

## Olive Oil: Production and Tasting

Driving through the Chianti countryside in Italy can make one almost feel Italian. Perhaps much in the same way that on St. Patrick's Day, everyone wants to be Irish.

The heritage inherent in the stone buildings scattered throughout the area, gives one a sense of history and perseverance. Acres and acres of vineyards are prevalent up and down hillsides. Olive groves are numerous and olive trees line driveways and roads as well as dotting vineyards.

Olive trees have some of the same horticultural attributes and needs as grapevines and therefore Tuscany is an ideal region for olive groves. Olive trees like grapevines need to be pruned heavily late winter/early spring. Olives also have a terroir and take on the essence of the area in which they grow.

Aware of wine tastings, walking into a tasting room for an olive oil tasting was a unique experience. Does oil really have a significant flavor? Is there really a nutritious oil? A visit to Félsina answered those questions. Yes, there is a significant flavor and if properly produced olive oil is nutritious.

Workers harvest olives when they show about 40 percent verasion.



*Olives ready for harvest*

In late October and November 2007, harvesting was taking place in Tuscany. At the time of harvest, olives are green, black and various shades in between. The harvesters use a small hand rake or a motorized rake that flaps back and forth rapidly bringing down olives and leaves. Workers lay heavy nets beneath the tree to catch the falling olives and leaves. Olives are placed in bins and brought to the facility to produce oil. The leaves are removed, olives crushed and pits removed. The water from the olives is removed and only the olive oil remains.

Félsina has a separate olive oil making facility. On the day of our visit, they were pressing a single varietal olive oil following the Veronelli method. Several machines are used for retrieving the olive oil from the olives. The process consisted of four separate operations. The first machine separated the olives from the leaves and stems. The second machine pitted the olives. In the third machine the olives are kneaded into a paste and protected from oxygen. The last machine extracted the oil. After the oil was separated from the olives, the oil was pumped into large stainless steel tanks.

Since olive oil does not need to be fermented like wine, it can be bottled immediately. Nearby was a separate bottling machine. Bottling at this winery does not take place until there is an order. One employee was bottling the olive oil one bottle at a time. Another machine was blending different olive oils together and bottling the oil in a larger container.

If you have the opportunity when in Italy, take time to participate in an olive oil tasting. A small plastic cup was set before each bottle of oil. Each cup held a small amount of oil. Our host demonstrated



*Olive oil tastings at Félsina, Italy*

how to taste the olive oil. For the best flavor, she held the cup in her hand and covered the top with her other hand. Twisting the cup back and forth slightly warmed the oil and released its aroma. Just as in wine tasting, aroma is important. While one person thought there was a green apple aroma, another thought there was a grassy aroma. As we sipped the first oil, there was little flavor however as the oil reached the back of the tongue a hint of spices came through. As the sipping progressed, the last varietal oil had the most significant taste of spices.

Single varietal olive oil production is as fascinating as the production of wine.

K.S.

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# The Legend of the Black Rooster

When traveling the Chianti Classico countryside one notices signs featuring a black rooster. The black rooster is also seen on seals of some wine bottles and on merchandise probably aimed at tourists. Why use a black rooster symbol for a logo?

The Chianti Classico area lies between Florence to the north and Siena to the south. Since about the year 1000 A.D., people living within the Tuscany borders as well as beyond the border enjoyed red wine produced from this area. The legend of the black rooster goes back to a time when the cities of Florence and Siena fought over the area that is now the Chianti Classico zone. Both cities wanted to claim Chianti Classico as their own. The dispute waged on for years and in the early

1200's the leaders decided to settle the issue by a competition.

Two horsemen were to set out at the crow of a cock. One equestrian from Florence and one from Siena would meet along the road connecting the two cities. The Sieneese chose a well-fed white rooster as their official timekeeper, while the Florentines chose a starving black rooster for their timekeeper. On the day of the event, the black rooster began to crow early long before sunrise and the Florentine rider set off towards Siena. Meanwhile the Sieneese white rooster took its time and began to crow at sunrise. As a result, the Florentine rider was able to cover more ground and met the Sieneese rider just 19 kilometers north of Siena. The boundary lines were drawn at the meeting spot and the majority of Chianti Classico region now fell under the jurisdiction of Florence.

