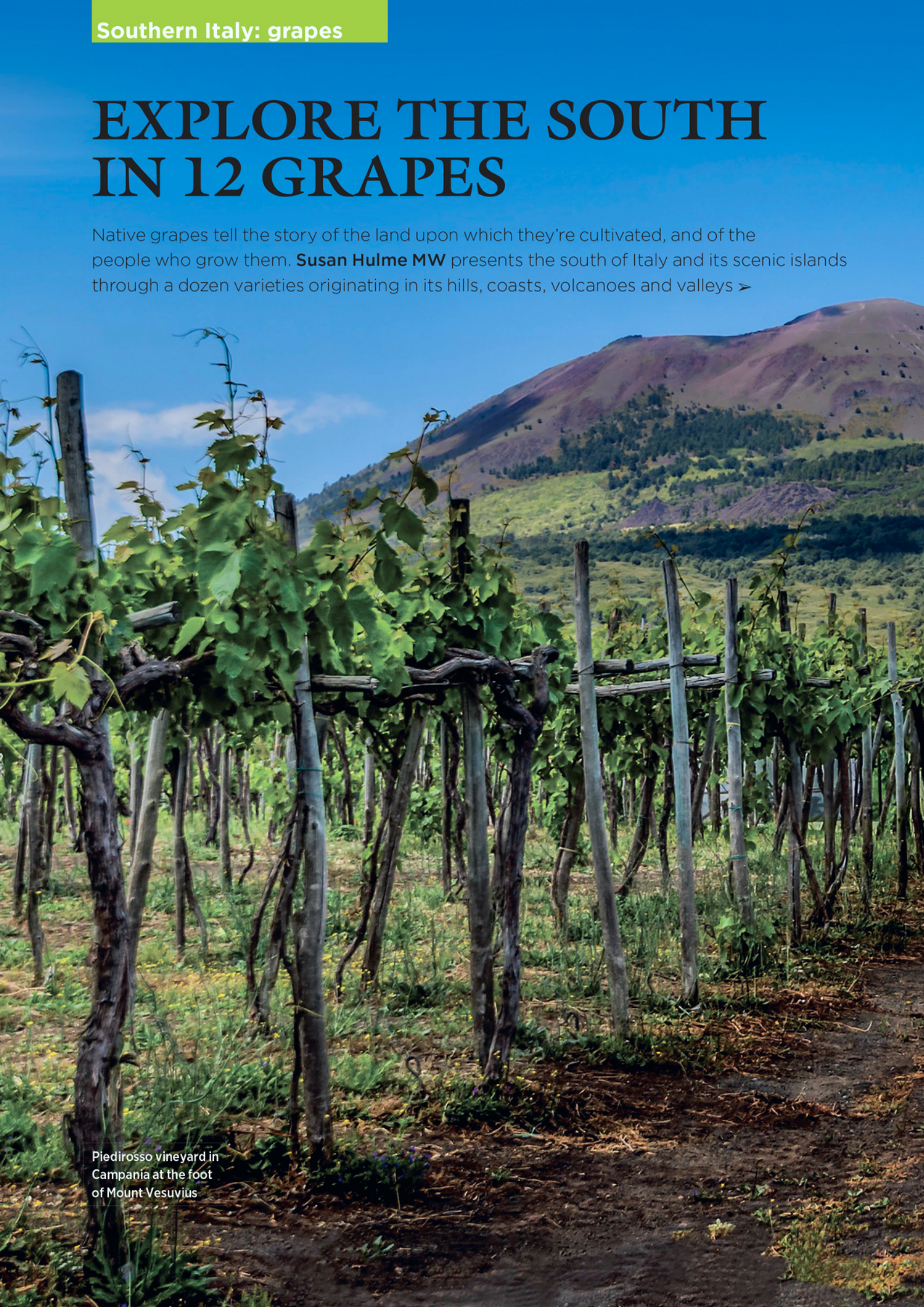


EXPLORE THE SOUTH IN 12 GRAPES

Native grapes tell the story of the land upon which they're cultivated, and of the people who grow them. **Susan Hulme MW** presents the south of Italy and its scenic islands through a dozen varieties originating in its hills, coasts, volcanoes and valleys >



Piedirosso vineyard in
Campania at the foot
of Mount Vesuvius

Southern Italy: grapes

Italy's incredible wealth of native grape varieties endows it with a special place in the wine world. It is teeming with local individuality, and nowhere does this express itself more forcefully than in its rarer, less well-known indigenous grape varieties and the wines made from them.

Italy has about 2,000 native grape varieties, with some 350 of these documented and authorised by the Italian government. For the adventurous wine drinker, Italy offers a treasure trove waiting to be discovered.

