

## Wines of Romagna

Most tourists visiting Italy tend to think of Emilia-Romagna as a single region. Legally it has been a homogenous political territory since 1945, when Romagna was joined with the four Duchys of Emilia. In reality, and as any resident of the area will be quick to tell you, it is still two separate regions, with very different cultures, lifestyles, cuisine and wine.

Emilia-Romagna is often referred to as the breadbasket of Italy, and this description relates to the iconic food products of Emilia--Parmigiano Reggiano, Prosciutto di Parma, and the other-worldly *balsamico* of Modena. Visitors observe these products being made, stroll through the outdoor food market in Bologna, and return home with the confidence that they've seen the region in depth. They also come back with the conviction that Lambrusco is the beginning and end of the area's wine production, and that it's world-famous food ingredients are dragged down by pedestrian, fizzy *vin ordinaire*.

No mention of Romagna and its cuisine would be complete without an account of Pellegrino Artusi. This legendary chronicler of the Italian table was born in Forlimpopoli in 1820. He moved to Tuscany, made his fortune in the textile business, and began collating classic recipes from all parts of the country. His collection of 790 dishes was published in 1891 as **Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well**. Supposedly, Artusi had to pay for the first edition himself; by the time of his death in 1911, over 200,000 copies were in print. Today, the book is the most widely read volume in Italy (actually, it is second only to Pinocchio in popularity), and is known to the public simply as the Artusi.

Artusi himself was not a chef, and his recipes came from home cooks in different regions of the country. They were tried and refined by his own household help. Visitors to Forlimpopoli today can visit Casa Artusi, a complex which sprawls over a full city block, encompassing a cooking school, a first-class restaurant, and a library devoted to the works of Artusi but also containing many culinary classics of the 19th century.

The wine of Romagna is the biggest surprise, particularly after travelling though Emilia and being served Lambrusco at every meal. The signature white wine is Albana di Romagna, the first white in the country to be awarded DOCG status. Made in dry, off-dry and *passito* versions, it is full-bodied, floral in aromas and nutty in texture, filled with flavors of apricots and peaches offset by bracing acidity. The key red wine grape is Sangiovese, but it differs in style from the version produced in Tuscany. Sangiovese di Romagna is generally softer and gentler than Sangiovese di Toscana, but has the potential in the right hands to become a formidable wine, with generous fruit flavors resting on a broad tannin structure, capable of soaring to impressive heights as easily as its Tuscan neighbor.

The story in Romagna is similar to many other emerging wine regions. In the past, production was dominated by large cooperatives, which turned out local wine in bulk. Today, many small estates are dotting the landscape, producing quality wine with the help of outside investors. These investors may be people who have made fortunes in a variety of industries, but they are generally from Romagna, and have chosen to keep their commercial interests close to home. In this way, the region is being regenerated from

