

The Alto Adige (also known as Südtirol) is one of Italy's most notable but least talked about wine regions. Due to the mountainous topography, land suitable for cultivation is limited, so the Alto Adige accounts for less than 1% of all Italian wine production, but it is unsurpassed in quality. The area's geography strikes a perfect balance of brisk Alpine air tempered by warm Mediterranean sun. Those elements combined with the artistic hands of multi-generational growers and winemakers produces an amazing selection of unique vintages.

Wines of the Alto Adige combine the region's Mediterranean and Alpine souls, German and Italian culture, age-old traditions and a modern spirit!

The rich history and bi-cultural heritage of the Alto Adige allows you to guide your guests into discovering this unique region. Well-known, international grapes along with several niche offerings showcase the region's wide range of offerings; there is truly something for every guest to enjoy!



HISTORY

The Alto Adige, one of Italy's most isolated and independent regions of Italy, boasts a very unique cultural identity. Its colorful history is rich with story-telling opportunities that will allow you to engage with guests unfamiliar with this dynamic region along with those who already know something of its elite standing in the wine world.

Winemaking is as old as time in the Alto Adige, pre-dating even the Roman Empire. An important mountain pass made the region a major thoroughfare for trade and travel in the age before air travel, and as such it changed hands politically several times over centuries past.

Until the end of World War I, it was the possession of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and called Südtirol (as this whole mountainous area is known as Tyrol). When political borders were redrawn following the conclusion of the first World War, the Alto Adige was given to Italy, extending the country's natural border to the Alps.

Have you see the name "Trentino-Alto Adige" on wine lists or in wine shops? Once the Alto Adige was part of Italy, the government attempted to tame the region's independent spirit linking it with Trentino, its neighbor to the south (see map on page 3). But the merger did not take with the free-spirited Alto Adige people, and they became an autonomously governed region in the 1970s; a 'country within a country' as it were.

The beauty of this region is that it combines Italian creativity with Germanic precision!

The Alto Adige might be located in Italy, but German is the predominant language spoken here. In fact, most signs are written in both German and Italian, but the people who populate the region do not think of themselves as either nationality.

