

IL VINO. Understanding Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

Charles Scicolone (June 08, 2016)



Montepulciano d'Abruzzo is a red wine made in the ruggedly mountainous region of Abruzzo in east-central Italy. It should not be confused with *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*, a similarly named wine made in Tuscany.

Montepulciano d'Abruzzo is made from the Montepulciano grape variety, while *Vino Nobile* is named for the Tuscan town of Montepulciano and is made primarily from the Sangiovese grape variety.

The Montepulciano grape is grown in other parts of Italy but it reaches its greatest expression in Abruzzo. The DOC in Abruzzo extends between the Apennine foothills to a few miles inland from the Adriatic Coast.



The best wines are made from 100% Montepulciano. Under the Italian law Montepulciano d'Abruzzo must contain at least 85% Montepulciano grapes and up to 15% Sangiovese. The wine must be aged a minimum of five months before it can go on sale. In order to be labeled Riserva, it has to be aged for 3 years with some time in wood.

Montepulciano d'Abruzzo is a deeply colored and rustic red wine, medium to heavy bodied, with hints of cherry, pepper, spice, plum and a touch of blueberry. These wines can be drunk young. However in the hands of the right producer the wine reaches great heights, and can be rich and elegant with hints of tobacco, leather, dry fruit and spice. These wines can last for 30 years or more.

Montepulciano d'Abruzzo is a wine that goes very well with food. Homemade spaghetti alla chitarra dressed with lamb ragu is one of the region's iconic dishes. Other regional specialties include meat stuffed fried olives, crepes baked with cheese and meat sauce, and grilled or roasted lamb.

There is also a Rose labeled Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, known as Cerasuolo, meaning cherry red, a reference to its color. It is dry and elegant with a slight hint of red fruit and is a perfect complement to lighter dishes like chicken or fish.

For more about wine, go to charlesscicolone.wordpress.com.

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