

Art

Inside Piazza della Signoria

Once a centralized square for political and civic affairs, the Piazza della Signoria has flourished in its transformation to a social center rich with art and history. Decorated with statues, stores, and restaurants, the piazza blends the past with modernity for visitors to experience.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the piazza is the price: it is free. Out of all the paid excursions available in Florence, visitors have access to history and art for no price.

The piazza is open, allowing visitors to breathe in the fresh air and immerse themselves in the elements while admiring the sculptures on display. For some, a visit contains the warm sun, creating a beautiful day. For others, they may be welcomed with rain and a gray sky. Walking along the cobblestone roads, individuals must navigate through crowds, tempted by the surrounding attractions.

History

These same cobblestone streets that visitors walk upon once led a path to political importance and strength led by the Medicis.

The [Medicis](#) are one of the most important families in the history of Florence. Cosimo de Medici was primarily the member of the family tree that would establish his political power in the city and promote the artists that would produce the sculptures in the piazza.

As the power of the Medici family grew, the decorations of Piazza della Signoria grew too. The piazza bookmarks the stories of the Medicis, including their return to Florence and their rise to power. More specifically, the statues mark their wielding of power. The piazza acted as the civil and political hub, and has remained one of the liveliest places in Florence.

Each statue acts as a chapter in Florence's book of history.

The Details

When approaching the piazza, *David*, *Marzocco*, *Biancone*, *Hercules and Cacas*, and *Judith and Holofernes* are in an open space. Their grandeur and detail reel visitors in, creating large crowds around each. Rain or shine, there will be a mass of people coming to experience the piazza. Individuals from every corner of the world can be found in this spot, whether they are with a tour group or by themselves. Pictures and discussion pale in comparison to the live sight of these sculptures.

Cathy Cardinal is one of the many visitors in the piazza. From Canada, she discusses her interest and experience in Florence with the amount of art available, especially in such an easily

accessible place like the Piazza della Signoria. “It’s [my] fascination with it. Growing up and seeing on TV and reading about it. I say this because I would come back in a heartbeat: this is a very welcoming, preserved, historical place,” she says.

David is immediately recognizable. The piece’s influence in art history and popular culture has solidified the work as a staple. Though this statue is a replica of the one in the Galleria dell’Accademia by [Michelangelo](#), the original once stood in this exact spot. *David* stands on the left side of the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio.

David’s detail and accuracy to human stature can only make one be in awe of the artistic abilities demonstrated. Every vein and muscle is accentuated. His expression remains concerned, as shown in his furrowed brows. He carries a sling over his shoulder.

David comes from a [biblical tale](#) of David and Goliath; however, many interpretations sought the more violent side of things. This interpretation of David shows him in a more heroic stance alone, amplifying the symbol of power and strength.

Marzocco, similar to *David*, is a replica. The original version was created by [Donatello](#) and was the first statue placed in the piazza. The original is currently held in the Bargello.

The lion on a pedestal, holding a shield with a red symbol, represents Florence’s citizen militia as this is their coat-of-arms. Yet again, this statue represents the strength and power of the Florentine people.

Marzocco stands looking over the piazza. His mane is intricately designed, allowing it to lay on the statue as if it were real. It has movement to it that creates a sense of realism. His claws are designed to look sharp and hold on to the shield of the people. His face is worn from the elements but still shows an expression of protection overlooking the people of Florence.

Even as a visitor, one can see how the lion creates pride. The symbol of Florence combined with the symbolism of the lion only help to achieve the feeling of the nation when visited.

Judith and Holofernes is significantly smaller compared to the other statues that stand along the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio. This is another piece by Donatello, though this was towards the end of his career. The Medici family commissioned this piece to continue the “underdog” theme that was present in *David*.

The piece follows another [biblical story](#) from the Old Testament, emphasizing female power and sacrifice. It promotes patriotism as well, a continued theme in many of the statues that accompany this piece.

The bronze statue depicts Judith standing over Holofernes. She is dominant in this state of violence. Her expression demonstrates strength and success as she holds Holofernes’s hair in one hand and a sword in the other. Holofernes looks as if he has accepted his fate, hands loosely holding the pedestal and eyes closed for the unfortunate ending that will occur.

