



WINES OF LE MARCHE

Le Marche's most popular grape variety is the elegant, white Verdicchio, but **just as worthy of our attention** are the exciting reds of the region. We take a closer look...

Tucked between the rugged Apennines and the blue waters of the Adriatic, the region of Le Marche is home to several white grape varieties, the most widely cultivated being Verdicchio, grown here since the Middle Ages in the rolling hills near the sea, around the medieval hill-top town of Jesi and further inland at Matelica, in the foothills of the Apennines. Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi, Verdicchio di Matelica and Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico

If you appreciate Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, then these offerings are well worth sampling

all have well-deserved DOC status: for with an abundance of fruit and a pleasing hint of almond bitterness, this elegant, dry wine deserves its place in the spotlight. It has a depth of delicate citrusy flavour you'll find is more than a match for its northern, crowd-pleasing cousin, the ubiquitous Pinot Grigio. White wines are the key players in this region, but it is worth seeking out the robust reds from vines grown in a small area on the slopes of Monte Conero, southwest of Ancona, between the Adriatic and the Apennines. If you appreciate the qualities of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo from neighbouring Abruzzo, then these full-bodied offerings are well worth sampling. Less widely available than the Le Marche whites, we have tracked down a few fine bottles of the region's reds for you to try this month. ➤



VERDICCHIO DI MATELICA RISERVA 'MIRUM' 2012, LA MONACESCA

From Berry Bros & Rudd
www.bbr.com

Price POA

High up in the Apennines sits La Monacesca, on the site of an ancient mineral-rich salt lake. One of Le Marche's standout producers, 'Mirum' is its flagship Verdicchio. This delicately straw-coloured wine is a classic, with aromas of crisp apple, aniseed and apricots on the nose, followed by a juicy, mineral-rich finish on the palate. A complex, delicately structured wine, it is perfectly suited to drinking now, but will also keep well in the bottle.

VILLA BUCCI VERDICCHIO, CLASSICO SUPERIORE 2014

From Vini Italiani
www.vini-italiani.co.uk

Price around £16.50

Ampelio Bucci has 26 hectares of vineyard on his 400-hectare estate near Ancona, all of which is cultivated organically. The warm, straw-yellow colour suggests a well-rounded flavour, and this is exactly what awaits. From crisp green apples and a hint of flint on the nose, you'll enjoy the juicy orchard fruits, lemony-almond notes and honey in the mouth. A deliciously tangy Verdicchio with good depth and complexity.

UMANI RONCHI, CUMARO, ROSSO CONERO RISERVA 2011

From Great Western Wine
www.greatwesternwine.co.uk

Price £21.00

The name *Cumaro* is a tribute to Mount Conero which dominates the region where the vines are cultivated. A celebration of the Montepulciano grape, this wine was first produced in the mid-1980s and gained its DOCG in 2004. One hundred per cent Montepulciano, everything about this wine is indulgent. From its ruby hue to the deep notes of plum and morello and a final kick of black pepper and spice, this is a full and satisfying wine.

BELISARIO, ROSSO CONERO 2014

From Liberty Wines stockists
www.libertywine.co.uk

Price around £13.99

Founded in 1971, the Cantine Belisario is the largest producer of Verdicchio in the Matelica DOC. Winemaker Roberto Potentino also produces this Rosso Conero, a robust 100 per cent Montepulciano red. The ruby red colour suggests a flavoursome wine, and it doesn't disappoint. With black cherry and liquorice aromas, it is damson-sharp on the palate. This mellows into a luscious finish with the restrained sweetness of brambles and spice. With firm tannins, enjoy now or later.



GREAT WITH...

Well-structured enough to serve as an aperitivo, and with piquant appetisers



GREAT WITH...

Enjoy with fish especially, as the citrusy notes in the wine are well-matched



GREAT WITH...

A punchy pasta with sun-dried tomatoes, olives and goat's cheese, blue cheeses



GREAT WITH...

Venison sausages, a tasty wild boar ragù, or a porcini mushroom risotto

CASAL DI SERRA VERDICCHIO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI CLASSICO 2015

From Carluccios

www.carluccios.com

Price £9.75

From one of Le Marche's leading producers, Umani Ronchi, comes this characterful Verdicchio. From the tiny Casal di Serra vineyard (14ha) in Montecaratto, grapes are hand-harvested and carefully crafted into an elegant white wine. Breathe in the aromas of lemon and crisp green apples, which develop on the palate to pear drops, tart apples, almonds and minerals, with a long luscious lemony acidity on the finish.