Whether or not the legend is true, the image of a black rooster on a gold background is 700 years old. The black rooster was branded in 1384 as the emblem for the League of Chianti. Today, the Black Rooster label is placed on the neck of a bottle of wine from the Chianti Classico zone. If the seal on the bottle has a red border around a black rooster, the wine is a young Chianti Classico meant to be enjoyed now. A gold border represents a Chianti Classico Reserva that can age for many years.

Not all wine from Chianti will bear the black rooster. The Chianti region became a DOC in 1967 and a DOCG in 1984. The Chianti Classico zone was considered a sub-appellation until 1996 when it became a DOCG appellation. In 2006, the regulations regarding wine with the DOCG on the label were revised. In the new regulations, a minimum of 80% of the wine has to be Sangiovese. There may be 100% Sangiovese or the wine maker may substitute another red grape or grapes but may not exceed 20%. Wine makers are no longer permitted to blend white grapes in their Chianti Classico wines beginning with the



*Throughout the Chianti Classico region there are signs showing the black rooster.*

2006 vintage. The minimum alcohol was set at 12% for the regular and 12.5% for the Reserva. Other rules also dictate if a wine can be called Chianti Classico. For example, there is a limit of 3.34 tons of grapes per acre. The regular wine may not be released until October 1 of the year following the harvest. The Riserva may not be released until after 24 months with at least three months of aging in the bottle.

The next time you purchase a bottle of Chianti Classico, look to see if the DOCG is on the label. Also, look at the neck of the bottle to see the emblem of the black rooster.

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*This Chianti Classico can be enjoyed while young.*



*Chianti Classico ageing in a large oak barrel at Badia a Coltibuono in Italy.*

## Chianti DOCGs

*Chianti Classico  
Colli Aretini  
Colli Fiorentini  
Colli Senesi  
Colline Pisane  
Montalbano  
Montespertoli  
Rufina*

## What's New on Wine Trail Traveler?

We recently returned from a trip to the Tuscan countryside. We visited several wineries in the Chianti Classico and Chianti Colli Senesi zones. You can read about these wineries in the Winery Review section under Italy. While in Florence, we visited an Enoteca that conducts very educational wine tasting experiences.

### Chianti Classico Wineries

Badia a Coltibuono  
Barone Ricasoli  
Castellare  
Castello di Bossi  
Fèlsina

### Chianti Colli Senesi Wineries

Mormoraia  
Azienda Agricola Panizzi

### Florence Enoteca

Enoteca Pontevicchino

Kevin Sullivan had an opportunity to take photos at Malenchini Estate Winery near Florence. Kevin is taking a photo journalism class while spending the semester in Florence. You can view his photos under the Italy section of Winery Reviews.

## About WTT

[Wine Trail Traveler](#) is a winery and vineyard virtual visitor center. It features winery reviews, a forum, recipes, and gentle wine education.

Sign up for our free newsletter and free forum.

## Celebrating Thanksgiving Day

Are you ready for Thanksgiving? This year Thanksgiving is earlier than usual. That's good news for those Christmas shoppers who get an extra week to shop before Christmas. However, Thanksgiving Day will be here before you know it. November 22nd is only a few days away.

For many Thanksgiving enthusiasts, young and not so young, the primary focus of the day is on family gathering together for a sumptuous feast in thanks for all we have. The day is filled with stories to share, laughter and good times. Usually much of the sharing is done at the dinner table. The food focus for most is the turkey and all of the other accompaniments, perhaps the stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.

If some of your family and friends enjoy wine, try to have some quality (not necessarily expensive) wine on hand, as well as a selection of non-alcoholic drinks. Many people are overly concerned with the selection of wine to have with a dinner, which has an amazing number of flavors. Decide if you will serve dinner course by course or serve everything on the table at once. If you serve the food by courses, it is possible to offer different wines with different courses. In doing it this way you have the ability to match the course with the wine. While some might suggest pairing a different wine with each course, that seems to be too much emphasis on the wine and not on the food which has taken hours to plan and prepare.

As I researched article after article about what was recommended to serve with a turkey dinner, I found numerous suggestions. Some of the wines suggested included Pinot Noir, Syrah, Pinot Gris, Zinfandel, Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer, rosés and sparkling wines. Other writers suggested that some of these are too heavy-bodied and would overwhelm the turkey. The best solution is to choose a wine you like. If you are still not sure, visit a winery and talk to the wine consultant who can make suggestions. In winery tasting

rooms, you can taste the wine before buying it.