The fountain, created by [Bartolomeo Ammannati](#), stands near the Palazzo Vecchio. The fountain was commissioned by Cosimo I de Medici and contributes to the underlying theme of national pride and power that is seen amongst the other sculptures. This time, it references Florence's power of the sea.

The piece utilizes both marble and bronze. Neptune is the prominent figure. He stands above all of the other details, looking towards the Loggia dei Lanza, which houses the other statues in the piazza. Neptune is upon a chariot, which is being pulled by horses. On the four corners of the fountain, there are bronze sculptures of multiple mythological figures. The size of this fountain attracts visitors and allows them to admire the details of such. There is power in such an extravagant art piece. Combined with the symbolism of Florence's sea dominance, it is easy to feel the importance and confidence that the country once exuded.

Canadian visitor Cathy Cardinal also discussed her awe of the fountain and its surrounding work. "[The way it was] built in marble and just the construction of it, how they did it back then. All of this, these sculptures, it's amazing," she says.

Hercules and Cacus was sculpted by Baccio Bandinelli. This sculpture was meant to be a companion piece to David, and there are details that complement each other. [Hercules](#) has a similar stance with his right arm by his side and glancing over his left shoulder. His expression contains a furrowed brow; this time, the expression looks more strained and almost sad. The expression of Cacus, however, is angry. He is in a squat below Hercules, suggesting defeat.

The sculpture, yet again, is a reflection of political intrigue: overcoming tyranny. The Medicis were in and out of Florence, due to expulsion. When the Medicis were back in Florence, they still appreciated the statue as it became a symbol of defeating enemies instead.

The Loggia dei Lanza stands next to the Palazzo Vecchio and houses the other statues in the Piazza della Signoria. This is an arched and covered gallery from the 14th century. It is connected to the Galleria degli Uffizi. It was once used to host public meetings and ceremonies, but it is now the outdoor sculpture gallery known today.

Perseus with the Head of Medusa by Benvenuto Cellini demonstrates a well known event in Greek mythology. This piece was commissioned by Cosimo I de Medici. [Medusa](#) was a symbol of the Republic with the snakes representing the disagreements that truly disrupt democracy. Though the political importance demonstrates a point in time for the history of Florence, the tale of Medusa is quite sad. Looking at this sculpture, it can be difficult to celebrate Perseus when Medusa's story is quite tragic itself.

The bronze sculpture is quite detailed in the way it portrays this violent scene. Medusa's body lies lifeless, spilling over the edge of the pillar. Perseus looks down with an accomplished or smug look on his face. He holds the head of Medusa by the snakes on her head, and her face is empty of expression.

Marzocco is not the only lion that is present in the piazza. The *Medici Lions* are the guards of the Loggia dei Lanza. The two lions look to the side, almost at each other while their paws rest on spheres. Similar to *Marzocco*, the lions are a symbol of protection and strength, wielding great power over the Florentine people, just like that of the Medici family.

The lions are extremely expressive. The lion on the left of the entrance to the gallery has his mouth open and his brows are furrowed, creating a look of concern. The other lion has his mouth barely open with his brows just slightly furrowed. This creates a slight contrast in the lion's expression, almost as if the one on the right of the entrance knows there's more power in their protection than the other may realize.

Though the world is ever changing, the environment of Piazza della Signoria remains the same. Betty Gore, a visitor from South Carolina, discusses her return to Florence. "Just all of this, it's amazing. The statues, the museums," she admires. "I've been here once and totally forgot. So, just coming back and seeing everything again, it's incredible."

A signifier of its history and influence in the arts, Piazza della Signoria tells the stories that make up the foundation of the city. A visit welcomes individuals into a world of the 13th century, and leaves you wanting to tell the modern tale.

Cuisine

The Sweet Life: Navigating Gelato in Italy

Strolling down Italian roads, the fragrant tins of gelato call out to those who pass by. Someone is indulging in the treat, and it is difficult to find a corner of the city where it is not being consumed.

When traveling through Italy, there is not a corner of the major cities where you cannot find someone indulging in gelato. This sweet treat has followed a path to fame, which resulted in the streets of Italy being decorated with gelato shops.

Cup or cone, gelato can be found in the hands of many. The density and intensity of the flavors allows for a different experience from that of sorbet or ice cream. Gelato is typically fresh and slow to melt. The elasticity of the dessert makes for an interesting texture, but one that most people certainly enjoy.

