Galveston
Monthly Magazine
•Exploring Your Island Paradise•

TRAVAGLINO
IN CALVIGNANO DAL 1868

INTRODUCING OLTREPÒ PAVESE

ONE OF ITALY'S SECRET GEMS, THIS REGION'S WINES HAVE GREAT POTENTIAL FOR PROMINENCE

BY **SANDRA CRITTENDEN**

OLTREPÒ PAVESE This wine region is located in the Lombardy region of northern Italy about 25 miles south of Milan.

Located about an hour's drive south of Milan, just south of the Po River in Lombardy, Italy, lies the province of Pavia. This is a virtually unknown wine region to wine lovers in the United States even though it has a strong tradition of wine production that dates back to Roman times.

While numerous grape varieties can be found growing in this region, one is king. There are more Pinot Noir, or Pinot Nero as it is called in Italian, vines growing in the Lombardy region than anywhere else in Italy. The area is not just the top Italian growing region for Pinot Noir for volume but for quality as well.

Located close to the Piedmont border, the soils and growing conditions are comparable to those found in Langa where Nebbiolo wines like Barolo and Barbaresco are produced. The limestone and marl-rich soils are also similar to Bourgogne in France, the ancestral home of Pinot Noir. Both regions are known for their elegant red and sparkling wines.

The Oltrepò Pavese growing area sits on the 45th parallel as do the exceptional wine-growing regions of Bordeaux and Willamette Valley. It is third in European Pinot Noir production, falling only behind Burgundy and Champagne.

Oltrepò Pavese is not far from a more well-known Italian sparkling region, Franciacorta, which is also located in Lombardy. The region has a strong production, making 75 million bottles a year in total, and has an excellent quality-to-price ratio.

With all of these wonderful things going for it, why aren't wine consumers seeing more wines from this region on shelves? Italian food and wine historian, Jeremy Parzen, suggests that the region's time is coming and Oltrepò Pavese wines have great potential for prominence.

The sparkling wines of the region sit at the top of the Italian quality pyramid. The wines labeled Oltrepò Metodo Classico DOCG, call for a minimum of 70 percent Pinot Nero, with a maximum of 30 percent Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, or Pinot Bianco in the blend.

If the label states the words "Pinot Nero" on it as well, then it has a minimum of 85 percent Pinot Noir, although many producers in this category prefer to make it with 100 percent.

Image courtesy of Consorzio Tutela Vini Oltrepo Pavese

TENUTA TRAVAGLINO This nineteenth century winegrowing estate built on the foundations of a thirteen century monastery is the oldest winery in the Oltrepò Pavese.

These sparkling wines are made in the traditional method like Champagne but are sold at a friendlier price point. By law, the wines must spend 15 months on the lees or 24 months if it is a Millesimato or a vintage-dated bottle.

One of the top producers in the region is Tenuta Travaglino. These wines are already available in our area, currently imported by Alarich Wines, and available online to order. Tenuta Travaglino morphed from a medieval monastery to a nineteenth-century winegrowing estate.

Travaglino, the oldest winery in the Oltrepò Pavese, cultivates approximately 198 acres of vineyards in a wooded area surrounded by biodiversity. This innovative cellar is a top wine tourism destination in the region.

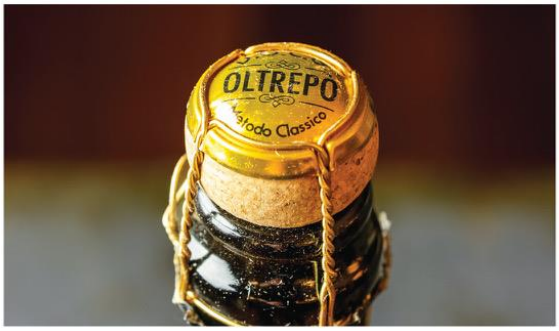
The Travaglino Gran Cuvée Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut Millesimato 2018 is made from 100 percent Pinot Nero and spends three years on the lees which adds both richness and freshness to the wine.

Bright and dry with tones of pear and apricot, this wine's lively acidity and lingering finish will easily pair with an array of dishes. The price point is $35.

While the appellation's traditional method of sparkling wines is unquestionably top quality, the Pinot Noir has the possibility of achieving that reputation on the world stage.

The Tenuta Travaglino Pernero Pinot Nero 2022 is an easy-drinking, expressive red with a silky feel and a fresh strawberry character. The persistent finish makes it an excellent pairing for grilled seafood, risotto, or pasta, and it's a steal at $19.

The Poggio Della Buttinera Pinot Noir 2022 is bright and bold with complex notes of spicy red fruit, a full body, and



a lengthy finish. This wine pairs perfectly with red meat, game, or aged cheese at a price point of $39.

Planning on visiting northern Italy? This region can easily be visited on a day trip from Milan. The surrounding countryside is a popular place for many Milanese to have weekend country houses. Beautiful and bucolic, this corner of Lombardy is particularly enjoyed by cycling enthusiasts.

Future growth is expected as rumors circulate about a handful of prominent winemakers from other regions searching for vineyard land in Pavia.

Look for more wines from Oltrepò Pavese on wine shop shelves and wine lists soon. Other recommended producers include Bruno Verdi, Calatroni Vini, Conte Vistarino, Cà del Gè, Cordero San Giorgio, and Frecciarossa.

This little-known Italian region is a secret gem whose wines have the potential to be the next "big thing." GM

Top image courtesy of Tenuta Travaglino