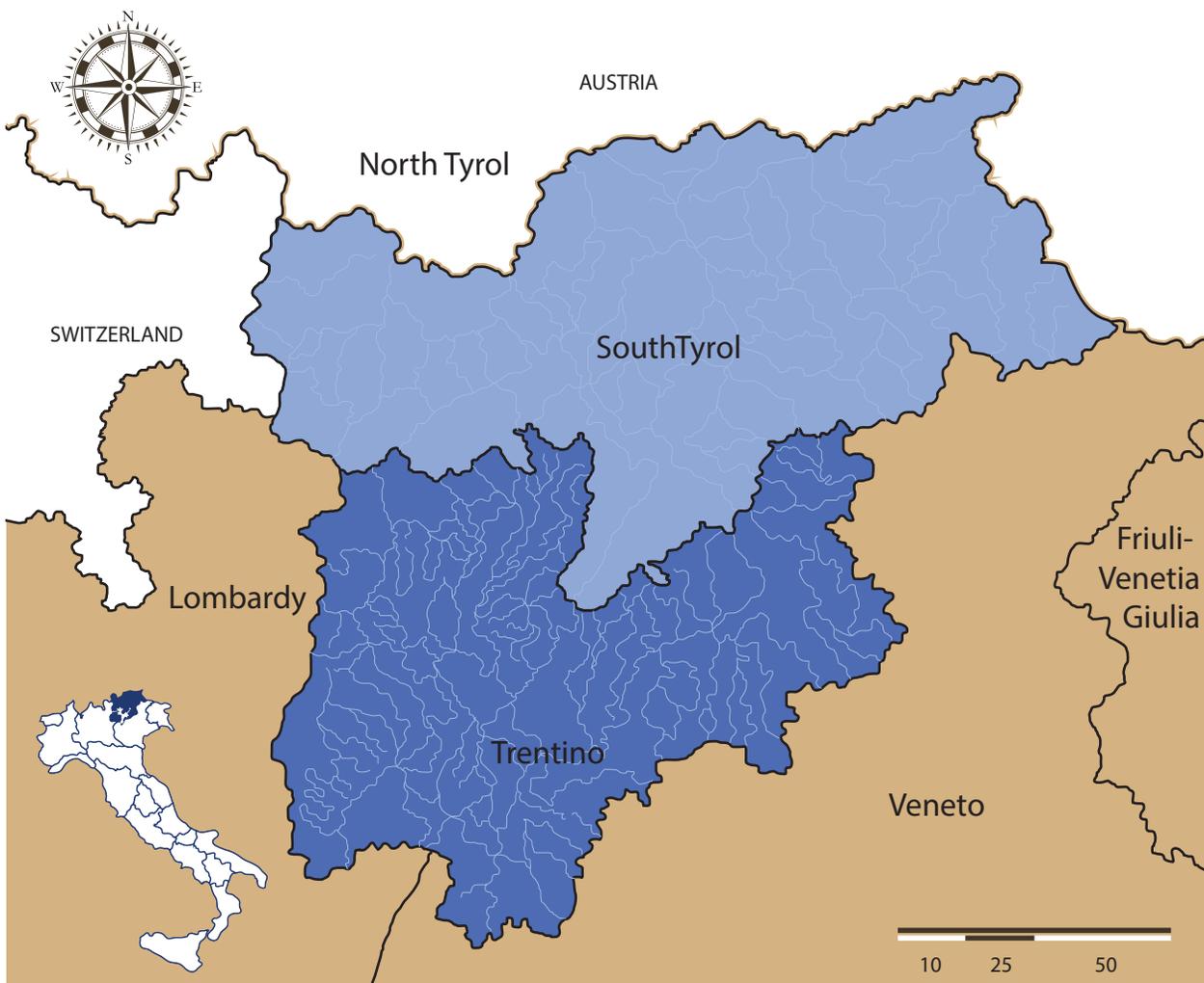


Maso system

An important element of this area is the *Maso Chiuso*. A remnant of the region's Tyrolean roots, it is a name for a house and surrounding land that provide a source of livelihood via agriculture for its inhabitants. These small farms must guarantee the income from agriculture for at least five people in order to provide income and succeed. In practice, this means that about 5,400 grape growers look after 5,300 hectare of vines (or just under 1 hectare / 2.4 acres per family!)

It's no surprise then that wine production in the Alto Adige is dominated by cooperatives. These well-respected and well-run businesses deliver about 70% of the region's wine, while another 25% comes from private estates (including Santa Margherita and Kettmeir, see pages 11 - 12). The remaining 5% are from grower-producers, a rarity in the United States.

*The amount of care about the grapes is impeccable
- Each hectare (2.3 acres) has its own grower!*



