



OVERVIEW

Tuscany (Toscana in Italian) is probably the most famous of the Italian regions. Among people around the globe, only Sicily can rival it in terms of name recognition. At the heart of Tuscany is Florence, an attractive city that was the epicenter of the Renaissance and then became the single most important stop on the Grand Tour that cultured young men and women took to polish their educations in the 18th and 19th centuries. Images of the Tuscan countryside dance in the minds of tourists from afar, with azure skies, green rolling hills, and picture-perfect villas. And in the wine world, Tuscany is the home of one of the longest-running star wine regions (Chianti), one of Italy's two greatest traditional wine regions (Brunello), and some of Italy's most outstanding nontraditional wines (Super Tuscans).

History: Beginning in the 8th century B.C., Tuscany was the homeland of the Etruscans the most important pre-Roman civilization in Italy, an early winemaking society, and the source of the name Tuscany itself. In a familiar pattern, the Etruscans were conquered and absorbed by the Romans. The area of Tuscany later fractured into a mosaic of principalities and city-states such as Siena, Pisa, Arezzo, Lucca, and Florence.

In the 15th century, Florence (Firenze in Italian) began to snowball, incorporating some of the smaller cities and growing in wealth and influence. The Renaissance, a cultural awakening that brought Europe out of the Middle Ages, got its start in Florence and the greater Tuscany region. The likes of Botticelli, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Galileo made Tuscany the richest center of art and science in the world in the 16th century. After Florence defeated Siena, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany was established in 1569, covering almost all of the present-day region. Tuscany basically survived intact thereafter, through its accession to the Kingdom of Italy in 1861.

FAST FACTS

TOTAL AREA:	
GRAPE VARIETIES:	Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sangiovese, Malvasia, Trebbiano Toscano, Vermentino
TOTAL WINE PRODUCTION:	1,901 hl
APPELLATIONS:	Bolgheri DOC, Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Carmignano DOC & DOCG, Chianti DOCG, Chianti Rufina DOCG, Chianti Classico DOCG, Vin Santo del Chianti Classico DOC, Cortona DOC, Maremma Toscana DOC, Morellino di Scansano DOCG, Rosso di Montepulciano DOC, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano DOCG, Pomino DOC, Toscana IGT

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Geography: Tuscany is located on the upper west side of the Italian peninsula and has a triangular shape. The coastline and border with Liguria forms the longest side of the triangle on the west. On the northern side is Emilia Romagna, with the ridge of the Apennine mountains defining the border between the two. The regions of Lazio, Umbria, and Marche abut Tuscany on the third, eastern, side.

The interior of Tuscany is a jumble of hills and valleys, offering numerous spots for those idyllic Tuscan hill villages, often surrounded by vineyards. The low-lying coastal area is known as the Maremma, a term that for wine purposes refers mainly to the southern coast in the province of Grosseto where a large colony of high-end wineries has based itself. The region's main river is the Arno, which flows from the Apennines through Florence and to the sea at Pisa.

Climate: The line of the Apennines, which runs down the middle of the peninsula, provides a barrier to weather systems moving south from northern Europe, helping to keep Tuscany milder than regions on the other side of the mountains. At the same time, the long coastline is wide open to sea breezes from the west, which moderate the temperatures. The combination makes for ideal viticultural conditions not too hot, not too cold, not too humid. In the Maremma, naturally the sea influence is stronger and the temperatures a bit cooler during the summer.

Primary grape varieties: Sangiovese, and more Sangiovese. Roughly two thirds of the vines in Tuscany are Sangiovese, which is Italy's most planted grape variety overall. Beyond the carpet of Sangiovese, a lot of the remainder is also red led by increasing amounts of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. White grape varieties are almost an afterthought. Trebbiano Toscano is the top white variety, but the more prestigious ones are Vernaccia and Vermentino.

Key wine regions: For centuries, Tuscany has been known as the source of Chianti, one of the first wines in the world that was recognized internationally for its place of origin. The Chianti region extends over much of interior Tuscany. Its historical core, between Florence and Siena, is now called Chianti Classico DOCG. The expanded area around the core is Chianti DOCG. A few communes in the greater Chianti zone earned a reputation for outstanding renditions of Sangiovese and have been awarded their own denominations most notably Brunello di Montalcino DOCG and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano DOCG.

The Maremma was a large, wild, swampy area a century ago, but it was drained and turned into usable farmland in the 1930s. Not too long after that, some eminent winegrowers from Chianti started planting vineyards to make something different, and Super Tuscans were born exceptional-quality wines that did not fit the Chianti model, or any other denomination's rules for that matter. Over time, denominations with relatively loose restrictions were created to give these renegades the protection of the legal system. Of these, the most famous is Bolgheri DOC, near the seacoast in the Maremma.

Outside of the red-wine realm, the only denomination of note specifically for white wines is Vernaccia di San Gimignano DOCG, although Bolgheri also allows white wines. Another well-known specialty of Tuscany is Vin Santo, a sweet dessert wine made from dried grapes. Several denominations permit a Vin Santo, including Vin Santo del Chianti Classico DOC and Vin Santo del Chianti DOC.

Cuisine: The cuisine of Tuscany has a very modern feel to it, fitting in perfectly with today's emphasis on fresh, farm-to-table ingredients and simple preparations that highlight rather than masking the flavors of those ingredients. The benevolent climate of Tuscany supplies garden-fresh salad greens and vegetables numerous

types of beans are a favorite that are served with minimal elaboration. In many cases, extra virgin olive oil is the only topping necessary. Unsalted bread is brought out in abundance to be dipped in olive oil, of course.

First courses are often hearty soups such as ribollita, thickened with day-old bread. Pasta is not a requirement in Tuscan meals, but if served, the regional version will often be picci, flour and water without eggs. Second courses may feature game such as rabbit, duck, or cinghiale wild boar. For the truly hungry carnivore, the Florentines are partial to enormous T-bone steaks, rare (basically raw). Fish would be more likely to be served in the Maremma than elsewhere. The standard cheese is a sheep's milk Pecorino. And for dessert, the classic would be biscotti (hard cookies) and a glass of Vin Santo.