



# Italian Wine Society Newsletter

Issue Cinque ~ April 2011



Dear Members of L'Ordine Della Vite,

Several changes have taken place in the L'Ordine Della Vite Italian Wine Society organization. 2011 brought with it the formation of several committees in an attempt to actively include more members in the workings of our group. President Marie Lusins McLaughlin has overseen the formation of a this restructuring and is pleased to announce the following:

Wine Committee - Jim Elting, Chuck Spinnato, Matt Pearsall and Tom Bartodziej.  
Membership Committee - Pat Dopazo and Tom Bartoziej.  
Education & Website - Terry and Julie Robards  
Treasurer - Gwen Schuster.

We began the new year with a January 22, 2011 dinner at the Otesaga Hotel hosted by Bruno and Vera Talevi. The reception was accompanied by antipasto appetizers of roasted peppers, olives, artichokes, assorted cheeses and slice meats and bread accompanied by two Soaves selected by the wine committee.



Dinner in the formal dining room consisted of a first course of handmade gnocchi in a sun-dried tomato sauce topped with fresh shaved mozzarella and fresh basil. Salad course of baby greens, apples, hazelnuts, maytag bleu cheese drizzled with citrus vinaigrette and topped with a half grilled quail.

Seafood Cioppino consisting of a red snapper filet smothered in fresh tomato broth, surrounded by clams, scallops, mussels and fingerling potatoes garnished with fresh chives was followed by a fruity intermezzo. A fifth course of slow roasted lamb shanks with fingerling potatoes in a carrot and tomato sauce was followed by a ricotta cheesecake with wild berry sauce and amaretto whipped cream and coffee.

A Valentine's Day event was hosted by Marie and Richard McLaughlin at Flying Changes Farm.

The Spring event will be held on Sunday May 1, 2011 at Beardslee Castle and hosted by Donna Goodbread.

Upcoming Summer Event - Grabaldi Day at Flying Changes Farm - July 9, 2011.

## Fun Facts About Italy - Culture, Art, Food & Wine - by Julie Robards

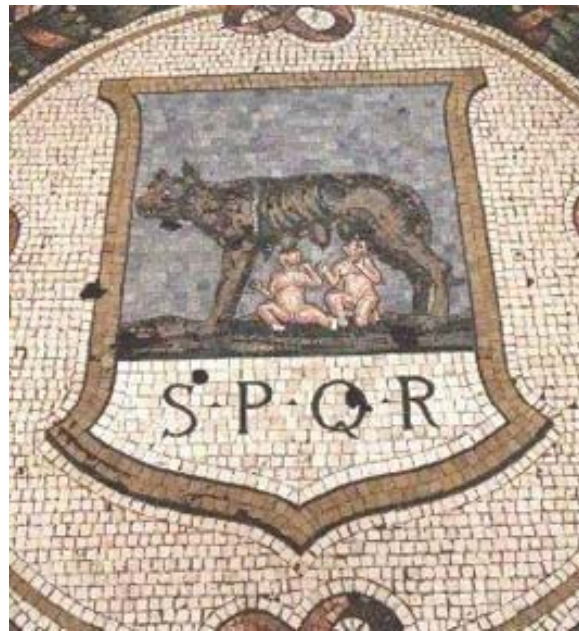
In keeping with the motto of L'Ordine Della Vite Italian Wine Society - Honoring the Culture, Art, Food and Wine of Italy - I thought it would be fitting to review some important facts about Italia - the country we base our wine society upon. We know much about the food and wine because, after all, we are an Italian wine society. However, did you know that Italy is the fourth most visited country in the world? It is slightly larger than Arizona, and borders Austria, France, Slovenia and Switzerland. Over 75 percent of Italy is mountainous or hilly. The Alps form part of Italy's northern border, and for a long time, protected the peninsula from invasion. Its longest border is Switzerland and its longest river is the Po.



The 20 regions of Italy - 5 of which are self governing shown in italics.

The Italian peninsula is surrounded by five seas; the Adriatic, Ionian, Tyrrhenean, Ligurian, and Mediterranean. Italy has two large islands, Sicily and Sardinia, as well as a number of smaller islands. The Italian island of Sicily is famous for being home of the Mafia criminal organization. Napoleon spent his first exile on the Italian island of Elba.

Within Italy there are 20 regions, 5 of which are self-governing. It is home to two micro-states, San Marino and Vatican City. Rome is the largest city in Italy, with over 5 million people. It was founded in 753 BC by its first king and namesake, Romulus. Legend has it that Romulus and his twin Remus were left to die in the wilderness and saved by a she-wolf that nursed and protected them.



The symbol SPQR can be found on many ancient buildings in Rome. It stands for "the Senate and People of Rome." This mosaic shows the legendary she-wolf that saved abandoned twins Romulus and Remus from death.