CLIMATE AND GEOLOGY

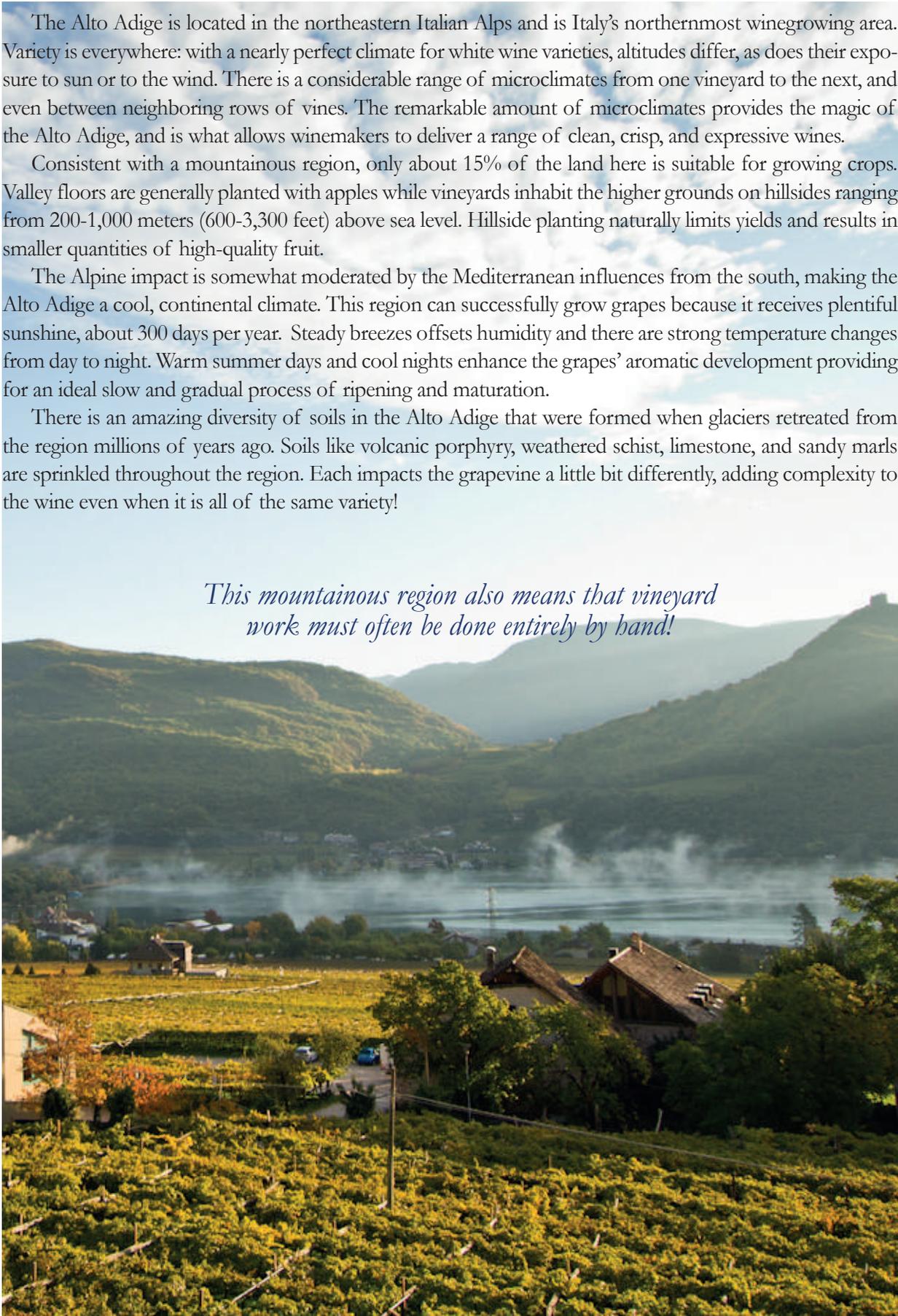
The Alto Adige is located in the northeastern Italian Alps and is Italy's northernmost winegrowing area. Variety is everywhere: with a nearly perfect climate for white wine varieties, altitudes differ, as does their exposure to sun or to the wind. There is a considerable range of microclimates from one vineyard to the next, and even between neighboring rows of vines. The remarkable amount of microclimates provides the magic of the Alto Adige, and is what allows winemakers to deliver a range of clean, crisp, and expressive wines.

Consistent with a mountainous region, only about 15% of the land here is suitable for growing crops. Valley floors are generally planted with apples while vineyards inhabit the higher grounds on hillsides ranging from 200-1,000 meters (600-3,300 feet) above sea level. Hillside planting naturally limits yields and results in smaller quantities of high-quality fruit.

