

White Wines

Costa d'Amalfi

Furore Costa d'Amalfi Bianco 2015, Marisa Cuomo

A blend of Falanghina with Biancolella, Ginestra, Pepolla and a number of even more obscure local grapes. Furore differs from the other terroirs on the Amalfi coast in that it is fully exposed to the sea and there is a pronounced saline/savory character that overlays the rich fruit aromas of fresh and dried apricot, hazelnut and fresh hay. There is an edge of spiciness here, but no oak aging, giving the wine a purity that is absolutely compelling. **** Tasted March 2017

Ravello Costa d'Amalfi Bianco Grotta Piana 2015, Ettore Sammarco

A cask fermented blend of 40% Ginestrella and 30% each Falanghina and Biancolella. This shows an extra layer of sweet, honeyed apricot fruit along with notes of straw, mineral and almond and an overlay of spice from the cask. The texture is silky, and the finish lingers beautifully on the palate. Compelling. **** Tasted March 2017

Ravello Bianco Costa d'Amalfi Grotta Piana 2016, Ettore Sammarco

The 2016 Grotta Piana is similar to the 2015 yet pleasantly different: more aromatic, with ripe round, nutty edge, yet on the palate it is fresh and lovely. Perhaps not quite as rich but very well balanced. **** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Bianco Terre Saracene 2016, Ettore Sammarco

From the village of Scala on the Amalfi coast, this 80/20 blend of Biancatenera (Biancolella) and Pepella shows a pleasantly forward fresh and dried apricot fruit along with a touch of hay, mineral, and marzipan. Medium body, balanced acidity good length. Interesting and worthy. *** Tasted March 2017

Falanghina / Falerno del Massico Bianco

Falanghina del Sannio Svelato 2016, Terre Stregate

Fairly pronounced aromas of citrus and stone fruit with a touch of honey and a minty edge. Nice ripeness and elegant balance. *** Tasted March 2017

Pompeiano Falanghina Verso 2016, Sorrentino

Grown at altitude, but the vineyards here are located in the foothills of Mount Vesuvius in the shadow of Pompeii. The wine shows a clean, fresh apricot aroma with notes of lemon peel, candle wax, and some earthy complexity. On the palate the texture is dense and almost oily, with a savory saline finish. *** Tasted March 2017

Campi Flegrei Falanghina "Vigna del Pino" 2015, Agnanum

Produced on terraces cut into the volcano of the same name on the Western edge of the city of Naples itself. The wine showed nice almond aromas a ripe apple fruit, with silky texture, pleasant balance and a lovely persistence on the palate. **** Tasted March 2017

Irpinia Falanghina 2015, Antico Castello

Pleasant. Nicely ripe stone fruit, touch of honey and hazelnut; silky texture, nice weight and length. Fragrant, pure, almost white Burgundy-like; supple and elegant. **** Tasted March 2017

Falerno del Massico Bianco 16 Marzo 2016, Trabucco

Lighter in color and aromatically a bit more restrained, yet it has classic stone fruit character, balance and elegance. *** Tasted March 2017

Falerno del Massico Bianco Pectus 2015, Fattoria Pagano

Walnuts and straw on the nose. Quite pleasant, really; dry, balanced and elegant, with a silky texture and good length. Oak aged? Definitely spicy, creamy rich and long. *** Tasted March 2017

Fiano

Fiano di Avellino Etichetta Bianca 2012, I Favati

My top Fiano of the blind tasting during a recent trip to Naples. With a few years of age, this is showing a very pleasant evolution. Although there are definitely mature secondary aromas, there is still an impressive freshness and a delicious leesy, yeasty character. Silky and slightly fat on the palate, this will continue to improve. **** Tasted March 2017

Fiano di Avellino Vigna della Congregazione 2015, Villa Diamante

Marvelous, with the ripe apricot fruit with an almost honeyed edge and subtle earth/straw/savory notes as well. This product of the warm '15 harvest manages elegance and charm with plenty of finesse. The texture is tender and dense with a pleasantly lingering finish. *** Tasted March 2017

Paestum Fiano IGP 2016, San Salvatore 1988

From was one of my favorite producers of both red and white wines, this showed a very youthful nose with predominantly floral aromas and notes of citrus and spice. The wine was elegant, silky and balanced, with a round, slightly fat feel on the palate, rich and satisfying. **** Tasted March 2017