Origins of Gelato

Looking back into the sweet history of this compelling confection, the beginning traces back to the origins of frozen desserts. Though the roots are in Chinese culture, Romans soon joined in when they began to utilize the ice from, what would be, Italian volcanoes. The Romans took the ice and flavored it with honey.

While the ice of Etna and Vesuvius provided a treat for the Romans many years ago, the modernity of gelato begins with the Italian Renaissance. The minds behind it all were that of the Medici family. They sponsored a contest, seeking the greatest frozen dessert. Individuals entered this contest, but only one was successful: Cosimo Ruggeri.

[Ruggeri](#) was no chef; in fact, he was an alchemist and an astrologer. He worked closely with Caterina de Medici and developed a type of gelato, though it is not the gelato we know today.

Beyond Ruggeri, there was [Bernardo Buontalenti](#). Similar to Ruggeri, he was not a chef. He was a stage designer and architect. He is considered the “inventor” of gelato, as his recipe was developed into the gelato that is seen through the streets of Italy. Rather than creating a similar sorbet-like creation, this recipe used egg cream, allowing it to be the thicker consistency that is known all too well.

While the recipe of gelato was solidified by this point, it was not as popular. This changed when [Francesco Procopio](#) got the word out about this frozen dessert. He even opened a cafe in France, called Le Procope. This was one of the first cafes in the area, and he was able to bring the delicacies further than just Italy.

As gelato started to gain traction, and it was a must-have among visitors, technology needed to follow this rapid pace. [Bruto Carpigiani](#) is the name behind many of the technological innovations for gelato. His initial machine allowed for a more efficient and quick process, and it was more hygienic. When he passed, his brother created Carpigiani, the label that is now famous and a leader in the making of Italian gelato machines around the world. The company is located near Bologna and there is now a museum dedicated entirely to gelato, the first and only of its kind.

The Sweetest Con

When it comes to gelato, the process of choosing a shop and knowing what to look for can be overwhelming. There are a few tips, though, that can help ease the process and make your gelato experience a good one.

One of the more important details when it comes to good gelato is to look for what it is served in. It is easy to spot shops that have mounds of gelato in the window, but surprisingly the best gelato doesn't need to show off. When the gelato is in metal tins (or even better with lids), one can know that it is being kept at the proper temperature. The mounds indicate extra ingredients that detract from the fresh and natural appeal of gelato.

Furthermore, more muted colors indicate more natural ingredients. Coloring doesn't need to be added to heighten the experience. Bright colors and decorations may be compelling, but this does not equate to a good cup of gelato.

“I think the big, colorful mounds definitely catch people's attention,” visitor Erica McDonal says. “When you look up ‘good gelato places’ though, that’s not what pops up.” She found herself looking up places before her visit, and things to look for. The “less flashy” places were the ones she found herself drawn to more.

Essentially, a specific phrase can be used to guide visitors through gelato picking: less is more.

The Place to Be

Italy has many places to enjoy gelato. Taste testing and exploring all of these shops would be time consuming. There are two shops in Tuscany, however, that have served gelato that checks all of the boxes: La Sorbettiera and Gelateria Dondoli.

La Sorbettiera

[La Sorbettiera](#) is located in Florence, though they also have a few other locations. Antonio, the owner, has been around gelato for nearly his entire life. From just 14 years old, he has learned the ways of gelato from Germany. He founded La Sorbettiera with his wife Elisa in 2007 and the Florence location has been around since 2009.

The gelato shop sits just by a park, so customers can sit on the street in their seats or travel through greenery just across from the location. Upon arrival, visitors will be able to spot the metal tins, which also have lids. The staff are extremely friendly and helpful, greeting you almost immediately and encouraging your flavor choices.

“This was just something we stumbled upon, and I’m glad we did. It’s delicious,” Sophia Dominguez says. This shop that is further from the typical gelato stops of the city center seemed to call out to her.

The shop has multiple flavors, and those of the fruit variety are fresh. La Sorbettiera manages to create a welcoming environment and is one of the shops that people should aim to visit for the frozen dessert known around the country.

Gelateria Dondoli

[Gelateria Dondoli](#) is an award winning gelato shop in San Gimignano. The shop opened 30 years ago in 1992, and the owner Sergio continues to uphold the reputation of the shop worldwide.