CLASSICO DEI CASTELLI DI JESI VERDICCHIO 2015

From Asda

www.asda.co.uk

Price £5.75

The Piersanti winery was founded in 1955 by Giovanni Piersanti and his children, Silveria and Carlo. Today the winery remains a family-owned business and is run by Carlo's sons. This pleasing, fresh white is a great example of its type: not too serious or complicated, it's an easy-drinking wine with green fruits, citrus notes and a hint of almonds. With a long finish, there's a good balance between fruit and acidity. It's great value and sells out quickly so stock up.



GREAT WITH...

Seared scallops, grilled white fish fillets, or a plate of *vitello tonnato*

GREAT WITH...

Seafood salad, *spaghetti alle vongole* and creamy pasta dishes

ITALIA! WINE DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH

Fonte del Re, Lacrima di Morro
d'Alba DOC, 2015

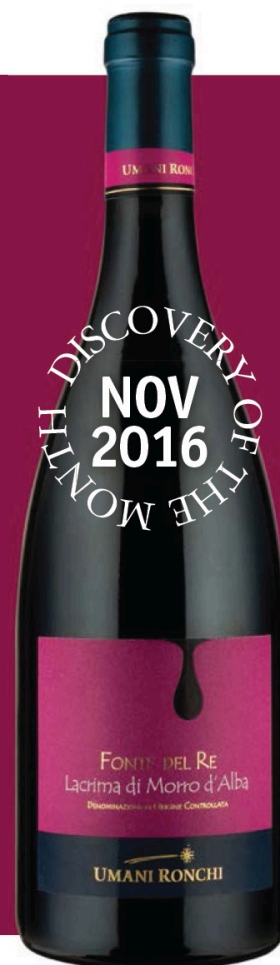
From Great Western Wine

www.greatwesternwine.co.uk

Price £12.95

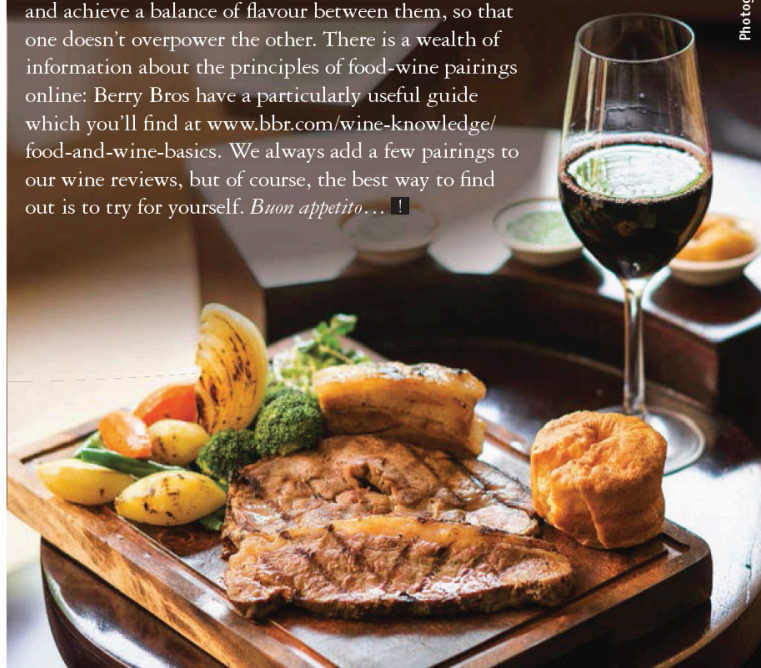
If you haven't heard of the Lacrima di Morro d'Alba grape before, you are forgiven, as it is one of the lesser-known Le Marche vinous varieties. Cultivated in tiny amounts in a small area around Morro d'Alba near Ancona and just 15km from the Adriatic coastline, it gets its name – Fonte del Re – from the site of an ancient spring, not far from the vineyard. The Lacrima vine has been existence since ancient times and gets its name from the characteristic teardrop which weeps from the cluster when the grapes are fully ripe.

From the moment this purple-red wine slips into the glass, an extraordinary bouquet perfumes the air: think Parma violets and English roses. In the mouth, you get all this sensory deliciousness and more, with a hint of geranium, solid tannins and succulent, oaky fruits. Traditionally matched with local Le Marche charcuterie, why not try it with some of the cured meats in our review overleaf? It will also complement strong cheeses, game and red meats like a hearty beef casserole or a meaty Sunday roast.



IT'S A MATCH

There's no doubt that matching wine and food can really enhance your enjoyment of a good meal. The trick is to try and achieve a balance of flavour between them, so that one doesn't overpower the other. There is a wealth of information about the principles of food-wine pairings online: Berry Bros have a particularly useful guide which you'll find at www.bbr.com/wine-knowledge/food-and-wine-basics. We always add a few pairings to our wine reviews, but of course, the best way to find out is to try for yourself. *Buon appetito...* !



Photograph © iStock