### Suggested Wines:

Consider setting out your crockpot and preparing a mulled wine early in the day. The aroma of the mulled wine will add a festive aroma to the air. Offer your guests a glass of the mulled wine as they enter.

A sparkling wine pairs well with almost any meal and there are some delicious sparkling wines available. Cranberry wines are available at some wineries. At Montezuma Winery in New York State, Cranberry Bog wine is their most popular wine. This wine pairs well with poultry.

### Non-alcoholic Drinks:

For those who do not drink wine or alcoholic beverages, it is important to have non-alcoholic beverages available. Consider cranberry sodas available from your local store. Serve fresh water in pitchers with lemon slices. Consider other fruits to add to water for a festive look such as orange slices or lime slices. Hot tea and coffee are great to linger over at the end of the meal.

Above all have a Happy Thanksgiving!

### If You Absolutely Need a Suggestion

**Chardonnay** - stainless steel or lightly oaked

**Sparkling wine** - many are made with Chardonnay

**Sangiovese** - good fruit flavor and soft tannins. Look for a Chianti Classico DOCG.

**Cranberry fruit wine** - pairs well with the turkey, stuffing and cranberries.

*Happy Thanksgiving  
from Wine Trail  
Traveler*

## Our Winery Partners

Stop by these wineries that advertise with Wine Trail Traveler. Be sure to check the [winery ads](#) for more detailed and updated information.

### **Basignani Winery**

15722 Falls Road,  
Sparks, MD 21152

### **Chateau O'Brien at Northpoint**

3238 Rail Stop Road  
Markham, VA 22643

### **Fiore Winery**

3026 Whiteford Road  
Pylesville, MD 21132

### **King Ferry Winery**

658 Lake Road  
King Ferry, New York 13081

### **Kluge Estate Winery & Vineyards**

100 Grand Cru Drive  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

### **Pearmund Cellars**

6190 Georgetown Road  
Broad Run, VA 20137

### **Veritas Vineyard & Winery**

145 Saddleback Farm  
Afton, Virginia 22920

### **The Winery at La Grange**

4970 Antioch Road  
Haymarket, Virginia 20169

## Our Lodging Partners

### **Hampton Inn, Geneva NY**

43 Lake Street  
Geneva, New York 14456  
Phone (315) 781-2035

### **Hampton Inn and Suites, Leesburg VA**

117 Fort Evans Road N.E.  
Leesburg, VA 20176  
Phone (703) 699-8640

### **Hilton Garden Inn, Allentown West**

230 Sycamore Road  
Breinigsville, PA 18031  
Phone (610) 398-6686

### **Hilton Garden Inn, Kennett Square**

815 E. Baltimore Pike  
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania 19348  
Phone (610)-444-9100

## Recipes with Wine

### **Mulled Wine**

#### Ingredients

1 Bottle Blue Crab Red Wine  
10 oz. water  
½ c brown sugar  
¾ c mulling spices (Nutmeg, Cinnamon, Cloves,  
Dried Orange Rind, Dried Lemon Rind, etc.)

#### Directions

Put wine, water, and sugar in a crockpot at low setting. Do not boil. Add spices (it is nice to place them in a mesh, tea like bag.)

Bruce Perrygo  
Ingleside Vineyards

### **Mulled Apple Wine**

#### Ingredients

1 bottle Adams Apple Wine  
¼ cup sugar  
1 Olde Tradition Spice Bag (may substitute your own spices)

#### Directions

1. Pour wine into crock pot.
2. Add sugar and spice bag.
3. Set on lowest heat setting. Do not boil.
4. Enjoy!

Provided by Adams County Winery

Note: Substitute an apple wine for the Adams Apple Wine.

More recipes have been added recently to our Wine Traveler's website. We will continue to expand the recipe section when wineries donate a recipe to our site.

Have a recipe that uses wines as an ingredient? If you'd like it published on Wine Trail Traveler send it to [newsletter@winetrailtraveler.com](mailto:newsletter@winetrailtraveler.com).

When you try a recipe, we hope you will take a moment to email us at [kathy@winetrailtraveler.com](mailto:kathy@winetrailtraveler.com) and let us know your experience with the recipes. If you would rather, join the free forum and comment.