

PREMIUM WINE CLUB

November 2021

2020 La Valentina Pecorino Abruzzo, Italy



Fattoria La Valentina was born on the hills overlooking Spoltore, which is near Pescara in Central Italy, in 1990. The owners, Sabatino, Roberto, and Andrea Di Properzio, have been managing the winery since their first vintage in 1994. Their continuous efforts to keep improving quality and to achieve recognition for the high-quality D.O.C. wines from the Abruzzo region have become the principal goals in the company philosophy.

It all starts with the land, and in addition to vineyards close to the winery, La Valentina has acquired several vineyard sites that are located at higher elevations in the foothills of the Apennines, near a national park in pristine conditions. In all their vineyards, the Di Properzios have made a strong commitment to sustainability—avoiding the use of artificial or chemical products, ensuring maximum biodiversity, and relying on minimal intervention in the land's natural processes. To this end, all the estate vineyards have been certified organic since 2016.

Rather than turning to international grape varieties or varieties that are more at home in other regions, the Di Properzio brothers remain true to the traditional varieties associated with Abruzzo: Montepulciano and Trebbiano Abruzzese, along with a time-honored but almost forgotten variety, Pecorino. The shift in focus is not on the grapes but on the way they are grown and vinified.

Pecorino is one of the most exciting new white grape varieties coming from Italy today, and Abruzzo is the source for many of the best. It is a light-skinned wine grape used in Italy's eastern coastal regions, particularly in Marche and Abruzzo. The name Pecorino means "little sheep" and is perhaps more widely associated with Pecorino cheese, which is made from ewes' milk and is entirely unrelated, save for its etymological link. The grape is so-called supposedly because it was a favorite treat for flocks of sheep driven to lower pastures. Pecorino cheese is, coincidentally, a good food pairing for Pecorino wine. Steamed white fish with ginger or chicken thighs with roasted red pepper and onion are also fun pairings. This is a classic 100% Pecorino wine. It is dry and minerally and has an elegantly floral bouquet of acacia and jasmine. Drink now.

Notes from www.wine.com & www.wine-searcher.com



\$16.99/btl

Member discount on additional btls \$15.29/btl

We apologize for typographical or price errors. Prices subject to change without notice.

Pasta with Pecorino and Pepper

Pecorino cheeses are hard Italian cheeses made from sheep's milk. The name "pecorino" derives from pecora which means sheep in Italian.

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon whole black Tellicherry peppercorns	2 tablespoons heavy cream
Kosher salt	1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1/2 pound dried Italian egg pasta, such as tagliatelle	2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves
1 cup freshly grated aged Pecorino cheese (4 ounces), plus extra for serving	

Directions:

Place the peppercorns in a mortar and pestle and crush them until you have a mixture of coarse and fine bits. (You can also grind them in a small food mill or coffee grinder.) Set aside.

Fill a large, heavy-bottomed pot with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Add 1 tablespoon salt and the pasta and cook according to the directions on the package until al dente. Ladle 1 cup of the pasta cooking water into a glass measuring cup and reserve it. Drain the pasta quickly in a colander and return the pasta to the pot with a lot of the pasta water still dripping.

Working quickly, with the heat on very low, toss the pasta with 1/2 cup of the grated Pecorino, the crushed peppercorns, cream, butter, parsley, and 1 teaspoon salt, tossing constantly. If the pasta seems dry, add some of the reserved cooking water. Off the heat, toss in the remaining 1/2 cup Pecorino. Serve immediately with a big bowl of extra grated Pecorino for sprinkling.

Serves 2 | Recipe <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/ina-garten/pasta-with-pecorino-and-pepper-recipe-1948496>

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2019 Tenuta delle Terre Nere Etna Rosso Sicily, Italy



Winemaking on Etna is not a new phenomenon – people have grown grapes on the mountain since 800 BC when settlers from ancient Greece arrived and planted the first vines on its northern slopes. But like many of Southern Italy's wine regions, the area was virtually abandoned in modern times, with the majority of its population having fled to nearby cities to find work. Those who remained ripped up their ancient Nerello Mascalese vines and planted international varieties in hopes of making a living off of their land. The region was abandoned, forgotten, and in shambles.

The 1990s were a time of revitalization on Etna. Enologists were brought in from other parts of Italy, vineyards were rehabilitated, and producers began to concentrate on quality over quantity production. By the early 2000s, vines on the mountain were beginning to thrive, and the world began to take notice. One such person was Marc de Grazia. Already known as one of the most influential importers in the U.S., de Grazia fell in love with Etna, bought his first vineyards at Tenuta delle Terre Nere, and began to make some of the best wines on the mountain. The rest, as they say, is history.

Nerello Mascalese is a highly regarded, dark-skinned grape variety that grows most commonly on the volcanic slopes of Mount Etna in Sicily. Its wines, which have had a rapid upsurge in popularity in the last decade, have a tendency to reflect their surroundings, giving taut, fresh red wines with fruity, herbaceous flavors, excellent minerality, and an earthy nuance. Nerello Mascalese wines often have a perfume reminiscent of those of the noble wines of Barolo and Burgundy.

The 2019 Tenuta delle Terre Nere Etna Rosso is full of ripe fruits and sweet spices. The palate is fresh, finely balanced, and rich with a very elegant finish. Pair this wine alongside pasta dishes, meat dishes, and fresh cheeses. Drink now through 2026.

Notes from www.skurnik.com & www.wine-searcher.com

"The purity of fruit is so impressive here with black cherry and dried strawberry to the ash and black-tea undertones. It's medium to full body with firm, tight tannins and a crisp finish. Floral and some citrus-zest highlights to this. From organically grown grapes. Drink or hold." **James Suckling 94 points.**

"A pretty, albeit informal, expression of Nerello Mascalese. The bouquet offers cassis and plenty of wild rose, with crushed stone and volcanic ash. This wine is built in a lean, mid-weight style; however, fruit in the 2019 vintage shows more richness and concentration overall. Indeed, this edition wears slightly more fruit weight with soft cherry and blackberry at the back. This is a great Etna Rosso to drink young while those primary tones are so nicely preserved." **Wine Advocate 91 points.**



Serving Cincinnati since 1973!

\$23.99/btl

Member discount on additional btls **\$21.59/btl**

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Penne alla Norma

This classic Sicilian pasta dish combines eggplant, tomatoes, and basil. Put a dollop of ricotta cheese on each plate to stir in for a creamy consistency.

Ingredients:

1 pound penne rigate
Coarse salt and ground pepper
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, halved and thinly sliced
4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper (adds spice - vary according to taste.)

1 large eggplant, cut into 3/4-inch chunks
1 1/2 pounds plum tomatoes, cored and cut into 1/2-inch chunks
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1/2 cup torn fresh basil, plus more for garnish
3/4 cup ricotta cheese

Directions:

Cook pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water until al dente, according to package instructions. Drain pasta; return to pot. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, and crushed red pepper; cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add eggplant to skillet; season generously with salt and pepper. Cover, and cook until eggplant begins to release juices, about 5 minutes. Uncover; cook, stirring, until tender, 3 to 4 minutes (if bottom of pan browns too much, add a few tablespoons water, and scrape with spoon).

Add tomatoes, tomato paste, and 1/4 cup water to skillet; cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes.

Toss sauce and basil with pasta; gently reheat if necessary. Top each serving with a spoonful of ricotta, and garnish with more basil.

Serves 6 | Recipe <https://www.marthastewart.com/334190/penne-alla-norma>