Fiano di Avellino 2016, Antica Hirpinia

Balanced and elegant, with notes of spice, ripe orchard fruit, and a pleasant herbal note. The wine is forward, bright, and fresh with good balance and length. *** Tasted March 2017

Fiano di Avellino Tognano 2014, Rocca del Principe

Nuanced, delicate nose with notes of hazelnut, ripe apricot, mineral and hay. Solid texture and good length. Exemplary. Slightly reduced; on the palate the texture and the length are impressive but the aromas are marked by the reductive character. *** Tasted March 2017

Fiano di Avellino Alessandra 2012, Di Meo

A maturing, complex blend of earth, mineral and straw aromas. Pleasant. Chenin-like, sheepy concentrated, a but funky. *** Tasted March 2017

Greco

Greco di Tufo Serum 2016, I Capitani

Showing a lovely, expressive nose, slightly restrained at first, but very elegant and nuanced, with a good complexity of orange and grapefruit aromas and a bit of peppery spice with a minty edge. On the palate the wine was well balanced, pleasantly fresh and long. **** Tasted March 2017

Greco di Tufo Colle Serrone 2016, Di Marzo

This would reward the efforts that might be required to track it down. The wine was very expressive, with an herbal touch to a fruit that ranges from fresh lemon to apricot and tropical notes. The texture is silky and the lingering finish invites a second glass. **** Tasted March 2017

Greco di Tufo Vittorio 2007, Di Meo

To judge from the way this wine shows at ten years of age, some cellar time is certainly warranted for Greco di Tufo. The aging gave it something of the allure of an “orange” wine without the oxidation or the deep color, but with similar aromas of fresh straw, candle wax and white truffle. The creamy texture testified to copious levels of extract that led the wine to a truly superb finish. Classic, elegant and very subtle. **** Tasted March 2017

Greco di Tufo 2014, Tenuta del Meriggio

Lovely. Mature; notes of butterscotch, but a well-managed evolution with hints of toast and cream, well balanced and long. Delicious! Somewhat evolved, with creamy lactic notes a bit of spice and smoke and a hint of sous-bois. **** Tasted March 2017

Greco di Tufo 2016, Villa Raiano

Lovely. Nice citrus/apricot aromas a ripe hint of honey and mint with a mineral undertone, a silky texture and lovely length. Ripe, elegant stone fruit structure, a slightly nutty note; good balance but lacking a bit of depth. *** Tasted March 2017

Greco di Tufo Terrantica Etichetta Bianca 2012, I Favati

Truffle and lemon – an intriguing nose. Silky texture, very fine. Well done. Fresh and clean; mineral/saline notes a pleasant citrus character; silky texture and good length. *** Tasted March 2017

Pallagrello Bianco

Terre del Volturno Pallagrello Bianco Lancellata 2015, Cantina di Lisandro

This shows delightful purity of fruit with a ripe peach character and clean floral accents. Fresh and engaging, if a bit light. *** Tasted March 2017

Terre del Volturno Bianco Calù 2015, Sclavia

Fairly deep in color, this blend of 85% Pallagrello and 15% Fiano shows a citrus fruit with salty and iodine notes. There is an aspect to it that is almost a bit Chenin-like, with a slightly sheepy note and noticeable VA. On the palate there is an interesting texture, fine balance and plenty of finesse. *** Tasted March 2017

Vesuvio Lacryma Christi

Vesuvio Lacryma Christi Bianco Munazei 2015, Casa Setaro

Rich and sort of “natural” tasting – slightly oxidative, but in a good way. Pleasantly complex, with notes of hay and herbs, candle wax and toasted almond. On the palate the wine is restrained, very elegant, and nuanced with a subtle and deeply soulful fruit character. *** Tasted March 2017

Red Wines

Casavecchia

Terre del Volturno IGP Casavecchia Prea 2015, Viticoltori di Casavecchia

A crazy luminous color. This is a bit closed initially, but opens up with time to show a pronounced, exotic fruit of cassis, cranberry and pomegranate. The wine is dense and concentrated with plenty of weight, yet there is a voluptuous, silky side to this as well and it opens up quite nicely with some time in the glass. Impressive. **** Tasted March 2017