Claiming the title “Maestro Gelatiere”, Sergio has created different flavors for Gelateria Dondoli. While one can usually walk into a gelato shop and pick the same flavors each time, Gelateria Dondoli brings a new experience to the table. The experimentation with different flavors and local ingredients allows visitors to try flavors they could not get their hands on anywhere else, making the experience even more memorable. Some of Sergio’s initial creations have become

some of the shop's most popular and famous flavors: Crema di Santa Fina, Dolceamaro, and Champelmo. The menu is already big to begin with, and these flavors add to the experience.

McDonal talks about her time finding this place. "You don't go to Italy and not get gelato," she says. "When I was trying to find a good place to go, I found [Gelateria Dondoli]. I looked up their menu to see what was so special and, like, I was sold. You can get strawberry or vanilla anywhere, but where could I get something like this?" she states as she motions to her cup of gelato.

Gelateria Dondoli has accumulated quite the following. It is rare to visit the shop and not have to wait in line. The shop sits in a plaza and is easily identifiable due to the line that extends from the shop doors to the middle of the plaza. Since the shop sees a mass of people daily, they seem to have mastered more than just the art of gelato: the art of quickly taking care of customer's orders.

The process is quick. Customers flood into the building, headed toward the back to fill up as much space as possible. The workers are attentive and manage to work at a very quick pace, rarely leaving anyone waiting too long. Customers order, receive, and pay all within a matter of minutes. There is not a place to sit within the store, so it is common to see people standing outside or walking around the city with their gelato in hand.

The shop has won the title of "Gelato World Champion" for the years 2006/2007 and 2008/2009. With such an award, Gelateria Dondoli has hosted many Italian celebrities, like Andrea Bocelli, and continues to compete in competitions. Beyond making the gelato themselves, they also hold gelato courses for visitors to get the full experience.

The Lingering Taste

Whether winding through the brick narrow streets, or whipping up milk, heavy cream and sugar to your own accord, this famous Italian treat is as quick and easy to create as it is to consume. Though gelato isn't the only sweet part about Italy, it is definitely one of the things that keeps visitors coming back.

When the treat stays on the mind, just know what to look for and where to visit to make the most of the gelato experience.

Architecture

Sea of Green: A Look into the Windows of Italy

The Italian landscape is filled with an array of buildings and their details. When looking at monuments, it is easy to be drawn into the aspect of history. Once the town becomes more residential, outside of the places everyone visits, you can find hidden gems that connect to the

lives of locals. If you just look up, you'll find something that graces the windows of the town, separating the lives of those who walk the streets to those who live within: shutters.

Behind the Blinds

Aesthetic appeal is one aspect, but shutters were used in a more practical sense. They even continue to be used in this way. Shutters were utilized for temperature control. The [intense heat](#) and seemingly never ending sun can cause the indoors to be just as hot as the outdoors. The shutters helped preserve any cool air as they were usually closed during the daylight hours and opened during the night. Through all the different buildings of different time periods, this practice and the shutters has remained the same.

The Greeks actually invented shutters. The belief that shutters came to be in Ancient Greece is just another aspect of architectural [advancements they contributed to](#). These shutters were made of marble, durable yet difficult. Wood was eventually incorporated into shutter designs. The appearance was enhanced and they were easier to maneuver. When shutters traveled to the rest of the Mediterranean, the wood took over. Shutters did not become common in homes until the eighteenth century. Painted shutters usually held importance behind the color, especially in places like Italy where they used arsenic.

[Arsenic](#) is naturally occurring in nature, but can also be released into the environment. Due to this fact, individuals would use this to their advantage. It was believed that arsenic held properties that could repel mosquitoes and other unwanted insects when used in paint. Turning a green color, many Italians used this for their windows with hopes that the arsenic would make any bug issues go away. Though it was proved that this was not the case, the green tradition was still upheld, along with the browns and grays. This allowed for a cohesive look among the buildings, and for some regions there is a law that makes it stay this way.

For the typical visitor, it may escape their mind as to why the shutters are painted this way. Visitor Julie Castillon was surprised at the mention of this fact. "Oh, I guess I never really pieced that together," she realized. "Yeah, uh, there is a lot of green shutters. I think it's interesting that it was like a thought to paint the shutters that color and how it would keep bugs and stuff away," she added.