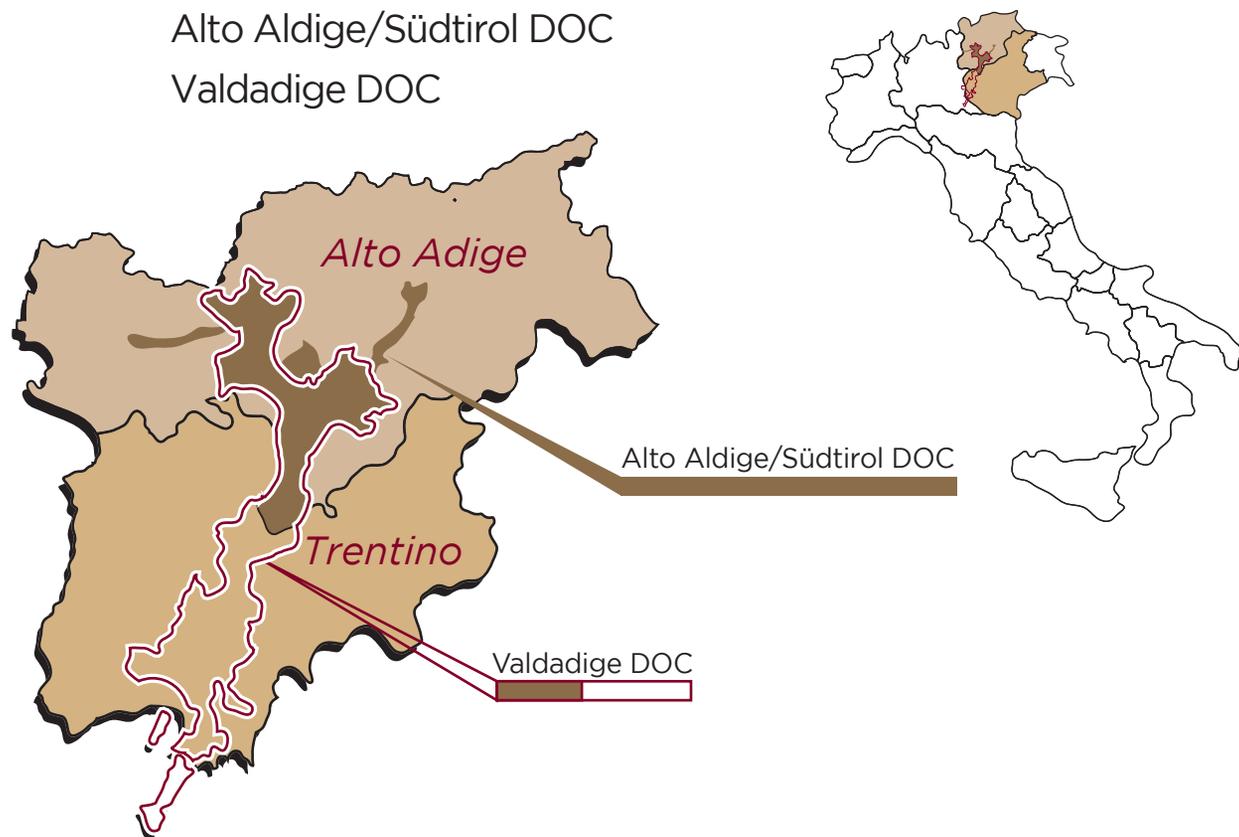
The Alpine impact is somewhat moderated by the Mediterranean influences from the south, making the Alto Adige a cool, continental climate. This region can successfully grow grapes because it receives plentiful sunshine, about 300 days per year. Steady breezes offsets humidity and there are strong temperature changes from day to night. Warm summer days and cool nights enhance the grapes' aromatic development providing for an ideal slow and gradual process of ripening and maturation.

There is an amazing diversity of soils in the Alto Adige that were formed when glaciers retreated from the region millions of years ago. Soils like volcanic porphyry, weathered schist, limestone, and sandy marls are sprinkled throughout the region. Each impacts the grapevine a little bit differently, adding complexity to the wine even when it is all of the same variety!

This mountainous region also means that vineyard work must often be done entirely by hand!



APPELLATIONS



For an area of such tremendous diversity, there are only three official delimited areas, also called appellations, in the Alto Adige:

- Alto Adige DOC
- Lago di Caldaro DOC (which is only for the production of the red Schiava grape)
- Valadige DOC.

Additionally, there are six subzones that can be mentioned on the label after the Alto Adige DOC designation.

Valdadige (“Valley of the Adige”) is located in both Trentino and Alto Adige (as well as bit of the Veneto) because it follows the natural environment of the Adige River Valley, while the Alto Adige DOC is limited to the political border of the northern province.

Varietal wines represent the great majority of the wine produced here, and they must contain at least 85% of the stated varietal, though in practice, most are 100%. Leading varietals include Pinot Grigio and Pinot Bianco with exciting niche varieties like Müller Thurgau. Many wines are varietally-labeled, so while your guests may be unfamiliar with the Alto Adige, they are likely to be familiar with words Pinot Grigio!

