

The Wines of Calabria

At the "toe" of Italy's peninsula lies the mountainous Calabria region. Calabria's viticulture is dominated by two grape varieties, the red Gaglioppo and the white Greco. However, wines made from these grapes of Greek origin can vary greatly in style from one vineyard to another, and many other grapes are used in smaller quantities to impart different characteristics to the wines.



A panoramic view of Bova Superiore, at the southern tip of the Aspromonte massif, with the Ionian sea in the background, perfectly epitomizes Calabria's extremely rugged nature. © iStockphoto/Thinkstock.

Calabria is a region of contrast, from the cool Sila and Aspromonte massifs to the warmer hills of the coast there are significant variations in temperature and weather conditions, creating many different microclimates for wine production. The region's versatility is demonstrated by Calabria's 9 DOC and 10 IGT appellations.

The best known of Calabria's DOC wines is **Cirò**, fabled locally to be a descendent of Krimisa, a celebration wine drunk by Calabrian athletes in early Olympiads. Grown on the foothills of the Ionian coast, this historic wine could not be further removed from its famous ancestor. Modern methods of vine training and improved vinification techniques have produced a fresh, deeply aromatic wine, with no signs of the oxidation that characterised earlier versions. The best examples can age for decades, into majestic dark, brooding wines, densely flavoured with red and black fruits, tar and spices.

Fine rosé wines are also produced under the Cirò DOC appellation, and an appealing white made from Greco. Similar quality reds and whites are produced in the neighbouring **Melissa** DOC. However, reds made from grapes grown on the higher altitude subzones of Pollino, Donnici and Savuto, which are part of the **Terre di Cosenza** DOC, tend to be lighter in colour and cherry-scented. Although there is also a recent trend towards plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, historic varieties like the red Magliocco are emerging as local grapes that can make some exceptional and unique wines. Other appellations such as **Bivongi** DOC and San Vito di Luzzi, another **Terre di Cosenza's** subzone, produce excellent quality reds and whites using local varieties.



As a land of ancient port towns and isolated mountain villages, Calabria is proud of the great diversity of its wine grape varieties, many of which cannot be found anywhere else. © iStockphoto/Thinkstock.

Although the region is better known for its Cirò reds, some exceptional white wines are also produced. The most prized are the sweet wines, such as the rare **Greco di Bianco**, made with grapes that are dried before pressing and fermentation take place. The resulting wine is an amber coloured, highly concentrated sweet vintage of at least 17% alcohol.

Calabria DOC wine appellations:

Bivongi, Cirò, Greco di Bianco, Lamezia, Melissa, Sant'Anna di Isola Capo Rizzuto, Savuto, Scavigna, Terre di Cosenza

Calabria IGT wine appellations:

Arghillà, Calabria, Costa Viola, Lipuda, Locride, Palizzi, Pellarò, Scilla, Val di Neto, Valdamato

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