The 12 grape varieties that follow come from the south of Italy and from the islands of Sardinia and Sicily. Among them are six whites: Guardavalle from Calabria, Puglia's Minutolo, Sardinia's Vermentino; and from Campania, Caprettone, Ginestra and Pallagrello Bianco. For reds, we feature Gaglioppo from Calabria, Piediroso from Campania, Puglia's Susumaniello, and Frappato, Nocera and Perricone from Sicily.





‘Massimo Alois has passion for the grape that comes from a desire to realise his grandfather’s dream of resurrecting these historically revered varieties’

Above: Massimo Alois in his Pallagrello Bianco vineyard near Caserta in Campania

Below: Sorrentino’s DòRè Versacrum Spumante (see p87)

Campania

Caprettone is a white grape grown on the slopes of Vesuvius, often used to make the romantically named sparkling white wine Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio Bianco DOC. According to Giuseppe Sorrentino, whose family owns vineyards and produces wines on Vesuvius: ‘Caprettone is an historic vine cultivated in the Vesuvian area by the Romans.’ For a long time, it was confused with Coda di Volpe (‘fox’s tail’), and the names of the grapes were often used interchangeably by producers on their labels. In recent years they have been registered as two distinct varieties; DNA studies have found that Caprettone is in fact related to Ginestra and to the red variety Piediroso, but not to Coda di Volpe. Caprettone has good acidity with white-flower and citrus aromas, and lends

itself well to sparkling wines. It’s delicious with light appetisers or shellfish.

Ginestra is a fascinating white variety that is grown on steeply terraced vineyards, clinging to vertiginous parts of the Amalfi coast in Campania, especially near the towns of Ravello and Amalfi. Ginestra translates as ‘broom’, and both the grapes and the wine smell of that beautiful wild plant with pretty floral, green aromas. One complication is that there are several local names for the same grape variety, as is so often the case in Italy: Ginestra is known as Biancatenera or Biancazita, depending on where it is grown. It has the potential to produce some excellent wines, and in the hands of Ettore Sammarco from Ravello, it does just that.

Pallagrello Bianco is one of a group of rare grapes (including Asprinio, Casavecchia and Pallagrello Nero) grown in the northern corner of Campania near the town of Caserta, not far from the Tyrrhenian coast. They have an illustrious past, deemed worthy of inclusion in the famous Vigna del Ventaglio vineyard in the Royal Caserta Palace of King Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies in the 1700s. In the early 20th century, they almost became extinct – until a small group of enthusiastic producers helped to revive them. The Alois family, who came originally from France and worked for the Bourbon king, produces a delicious Pallagrello Bianco. Massimo Alois (*pictured above*) has a passion for the grape that comes from a desire to realise his grandfather’s dream of resurrecting these historically revered varieties. ➤





ALOIS

Morrone Terre del Volturno, 2018



This is a lovely example of the rare Pallagrello Bianco variety. Grown in Pontelatone in the northern part of Campania near Caserta, vines are situated at an altitude of 300m above sea level. Gentle creamy notes on the nose, more textural than aromatic, with a savoury leesy quality. It's bright and lively on the palate with juicy acidity and a tangy, grapefruit pith finish.

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Exciting reds

Calabria, Campania & Puglia

Gaglioppo, a red variety from Calabria, Italy's 'toe' region, is one of the nation's oldest grape varieties, dating back to a time when southern Italy and Sicily were colonised by the ancient Greeks. It is the principal grape for wines in the Cirò DOC, situated near the town of Cirò on the Ionian coast, and has recently been shown to be a crossing between Sangiovese and Mantonico, a local Calabrian grape. The wines it produces are sometimes described as similar to a lighter, more savoury Nebbiolo.

Like Nebbiolo, it loses its colour easily and can have a reddish-orange tone. Andrew Johnson of London merchant WoodWinters says: 'Gaglioppo is simply the most underrated grape variety I know of. Cirò, the main DOC, is often referred to as the Barolo of the south, and when you see a good example, it is plain to see why. Top-quality Cirò now offers the same sort of value you could find in Piedmont 10 or 15 years ago.'

Piedirosso – literally meaning 'red foot', due to the likeness of the stalks to a pigeon's foot – is the second most-planted variety in Campania, but it is still not widely known as a single varietal. It is similar to Sicily's Frappato in that usually it is blended with other

Above: sparkling red Lacryma Christi, served with Neapolitan pizza

Below: Vallone's Tenuta Serranova Susumaniello Rosso from Salento in Puglia (see p88)



varieties (in this case Aglianico), softening the blend. Piedirosso is also the main grape in the famous DOC red sparkling wine grown on the slopes of Vesuvius, Lacryma Christi Rosso. It produces lightly coloured red wines with crunchy red-berry fruits, green herbal or olive notes, light tannins, and moderate acidity. A classic combination is sparkling Lacryma Christi with Neapolitan pizza.

