

The Boston Globe

Peak flavor from the reds of Abruzzo

In their marvelously readable compendium of Italian wine, “Vino Italiano: the Regional Wines of Italy,” restaurateur Joe Bastianich and wine maven David Lynch describe the red wines of Abruzzo as a bit puzzling: “As soft and generous,” they say, “as their surroundings are rugged and unyielding.” About 50 miles due east of Rome, the Abruzzo is squeezed between the Apennine mountain chain and the Adriatic Sea. The landscape is indeed rugged. In the national park there, wolves, bears, and chamois still roam, and in the northern territory wine is made from the Montepulciano grape. Americans know these red wines as Montepulciano d’Abruzzo and favor them as exceptionally good companions to pizza, burgers, or, as a friend likes to say, “Anything with red sauce.” In many regions of Italy, a tendency to think only about how to make more wine has given way to thinking about how to make better wine. It holds true in Abruzzo, and the result has been some particularly inviting and flavorful sips with comfy tannins and moderate acidity. That they tend to be readily available is a bonus. Prices for these bottles tend to top out in the mid to high teens (as usual, we focus on bottles we can snap up for \$12 or less). At this moment in time and at this price, Montepulciano’s only competitor for sheer drinkability may be Argentine malbec. You decide.

Umani Ronchi Montepulciano d’Abruzzo 2008 Lightest of the group (could easily take a chill in hot weather) but plenty of flavor and zip. Sip with vegetable soup or with a pita chip and scoop of baba ghanouj. Around \$9. At the Wine and Cheese Cask, Somerville, 617-623-8656; Hi-Rise Bread Co., Cambridge (Huron Village), 617-876-8766; Upper Falls Liquors, Newton, 617-969-9200.

Stephen Meuse can be reached at onwine@comcast.net.

© Copyright 2010 Globe Newspaper Company.

www.winesfrombedford.com