IGP Terre del Volturno Casavecchia "Cimmarino", Cantina di Lisandro

As with other examples of Casavecchia, there is a vibrant deep color and very firm tannins. This example shows a ripe, expressive cassis fruit with plenty of punch and nice, spicy depth of flavor. Although firm, the tannins are not astringent, and the wine lingers exotically on the palate. Unique and different, and delicious, just like Campania. *** Tasted March 2017

Terre del Volturno IGP Casavecchia Prea 2013, Viticoltori di Casavecchia

This is from the older vines on the estate, and sees 18 – 24 mo in cask. Like all of the wines from the grape variety that I've tasted, the Prea is very structured but the tannins are not bitter or astringent. It is marked by the cask treatment but not excessively so. On the nose there is a dark, ripe fruit character of figs and cassis with an attractive menthol note. Unique, different, very pleasant. *** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Rosso

Furore Costa d'Amalfi Rosso Riserva 2013, Marisa Cuomo

A 50/50 blend of Aglianico and Piediroso, this shows deeply pungent aromas of dark fig and prune fruit with exotic notes of tar and wild herbs with a mineral, almost salty edge, resulting no doubt from the fact that the vineyards of Furore face the sea in one of the most beautiful settings anywhere in the world of wine. This is a wine of lovely complexity, dark and brooding, with concentrated tannic power, and a long, spicy finish. **** Tasted March 2017

Ravello Costa d'Amalfi Rosso Riserva Selva delle Monache 2005, Ettore Sammarco

Positively superb. There is a deep, ripe black fruit here—still very fresh—with subtle hints of black truffle, sous bois, and porcini. This is fully mature but holding well. One of the great wines of the trip. ***** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Rosso Riserva Selva della Monache 2010, Ettore Sammarco

Another marvelous, exotic wine from Ettore Sammarco. This shows a ripe, fig and plum fruit with a layer of chocolate and ground coffee, yet no overt oxidation. On the palate the wine is opening well, with a supple texture, a robust weight on the palate, and a round, penetrating finish. **** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Rosso Riserva Selva della Monache 2013, Ettore Sammarco

The Riserva bottling has noticeably more depth and concentration than the normale, with more spice aromas and more nuance and intriguing overtones of hazelnut, truffle, and earth. On the palate the wine is more tannic, firmer and more lingering on the finish. Lovely. **** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Ravello Rosso Selva delle Monache Riserva 2013, Ettore Sammarco
Luminous color; a bit closed on the attack, but with time shows a ripe, black plum character with spice and leather. Pleasantly full bodied and tannic but not astringent. This is well-done, but needs time. *** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Rosso Terre Saracene 2016
A blend of Piediroso and Sciascinoso, this shows a profound purplish color and exhibits a lively blackberry and cassis fruit on the nose. On the palate the wine is moderately tannic, with a silky texture good length. Very pleasant. *** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Rosato Terre Saracene 2016, Ettore Sammarco
The Terre Saracene wines from Ettore Sammarco are produced from fruit coming from the village of Scala. This fruit has a particular, saline character, but it is not one of the three subzones of Costa d'Amalfi, which are Furore, Ravello, and Tramonti. This is a blend of Piediroso, Sciascinoso, and a bit of Aglianico. The wine shows a pleasant red berry fruit character and a soft, easy appeal on the palate. ** Tasted March 2017

Costa d'Amalfi Rosso Selva della Monache 2016, Ettore Sammarco
A blend of Piediroso and a bit of Aglianico, this has a ripe blackberry fruit with a spicy, slightly rustic, almost savory edge. The wine is tannic but not astringent. Pretty fruit, but lacking a bit of punch. ** Tasted March 2017

Aglianico / Taurasi / Falerno del Massico Rosso

IGP Paestum Aglianico "Omaggio a Gillo Dorflies" 2013, San Salvatore 1988
My top rating of the entire week of tasting. This little-known region is found along the southern coast portion of the province of Salerno. It is named for a town perhaps more well-known at present for its well-preserved Greek temple than it is for wine, but that could be set to change! The (also mentioned for their white wine) was absolutely riveting, with lush, ripe blackberry and cassis fruit with a gamey, leathery edge. There is impressive density and concentration here as well as superb length and harmonious balance. *****

Aglianico del Taburno Vigna Cataratte Riserva 2009, Fontanavecchia
Lovely rich notes of currants and licorice with an undercurrent of dark chocolate. Silky tannins, full body, good length. Very nice just now but mature. ****