Vatican City was established in 1929 and is a walled, sovereign city-state within the boundaries of Rome. It is approximately 110 acres and has a population of over 800 people. Vatican City is ruled by the Bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic Church - Pope Benedict XVI ( 265th )



Michelangelo's most famous masterpiece of the Renaissance, the Pietà sculpted of marble in 1498 -1499, is located in Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. 98 percent of Italians are Roman Catholic. St. Francis of Assisi and Saint Caterina of Siena are the patron saints of Italy.

Florence, Italy is home to Italian art and culture. The country has has over 3,000 museums. Shakespeare set the following works in Italy; Romeo and Juliet, Othello, The Merchant of Venice, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Cymbeline, Much Ado About Nothing, Othello, The Taming of the Shrew, Titus Andronicus, The Two Gentlemen of Verona and The Winter's Tale.

Milan, the second-largest city in Italy, is home to Italian fashion. The town of Torre del Greco, in the province of Naples, is famous for jewelry making. Cameos have been carved there from coral, shell and volcanic lava since the seventeenth century.



Carved cameo profile of Italian military and political hero Giuseppe Garibaldi, fashioned from Volcanic lava during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Italy has three active volcanoes: Vesuvius, Etna, and Stromboli. The ancient city of Pompeii was destroyed by the volcano Mt. Vesuvius, which last erupted in 1944, destroying a number of neighboring villages.

Italy's contributions to science include the barometer, electric battery, nitroglycerin, wireless telegraphy and the nuclear reactor. Other inventions include eyeglasses and the typewriter.



The red, white and green striped Italian flag was inspired by the French flag introduced during the 1797 invasion of Napoleon. the colors represent three virtues: hope (green), faith (white), and charity (red). Italy did not become a united country until 1861 and its current constitution took effect January 1, 1948. The Italian Republic does not have an official motto, but it does have a common phrase: "L'Italia ÃfÂ" una Repubblica democratica, fondata sul lavoro" translated; Italy is a democratic Republic, founded on labor.

Barely a third of Italy's land is suitable for farming. Agriculture used to make up over a third of Italy's economy but now makes up less than three percent. Italy's northern region has warm summers and cool winters and in southern Italy's summers are hot and winters are mild. Farmers produce grapes, potatoes, sugar beets, soybeans, grain, olives, beef and dairy products.

### **Italian Food & Wine Facts:**

The city of Naples gave us pizza.

The average Italian eats ½ lb. of bread a day.

In the 13th century, the Pope set quality standards for pasta.

The average Italian consumes 51 pounds of pasta a year.

Pasta and tomato sauce wasn't introduced until the 1700s.

The ice cream cone is an Italian invention.

Average annual wine consumption is 26 gallons a person.

Italy has been making wines for over 2800 years.

There are over 2000 grape varieties planted in Italy.

The most planted white varieties are Trebbiano and Catarratto.

The most planted red varieties are Sangiovese, Barbera, Montepulciano, Nero D'Avola and Primitivo.

The most famous Italian red wines are Barolo, Brunello di Montalcino, Amarone, Taurasi, Nobile di Montepulciano, Bolgheri, Gattinara and Chianti.

The most famous white wines are Fiano di Avellino, Gavi di Gavi, Greco di Tufo, Soave, Erbaluce, Verdicchio, Lacryma Christi, Vernaccia di San Gimignano.



Jody and Luisa Somers of Dancing Ewe Farm in Granville, NY are dedicated to preserving the old world art of making authentic Tuscan style cheeses using only raw sheep and cow milk.

## A Visit to Dancing Ewe Farm with Terry & Julie Robards

It was a beautiful sunny, spring day when we decided to visit Jody and Luisa Somers at Dancing Ewe Farm in rural Granville, NY. Upon arrival we were greeted by Luisa, who gave us an informative guided tour of "La Fattoria" (the farm). Jody was in the "caseificio" (cheese house) working on batches of ricotta and pecorino cheeses. Both varieties are made from fresh, raw sheep milk - and since the spring lambs had just been born, the flock was producing in abundance.

We met their beautiful milk producing sheep, the young lambs, and their enthusiastic sheep dogs William and Twist. Twist played the working role as the sheep dog in Jeff Bridges HBO film "A Dog Year." The proceeds from the film allowed Jody to purchase the farm and attend cheese making school in Tuscany. It was in Tuscany, at the cheese school, that he first met Luisa - whose family owned a nearby olive grove.



After our tour of the farm, and a chance to watch Jodi making cheese, it was time for a delightful al fresco lunch. Luisa set up a sampling of all their wonderful cheeses, as well as bread, cured olives and oil pressed from her family farm in Tuscany. Our contribution to the meal was a 2003 Brunello from the same region Luisa grew up in.

The "Olio extra - vergine d'oliva" is unfiltered, cold pressed from the best fruit in the family groves. It has a fresh green flavor with a delicate peppery bite that just bathed the taste buds in pleasure. Rich and meaty, the olives were cured by Luisa's mother "sott'olio." They were first harvested and then dry cured in salt and finally soaked in olive oil to restore plumpness.