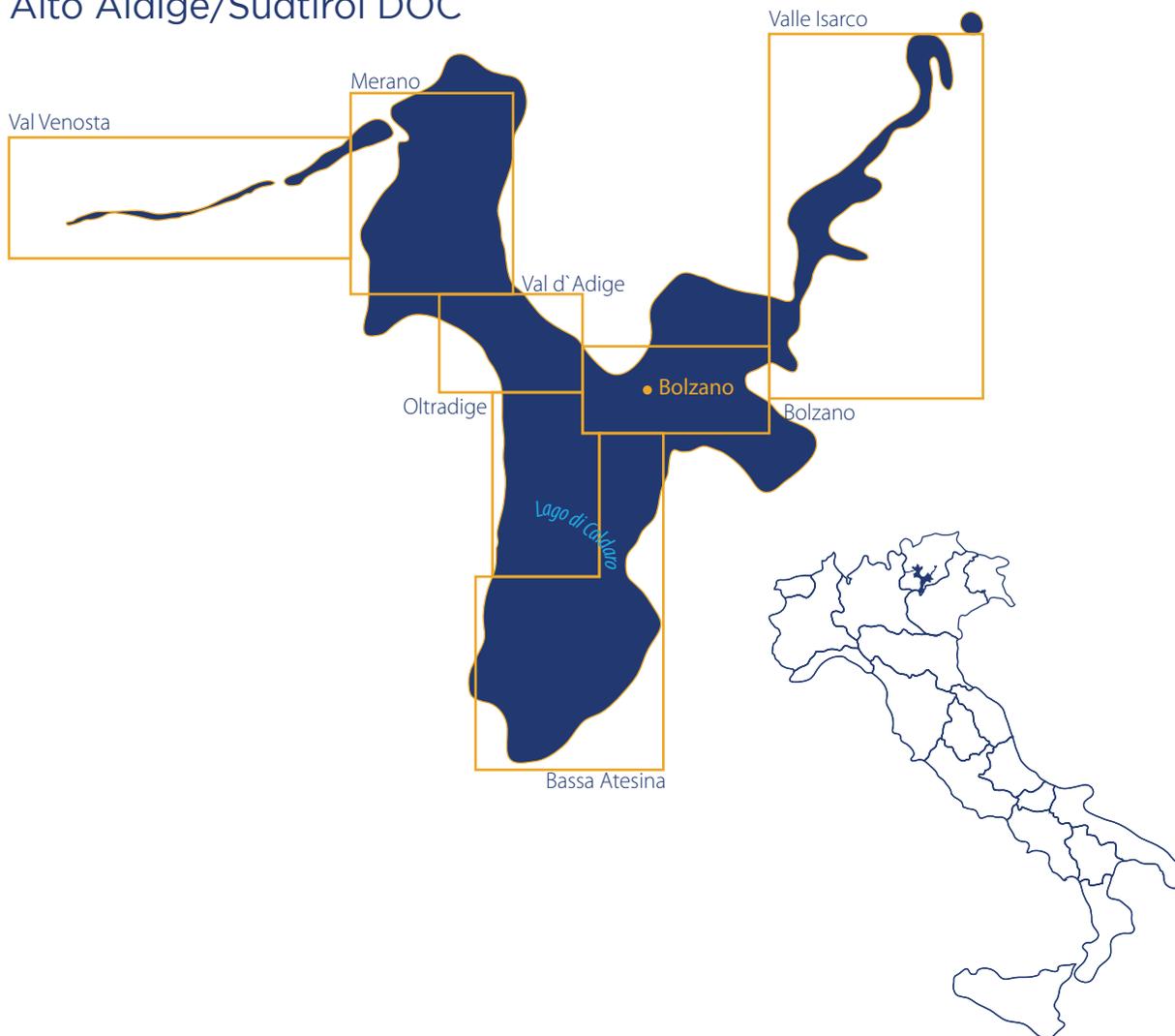
In the Alto Adige, it is very common to see German names and words on the labels, which is why many bottles will list “Alto Adige/ Südtirol” as their origin.

Despite one main appellation in the Alto Adige, pairing suitable varieties to certain terroirs has become more precise, and winegrowers and producers acknowledge seven unofficial winegrowing districts (though you will rarely see this listed on a label).



GRAPE VARIETIES OF THE ALTO ADIGE

Alto Adige/Südtirol DOC



The varied topography and growing conditions of the Alto Adige makes it possible to grow at least 20 different varieties of grapes. About 60% of plantings are of white varieties, including indigenous, internationally popular, and some varieties (like Müller Thurgau) that reflect the region's Germanic influences.

