



TRAVAGLINO

... dal 1868 grandi vini



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## When's the last time you tasted an Oltrepò Pavese?

by [Do Bianchi](#)



Oltrepò Pavese: it means *beyond the Po [river] in Pavia [province]*. It's a DOCG *and* a DOC in southern Lombardy in the foothills of the northern



Apennines where you have a confluence of altitude, and sandy, clay-rich, and limestone-rich soils, ideal for growing Pinot Noir, the appellation's flagship grape.

To get a sense of the topography there, check out [the Google map satellite view](#) screenshot below.

Created in 2007, [the DOCG is devoted to classic-method wines](#), made primarily with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The DOC, established in 1970, covers a broad range of still wines made from grapes including Barbera, Croatina, Uva Rara, and Vespolina. I've also tasted some stunning Riesling from the DOC.

Houston, the city where my family and I have lived for nearly four years, has a unique relationship with Oltrepò Pavese. The stretch of the Po River Valley between Pavia and Piacenza (Emilia-Romagna) is home to much of Italy's oil and gas industry. As a result, there are a lot of Italians from those provinces living here. After the decline in oil prices began to take shape in 2008, many of them sought out other careers. Some of them turned to wine. It was only natural that they would work with wines from their home region.

Three years ago, a former oil and gas executive organized an ad hoc consortium of Oltrepò Pavese to participate in the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce Taste of Italy Festival (I started to consult with the chamber that year). I had never seen so many Oltrepò Pavese wines in one American tasting before. It was remarkable.

Last night I tasted the Travaglino 2012 Montecérésino rosé brut (four grams residual sugar) with the estate's current generation, Cristina Cerri, a Bocconi business school grad who's now returned to the family fold to focus on its wine exports.

What a fantastic wine, what a great value, and what a great expression of Italian-grown Pinot Noir! I loved the rich fruit character of the wine, its freshness (aged on its lees for 24 months, disgorged May 2017), and its balance. Where Franciacorta struggles to deliver this level of quality at a by-the-glass price, the Travaglino delivers and then some.



I was also blown away by the winery's top still Pinot Noir. It lands beyond a by-the-glass price but the transparency of its electric fruit makes it an extreme value. I really loved it.

The crazy thing is that these wines are only available in the U.S. in Texas. Cristina's currently trying to expand the winery's U.S. reach. She has her work cut out for her and a long, long way to go.

Until she gets there, we Texans have the exclusive and our wine community is all the richer for it. Who would have ever thunk it? Pinot Noir from the Po River Valley: Italy's Texas tea!

