

Crisp Italian Whites

By Kevin Fritz

Don't miss out on the wide array of fabulous white wines Italy has to offer.

Sometimes it's appropriate to put red wines aside and indulge your taste buds with some crisper, lighter sensations. White wine can be described as fun and frolicky but are often overlooked, says **Patty McShane**, former director of WineQuest, one of Orlando's premiere wine events. "People tend to choose reds with a higher alcohol content and leave whites behind. That's a mistake."

A decade ago, Australian whites were all the rage, soon replaced by New Zealand's imports. However, Italy should not be overlooked. After all, no place in the world can claim the rich history of wine production quite like Italy.

Jay Smith, proprietor of Cavanaugh's Fine Wines in College Park, believes every wine drinker should indulge in whites, especially those produced by the Italians.

"If you are not drinking white wines, you are missing out on half of all wine," he says. "Italian whites in particular offer great pleasure and are perfect with every food. They can be enjoyed any day of the week."

One reason Italian wines — white or red — tend to be passed over by consumers browsing the shelves is because the labels can be difficult to decipher. There are 41 Denominazioni di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) or controlled origin denomination wines in Italy. This is the small pink label over the cork that assures the area the grapes for your wine come from. Italian legislation additionally regulates the use of the following qualifying terms for wines: *Classico* is reserved for wines produced in the region where a particular type of wine has been produced "traditionally". For the *Chianti classico*, this "traditional region" is defined by a decree from July 10, 1932. *Riserva* may be used only for wines that have been aged at least two years longer than normal for a particular type of wine.

Some types of wines to try from Italy: *Soave*, a dry, neutral white from the Veneto region. *Orvieto*, a blended dry white with a slight, pleasingly bitter after taste. *Pinot Grigio*, one of the better known Italian whites, very crisp and refreshing. *Gavi*, a fruity, persistent, dry and balanced white. *Lacryma Christi*, which is produced on the slopes of Mount



Italian white wines match with every food.

Vesuvius, the infamous volcano that destroyed Pompeii. It has a peachy, almond flavor with a mineral finish.

Once you find a white wine you enjoy, look for others that come from the same region in Italy then try others from the same vicinity. It's called 'chasing the grape.' Become familiar with some of Italy's most prominent wine regions, such as Tuscany and Campania.

Finally, don't forget the bubbly or *Spumante*. Sparkling whites from Italy are great for celebrating Mother's Day or graduation.

Salute! 🍷