Taurasi Piano di Montevergine 2011, Feudi di San Gregorio
Top of the line for Feudi, this is darker and much more complex, with blackberry, plum and fig fruit accented by mineral notes. On the palate it was firm but elegant, with slightly grippy tannins yet no unpleasant astringency. ****

Taurasi 2012, Donnachiara
Another very seductive style, this shows clean, bright blackberry fruit with a hint of chocolate. Firm, tannic, still very youthful and pleasant indeed. ****

Falerno del Massico called Rapicano 2004, Trabucco

Tasted at the winery, this hints at the heights this grape can attain with a bit of age, with notes of licorice and spice over an exotic black tea aroma with fresh and dried fruit and a lovely truffle-scented evolution. There is a very silky texture and a wonderful, lingering finish. ****

Campania Rosso Villa Teresa 6" 2013, Portolano Mario

Ripe, spicy black fruits with a hints of chocolate and ground coffee. Still structured and tannic, this is pleasantly firm and long. ****

Taurasi Santa Vara Riserva 2009, La Molara

Licorice and dark fruit - well done, but fading now. Soft and silky on the palate with little tannic structure. Balanced and harmonious, not lacking in depth or power. ****

Falerno del Massico Rosso Angelus 2009, Fattoria Pagano

Ripe plums and figs; round in the mouth, rich and full. Well balanced and showing pleasant secondary and tertiary aromas now. Maturing now, yet there is still a firm, powerful structure. ****

Irpinia Aglianico Serpico 2012, Feudi di San Gregorio

Located in Sorbo Serpico, the winery was founded in 1986, and today produces 3,000,000 bottles of wine from all varietals in a good year. This entry-level Aglianico was delicious, showing mineral, almost petrol notes and a ripe blackberry fruit. Well-managed tannins, a plump body and nice length. ***.

Taurasi 2012, Feudi di San Gregorio

Another delight, with very well developed plum and cassis fruit with an edge of leather and spice; full bodied; tannins that were rich but not astringent and a lingering finish. ***

Taurasi 2012, Villa Raiano

Worth seeking out in spite of limited availability, with a nose that shows ripe black plums and spice. Although it is still very youthful and firm on the palate, it will continue to open up with time and should show well for decades. ***.

Taurasi 2008, Perillo

Rewards with a big mouthful of featuring plenty of dark fruit and a lively, tannic freshness on the palate. Drinking at its peak. ***

Aglianico del Taburno Vigna 2014, Fattoria La Rivolta

Decidedly youthful, with ripe blackberry fruit with a smoky, burly edge on the nose. On the palate the wine is well-structured and tannic, yet there is a bright, elegant black fruit character that shines through straight to the finish. Structured without being overly firm. ***

Aglianico del Taburno "Diomede" 2011, Ocone

Fermented in wood and aged for one year in a blend of new and used casks, this has a fruit character that is bright yet inky dark in character, with notes of fig, plum blackberry and cassis. The palate is structured but not acerbic – there is an elegance and freshness here that is missing in some of the heavier offerings. ***

Sannio Aglianico Manent 2015, Terre Stregate

Slightly reduced but lots of ripe blackberry fruit on the palate; supple structure, good length. Lots of potential. Also bright but more expressive floral notes and blackberry fruit. ***

Irpinia Campi Taurasini 2012, Villa Raiano

A slightly savory start then nicely plummy with a bit of smoke and complexity on the palate. Pleasant. Definite potential, but reduced and not drinking that well just now. ***

Taurasi Poliphemo 2013, Tecce Luigi

Pleasant blackberry fruit with some dried herb notes; supple but rich and satisfyingly long on the palate. Mature, ripe, expressive. Love the slightly petrol notes. ***

Taurasi 2012, Tenuta del Meriggio

Plum and fig dark fruit character a bit of spice and chocolate - very pleasant, really, not at all astringent but well long. Exotic spices. Silky, perfumed, yet still full bodied and long. Very pleasant. ***

Taurasi Primum Riserva 2011, Guastaferrò

Black fruit aromas with an animal, leathery edge. Showing well now, not too astringent but definitely structured and powerful. Spicy licorice notes and exotic spice. On the edge of greatness. ***

Paestum Rosso Zero 2012, Tempa di Zoè

Ripe black fruits with a mineral edge and a hint of spice. Majestic, well-proportioned if slightly austere. Drinking well. Fresh but lacking a bit of the harmony and balance of the previous wines. ***