In the cellar, the emphasis is on preserving the primary fruit and fresh mountain aromas. Temperature-controlled stainless steel is the most widely employed fermentation strategy.

Pinot Grigio

The Alto Adige's most planted white grape is Pinot Grigio (Grauburgunder in German), believed to be a natural mutation of Pinot Noir. The *grigio* in the name refers to the darker colors on the skins, which can appear anywhere from greyish blue to brownish pink.

Pinot Grigio is also the second-most popular varietal white wine in the United States (after Chardonnay) and is called Pinot Gris in France.

Pinot Grigio from the Alto Adige is clean, well-made, and subtly aromatic with citrus and pears with crisp acidity and stony minerality.

Pinot Bianco

Pinot Bianco (Weissburgunder in German) has been grown in the Alto Adige since the 1850s and is one of the leading grape varieties producing some of the region's finest wines. Like Pinot Grigio, Pinot Bianco is a natural mutation of Pinot Noir.

With a similar medium body and attractive apple fruit like that found in Chardonnay, Pinot Bianco shows more elegant floral and almond notes along with bright acidity.

Müller Thurgau

This grape is a crossing created in Germany in 1882 by Dr. Herman Müller, who was born in the canton of Thurgau in Switzerland. DNA research shows that the parents of this crossing are Riesling and an extinct grape called Madeleine Royale. The exotic fruit notes show off the Riesling parentage! The best wines from this grape are grown on very steep, stony, high-elevation sites.

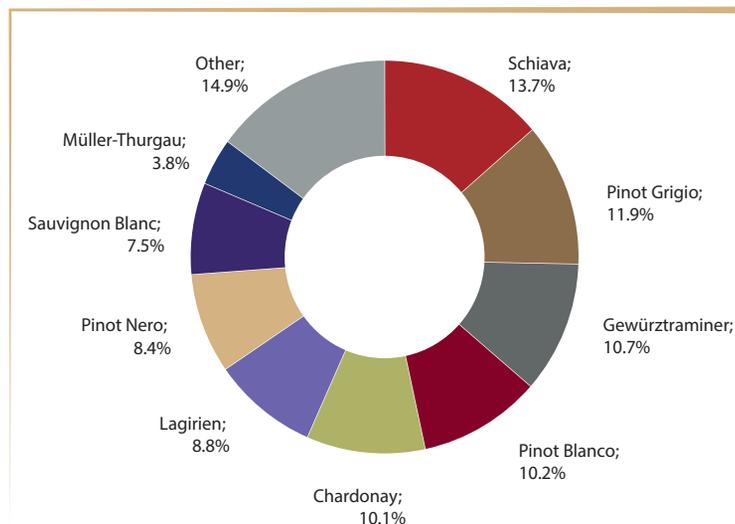
The Alto Adige's Müller-Thurgau has intense aromas of exotic fruits, stone fruits and mountain flowers with vibrant acidity and the benchmark aroma of nutmeg.

Other varieties of note

Schiava – Also known as Vernatsch or Trollinger, this indigenous light-colored red wine is mostly consumed in the region and is considered the everyday wine of the Alto Adige. The name Schiava means “slave” as it is a workhorse grape of the region.

Gewürztraminer – Although not native, it's a traditional variety that was once thought to have originated in the Alto Adige town of Tramin. Gewürztraminer in German means “Spiced Traminer”, which fueled origin claim.

Lagrien – Another indigenous grape that produces fragrant and sturdy red wines. When made as a *rosato* (*rosé*), the wine is called Kretzer.



SELLING

ALTO ADIGE WINES

The wines of the Alto Adige combine character, style and pedigree. With an emphasis on fresh fruit and crisp acidity, the wines of the Alto Adige are infinitely flexible on the table. Much like the blending of the German and Italian cultures, the wines tend to work seamlessly with dishes that marry different cultures and cuisines.

The history and description of the area lend themselves to storytelling for interested guests, but the best place to start is with the varietal. Unlike other parts of Italy, the wines of the Alto Adige are varietally-labeled, which will help your guests feel more comfortable choosing these wines.

