

**Tasting Notes
August 2020 Pick-up
Wines of Puglia, Italy**



Welcome to your August 2020 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is the region of Puglia (sometimes called Apulia), the easternmost region of Italy. When you're thinking of the boot-shaped country of Italy, Puglia is the heel of the boot.

Puglia is an up-and-coming region for Italian wines. Wine grapes were first planted there over 1,000 years ago by the Greeks, and for centuries, it was known as a strong agricultural region producing inexpensive wine for local consumption. However, in the 1960s and 70s as the middle class grew worldwide and wine became an affordable luxury, Puglia gained a negative reputation for starting to produce mass quantities of very poor-quality bulk wine for blending. Then in the 1990s things started to turn around and the area benefited from government investments in tourism and improved winemaking.

These days the region is known for its well-valued and easy-to-enjoy red wines. The most famous grape is Primitivo, which originally comes from Croatia and is either the exact same or a very close genetic relative of Zinfandel (wine geneticists are still working on this question). The 2nd grape of Puglia is Negroamaro, which produces either deep, bold reds or famously tasty rosatos. Other well-known local red grapes include Aglianico, Nero de Troia and Susumaniello. Fiano is the most common local white grape.

Thank you so much for your continued support of the Smart Wine Club even during these incredibly strange times. Remember, if you introduce a friend who then decides to join, you'll BOTH receive 10% off your next tote.

If you find a wine you like, I'm happy to order more of it for you, whenever possible.

Don't forget, you can always return your wine club red bags to the store when you come in to pick up.

- **Antica Masseria del Sigillo "Sigillo Apio" Fiano Bianco IGP** – The Fiano grape is believed to be native to southern Italy and grows well in the regions of Puglia and Campania. Although this winery is located in Puglia, the grapes for this one are actually grown in nearby Campania. The wine is pale yellow in color with lovely aromas of pear, pineapple and honey. Excellent acidity with a smooth, toasty finish.
Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: Pairs perfectly with grilled shellfish or fresh, creamy cheeses such as burrata (which hails from the Puglia region!)

- **Tormaresca “Calafuria” Negroamaro Rosato Salento IGT** – Tormaresca is perhaps the most well-known winemaker in Puglia, owned by the most well-known winemaking family in all of Italy, the Antinoris. This rosato (rosé) is 100% Negroamaro, from the sub-region of Salento. You'll enjoy lovely hints of stonefruit, lychee and delicate floral notes. Traditionally, the poor country people of Puglia used to ferment their own negroamaro rosatos from the pink juice leftover in the bottom of the wagons after grape-picking. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: A delicious pairing for this rosato would be a nice piece of seared tuna, marinated in lemon and herbs

- **Masseria Li Veli “Passamante” Negroamaro Salice Salentino DOC** – It is fun to compare the above negroamaro rosato with this typical red negroamaro. The name of this grape means “black bitter” but don't fear! Although the grapes have very deeply colored skins, the wine itself is very elegant and not at all bitter. You'll find aromas of sour cherry, red fruits and spices with well-balanced soft tannins. Reg retail: \$14 Smart price: \$13

Pairing: Negroamaro reds pair perfectly with the bold flavors of fresh tomato bruschetta, spicy salami, and grilled meats

- **Masseria Li Veli “Askos” Susumaniello Salento IGT** – From the same winemaker, here is a grape I'll bet you've never heard of! It is believed closely related to Sangiovese, crossed with an as-yet unknown grape. The wine has a lovely bouquet of red berries, black currant, licorice, leather and rhubarb. On the palate, the wine is rich and well-balanced with a surprisingly fresh finish. Reg retail: \$21 Smart price: \$19

Pairing: Susumaniello pairs well with game meats or earthy dishes like mushroom risotto

- **Tormaresca “Nèprica” Primitivo IGT** – Our second bottle from Tormaresca, this is a young and modern Primitivo. Aged only in stainless steel, the wine shows an intense ruby-red color with fruity aromas of plum, geranium and light anise notes. The flavors are round and nicely structured with lip-smacking juiciness. Reg retail: \$12 Smart price: \$10

Pairing: Thinking of cheese pairings, this one would go perfectly with dry, nutty cheeses such as aged Gouda or Gruyère.

- **Varvaglione Papale Primitivo di Manduria DOP** – The grapes for this bolder Primitivo are harvested from old-vine, free-standing plants. The color is a deep burgundy red with hints of violet and the wine is aged 8 months in French oak. The bouquet is intense with pops of cocoa, licorice, berry jam and dark cherries. It is smooth with a lingering, aromatic aftertaste. Reg retail: \$23 Smart price: \$20

Pairing: This bolder type of Primitivo would pair perfectly with slow-braised beef short ribs – maybe save this one until fall rolls around?