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A Whirlwind Visit to Vinality

Thomas Matthews and I descend on Verona for Vinality, the annual Italian wine fair

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Mi piace



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Wine Spectator executive editor Thomas Matthews and I spent three days at Vinality this past week. The last time I visited Verona, where the annual wine fair is held, was in 1998.

My memory was faded, but this was an energizing time spent meeting dozens of Italian producers. It was made even more enjoyable by the sunny, 80° F weather, a welcome change from the chill and rain we left behind in New York.

Roughly half our time was spent wandering the fair's nine exhibition halls, tasting wines and meeting producers, many of whom we knew, and others whose wines we were tasting for the first time.

The other half was spent in informal meetings we set up with the help of the Vinality organizers, tasting the wines of four lesser-known regions from Italy's diverse assortment of vineyards and grapes: Liguria, Emilia-Romagna, Campania and Sicily.

These meetings and tastings afforded us a wonderful opportunity not only to taste a range of wines and appellations from the four regions, but to meet the people behind the labels. They were as diverse as the country itself, coming from generations in wine or other professions such as teachers, lawyers, photographers and even a gentleman from Liguria who designed ventilation for chicken farms.

What impressed us was both the passion these vintners had for their vines and wines and the consistent quality of what we had in our glasses. From Pigato and Rossese in Liguria, to Sangiovese in Emilia-Romagna, Greco, Fiano and Aglianico in Campania and Nero d'Avola in Sicily, Matthews and I have a new-found appreciation for many of the country's indigenous grape varieties.

Verona itself was larger and more cosmopolitan than I remembered it. We enjoyed good local cuisine and wines, including risotto with Amarone, squid from Venice lagoon, cured ham from Veneto, bollito misto and horse. To wash it down, there was plenty of Soave, Lugana and Valpolicella.

The bollito misto, at a restaurant called Locanda Castelvecchio, was an adventure itself. Each time the dish was served, which was often, since it was about the only thing on the menu, the cart was wheeled out and with a flash of a large knife, the proprietor whacked off slices of veal, ham, roast beef and tongue, arranging them on a plate.

When it was our turn, he proudly stood over the cart, honed his knife on the steel and asked Matthews, "What can I serve you?" When Tom replied, "I'm a vegetarian," I thought for an instant we were going to have bollito Matthews. Then our carver laughed and began slicing off thick slabs of meat that we were happy to consume.



Bruce Sanderson

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