The Alto Adige is also a very well-respected winemaking region, both here in the United States as well as in Italy. The region has the distinction of being awarded the highest percentage of Tre Bicchieri awards (from the Italian wine guide *Gambero Rosso*) relative to total vineyard area. High quality wines are a signature of this region and should make you (and your guest) more enthusiastic to explore it.

Dry, unoaked, high-quality wines of authentic varietal character, the wines from the Alto Adige are excellent when served by the glass as an aperitif, but their flexibility on the table will really elevate your guests' experience

- Pinot Grigio is a popular wine that is instantly recognizable by guests who appreciate its clean, fresh style. Its medium body pairs well with dishes from the most simple to the most complex. This flexibility accounts for its popularity and makes it the perfect wine to suggest when guests at a table have ordered completely different kinds of meals.

- Pinot Bianco is what Alto Adige residents consider to be their signature grape and it is an excellent alternative to Chardonnay. In fact, Pinot Bianco is the secret weapon of sommeliers because of its beautiful floral and green apple notes, with give racy acidity and a clean finish working wonderfully with a wide range of cuisines.

- The Müller Thurgau rarity (only 3.8% of all plantings in this small Italian region!) will entice guests who want to try something exceptional and unique. The wine is wonderful on its own, especially when appreciating its multilayered flavors. But when consumed as part of a meal, Müller Thurgau's exotic fruits beautifully echoes spiced dishes from around the globe.





WINES TO TRY

Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio

Santa Margherita is a family-owned Italian winery founded in 1935. They introduced the first Pinot Grigio to the United States in 1979 and have continued to lead the ultra-premium wine category ever since.

Region: Adige River Valley

Grapes: 100% Pinot Grigio, cultivated for low environmental impact

Style: The wine is dry with intense aromas and appealing flavors of Golden Delicious apples and citrus with a long, multi-layered finish.

Pairing: Excellent as an aperitif and versatile enough to pair with everything from salads to chicken or grilled fish.



Kettmeir Pinot Grigio Alto Adige DOC

Founded in 1919 by Giuseppe Kettmeir, the winery has been a pioneer in the region for making expressive, crisp wines. This complex and sophisticated Pinot Grigio is a classic example of the best of Alto Adige.

Region: Alto Adige

Grapes: 100% Pinot Grigio planted at 300-500 meters (980-1,640 feet) in the Oltradige and Bassa Atesina

Style: Straw yellow color with varietal ripe apple-led fruit aromas. Dry on the palate with vivid acidity and a persistent, mineral-driven finish.

Pairing: Kettmeir Pinot Grigio's flexible profile can be enjoyed on its own or can work well across several kinds of dishes from the most simple to more rich fare.

Kettmeir Pinot Bianco Alto Adige DOC

The secret weapon of sommeliers who've seen it all. The racy acidity pairs well with an endless array of cuisines. The interplay of soils and climate here are simply perfect for our wines based on niche varieties throughout the region.

Region: Alto Adige

Grapes: 100% Pinot Bianco planted at 400-600 meters (1,300-1,970 feet) west of Lake Caldaro and in the Bassa Atesina

Style: Beautiful floral and green apple notes with delicate minerality. Dry on the palate, unoaked with crisp acidity and a long, juicy finish.

Pairing: The Alto Adige is the German-speaking part of Italy and Kettmeir's Pinot Bianco works wonderfully with dishes that marry different cultures and different cuisines.



Did you know? Kettmeir's 100-year history has allowed us to develop multi-generational relationships with the growers of the area.



Kettmeir Müller Thurgau Alto Adige DOC

The Müller Thurgau grape was created in Germany in 1882 by crossing Riesling with a now-extinct grape called Madeleine Royale. The exotic fruit notes show off this Riesling parentage.

Region: Alto Adige

Grapes: 100% Müller Thurgau planted at high elevation (700+ meters / 2,300 feet) in Soprabolzano

Style: This Müller Thurgau, with its intense and complex notes of stone fruits, citrus and mountain flowers leads to a dry palate with a solid backbone of acidity and a clean finish.

Pairing: Wonderful on its own, especially to appreciate its multilayered flavors, Kettmeir's Müller Thurgau's exotic fruits pair beautifully with spiced dishes from around the globe.