The cheeses were a savory delight - buttery pecorino and delicate fresh ricotta made from the sheep's milk and perfectly aged, subtle caciotta made from the milk of a nearby Jersey cow herd. All paired perfectly with the Brunello. After a relaxing meal in the fresh air, Jody serenaded us with authentic Italian tunes on his vintage accordion. It was the most "Italian" experience we've ever enjoyed in the states !

When it was time to say good-bye, we left with a bottle of olive oil and huge wedges of the cheeses so we could try some of the recipes from Luisa's family that are published on their website. We invite members of L'Ordine Della Vite to learn more about Dancing Ewe Farm and Jody and Luisa Somers by visiting [www.dancingewe.com](http://www.dancingewe.com). Please also note the photos from our visit on the photo page.

## AN ITALIAN WHITE THAT MERITS A SPOT ON YOUR LIST

### By Terry Robards

There was a time a generation ago when Soave seemed to be the only Italian white wine on the American market, and the dominant brand was Bolla. In fact, many Americans thought “Soavebolla” was one word. Now, all that has changed.

[Watch the Soave Bolla commercial from April 1979](#)

Numerous Soaves are now available here, as was amply demonstrated in a tasting held recently in Manhattan by the Wine Media Guild, a group of journalists, at Felidia, one of the city’s leading Italian restaurants. We tasted some two dozen of this delicious wine, but not one of them was Bolla because, we were told, Bolla is now synonymous with quantity rather than quality.

Soave is third in volume among Italian imports behind Asti Spumante and Chianti, and there are about 150 Soave producers, not counting cooperatives, although the big co-ops accounts for 80 percent of volume, with some 2,500 growers belonging to them. The wine is made mostly from the garganega grape, with small percentages of chardonnay and trebbiano di Soave, grown in a dozen villages in Italy’s Veneto region, including the medieval walled village of Soave itself, lying in the northeastern sector of the Italian boot just a few miles east of Verona.

The area is characterized by gently rolling hills, and the better vineyards are on the hillsides, rather than in the valleys, as is true in most of the other superior European wine regions. Ancient castles, churches, bell towers and aristocratic villas are all part of the rich history and tradition of the area.

The region is certainly worth a visit, and one good way to do it is to follow the Soave Wine Road, roughly 30 miles long and passing through 13 wineries, showcasing not only the wines but also many historic landmarks, architectural attractions, museums, fine restaurants and the landscape of the Verona hillsides with their abundant olive and cherry trees. Travelers can enjoy artisan foods like Monte Veronese cheese, Vialone Nano rice, Veronese radicchio and chestnuts from San Mauro.

The long growing season and the vigor of the garganega grape can result in overly prolific production of grapes and insipid wines, so one of the major recent changes in the Soave zone has been the limiting of vineyard yields to improve quality. Freshness and a certain mineral quality make these crisp, clean wines excellent with a variety of foods, including mild fish, shellfish, poultry, vegetables and many pasta dishes.

Consumers should seek Soave Classico, the portion of the district that yields the best wines because of the volcanic soils that prevail there, with high percentages of iron and marine elements that result in sleeker, mineral-rich yet delicate wines meriting the so-called DOCG, or guarantee of quality. Note that many producers do not use the DOCG designation on their labels because, among other reasons, the DOCG rules ban the use of the screw caps that have become so popular in recent years.

The most remarkable aspect of our tasting was the across-the-board quality of the wines. No single wine could be identified as having superior quality over the others, and none could be called inferior either. All nicely complemented the luncheon served in the Felidia dining room, and all of the 50 or so tasters in attendance seemed to be impressed with the general quality of the wines.

Normally I would offer my tasting notes on each wine, but they were all so similar that the excersize would be highly repetitive, so I will merely list the wines and their prices (where prices could be found): Soave Vigna dello Stefano 2009 Le Albare (\$14), Soave Classico 2009 Casarotto, Soave Classico Capitel Alto Canestrari (\$14), Soave Classico I Cerceni 2009 Combrago, Soave Classico I Cerceni 2008 Combrago (\$15), Soave Classico Rocca Sveva 2009 Cantina di Soave (\$13), Soave Vigneto a Broia 2008 Roccolo Grassi, Soave Classico Clivus 2009 Cantina di Monteforte, Soave Superiore Monte San Piero 2008 Sandro de Bruno, Soave I Tarai 2008 Corte Moschina, Soave Motto Piane 2009 Fattori (\$13), Soave Sereole 2007 Bertani (\$12), Soave Sereole 2006 Bertani (\$13), Soave Classico La Frosca 1990 Gini, Recioto di Soave Spumante 2008 Montetondo, Recioto di Soave Ardens 2008 Cantina del Castello.

In light of our motto: Honoring the Culture, Art, Food and Wine of Italy "Ars longa, vita brevis" ( Art is long, life is short).

Non Basta Una Vita,

Julie Robards - LDV Newsletter Editor