Crossing Italy from Campania to the Brindisi area of Puglia, Italy's 'heel', **Susumaniello** is a red grape variety with plenty of colour, acidity and alcohol, producing robust, firmly structured wines. In decline until recently, it is now one of Italy's up-and-coming native grape varieties, and plantings have been increasing.

Traditionally it is blended with the better-known local Negroamaro in robust reds or rosés. However, some producers are making single-varietal Susumaniello; at Agricola Vallone, Giuseppe Malazzini believes that 'there is market demand for this unique native variety'. He adds: 'Susumaniello's strengths are that it has a beautiful combination of fruit and spice, and is well structured with round, enveloping tannins.' ➤

Top Wines in Campania Stories



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Susan Hulme MW is a wine writer specialising in Italian wines, who travels regularly to wine regions across Italy. She runs her own wine education and consultancy company, Vintuition, which provides training and courses for both wine trade and public

Offbeat south: Hulme's 15 to try

Sorrentino, DòRè Versacrum Spumante, Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio, Campania 2018 90

N/A UK www.sorrentinovini.com

Made mostly from Caprettone grapes grown on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, this is a delightful sparkling wine with gentle toast, cream and red apple aromas and crunchy, clean citrus flavours. Crisp, fresh and invigorating, it's the perfect aperitif wine to sip while gazing over the beautiful bay of Naples at the island of Capri, with Ischia and Procida in the distance. **Drink 2021 Alcohol 12.5%**

① Ettore Sammarco, Terre Saracene, Costa d'Amalfi, Campania 2019 93

£20.88 (2018) [Great Wines Direct](http://GreatWinesDirect.com)

A wonderfully evocative wine that takes me right back to Ettore Sammarco's tiny cellar squeezed between steep cliffs and the beautiful, rugged Amalfi coast. From local varieties Biancatenera and Pepella, with 20% Falanghina, the nose blends sea salt, Amalfi lemons and wild broom (ginestra) with hints of orange blossom. A very subtle, unassuming wine until the silky texture and subtle ebb and flow of flavours and aromas has you under its spell, and you realise the bottle is empty. **Drink 2021-2023 Alc 13.5%**

Cilento, Campania 2018 93

£29-£36.40 Hedonism, Lea & Sandeman, WoodWinters

Luigi Maffini's vineyards are a 1.5-hour drive south of Naples, inland from the famous Greek ruins at Paestum in the Cilento National Park. This Fiano is something special – it's a sunnier, wild herb, exotic version of the better-known Fiano di Avellino. Enticing toasted apricot and exotic spice aromas give way to a silky rich texture balanced by fresh acidity and bright citrus flavours. Sea salt and mineral notes provide a long, lingering finish. Organic. **Drink 2021-2025 Alc 13.5%**

Santa Venere, Vescovado, Calabria 2019 92

N/A UK www.santavenere.com

The Guardavalle grape variety is so exciting and deserves to be better known. The first impression is of honeysuckle, summer flowers and ripe grapes, with some waxy, lime notes – delicately fragrant but so persistent. Filigree citrus flavours contrast with a full texture, like a little piece of lace melting on the palate. A little tangy grapefruit pith, slightly bitter, adds to the length and intrigue. Organic. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 13%**

③ Siddùra, Maia, Vermentino di Gallura,

£23.47 Independent Wine

Raised on the granite soils of the Gallura region on Sardinia's wild northeast coast, this Vermentino has a long, elegant and mineral finish. Opening with delicate aromas of peach and white flowers, the palate goes on to reveal crisp green apple and citrus flavours followed by a savoury, salty aftertaste. Imagine the mineral qualities of a Chablis and the crunchy green flavours of a Sancerre – zesty, lively, fresh and versatile; summer flavours in a glass. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 14.%** ➤



Southern Italy: grapes

native varieties: Fiano, Falanghina and Greco. It offers great value and is so deliciously drinkable. It's bright gold in colour with salty, lemony aromas and a waxy note reminiscent of Semillon. Crisp and zesty, it's medium-bodied with sea-salty citrus flavours that bring to mind a brisk walk along a Mediterranean seashore. **Drink** 2021 **Alc** 13%

Alois, Morrone, Terre del Volturno, Campania 2018 90

POA *Passionevino*

This is a lovely example of the rare Pallagrello Bianco grape variety (see p87). Grown in Pontelatone in the northern part of Campania, near the city of Caserta, the vines are situated at an altitude of 300m above sea level. There are gentle, creamy notes on the nose – more textural than aromatic in character – with a savoury leesy quality. On the palate, it's bright and lively with juicy acidity and a tangy, grapefruit pith finish. **Drink** 2021-2022 **Alc** 13%

④ Cantine Paololeo, Triade Bianco, Campania 2019 89

£8.99 *Waitrose*

Triade is an unusual but exciting blend of three of Campania's most celebrated