Into the Details

Florence

Amongst the architecture that brings visitors into a picture of the [Renaissance](#), Florence is decorated with buildings that hold locals and visitors. The shutters of these buildings complement the colors of each one. The buildings mainly utilize terracotta and ochre, or yellow based pigments. In turn, the green or brown of the shutters pair nicely. The city is bathed in neutrals, allowing for the occasional bright color, like the green shutters, to stand out.

The shutters differ slightly, but the majority maintain the rectangular shape that covers the window perfectly when closed. The windows are placed near each other, multiple on a single wall.

Visitor Raina Chehaitli noticed this about the city. "I would say, looking at the buildings, what piques my interest is how close they are to each other and how that affects the social, like, aspects of their culture." Side to side buildings, and side to side windows, pose an interesting question into the home life of local residents for Chehaitli.

Most of the buildings are multiple stories, creating more rows and columns full of windows and their corresponding shutters. The dark green color is typically worn from the elements. Bits and pieces of brown peek through. This tends to be more noticeable when the shutters are closed rather than open. Attached with three hinges, the shutters have a beveled look to them to fit in the window and have the blinds further inward. This adds an aspect of depth and design to the shutters. There is also a protruding piece on the bottom, most likely used as a handle. The individual blinds are angled to keep the light and heat out, with the bottom leaning more forward than the top of it. This reverses when the shutters are open.

Venice

The major square in Venice, Piazza San Marco, plays into the [traditional architecture](#) of the time period. The piazza is full of white and gray, so moving outside brings more color into view. Here, the buildings begin to differ from those in Florence, including more pigments than the common yellow based colors of the city. One thing remains constant though: the shutters.

Shutters are on most windows, but the shapes and types seem to differ compared to those that were previously discussed. Some of the shutters maintain the rectangular shape. However, there are other shutters that are elongated to fit the frame of the window. These frames also tend to have a half circle attached to the top. This creates a beautifully sophisticated silhouette. The shutters on both frames adopt a collapsible feature. The shutters are split into two parts on both sides. When they are opened, one panel stays on the inside frame of the window, while the other extends outward to lay flat on the exterior of the building. There is less dimension on these shutters. They are just typically split into multiple rectangles with the handles higher on the middle of the outside panel. There is not a blinds component like those in Florence.

Cinque Terre

The landscape of [Cinque Terre](#) has made it famous for its beauty. If one looks closer, a detail of the buildings contributes to this, and is familiar. The same shutters that are seen throughout many Italian cities, including Venice and Florence, can be found in this location.

The color palette has only increased in vibrance for these buildings. The same yellow colors can be found here, but brighter hues have been adopted as well. Traveling between towns, visitors

can get lost in a view of reds, pinks, and greens. Decorating these brightly colored buildings are shutters, ranging in greens, browns, and grays.

Castillon commented on this as well. "I think when you look at [Cinque Terre], it's striking almost," she says. "It's so colorful and the water is so blue and, like you pointed out, the shutters help create that view. I understand why it's so visited and photographed."

The shutters of Cinque Terre are similar to those in Florence. They have the blinds aspect in the center of the design. There are only two panels, one right and one left. The middle portion of the shutters are inward more than the base of the panel. There is a difference, however. The shutters are split into two or three vertical panels of blinds, depending on the size of the window frame. This allows the bottom of the shutters to be opened. The shade is still present but allows for air flow to occur more so than when the shutters are completely closed. For the taller, more elongated shutters, the middle and the bottom can be opened accordingly.

The Colors Above

The unique *persiane*, the green shutters, of Italy contribute to the look and appeal of Italian buildings. Establishing a practical and aesthetic use, the windows and shutters provide a look into the history of the city and the lives of locals. Whether you're indoors with painted ceilings or outdoors with the plethora of windows and shutters, it may be important to keep one phrase in mind: *always look up*.

History

Cheers to Chianti: The Sweet and Rich History of Wine in Tuscany

Tinted with hues of white and red, beauty, history, and culture can be found in the bottom of a wine glass. Though wine can be found through multiple regions of Italy, the wine and process of the Tuscany region, especially Chianti, is loaded with a *crazy* past.

Wine in the Culture of Italy

Wine is not a drink that was recently popularized. The traditions and legacy of wine has dated back to the Romans.

The Romans learned how to cultivate and harvest grapes, also known as viticulture. These techniques would carry on throughout the evolution of Italy and be shared elsewhere. Still in the days of the [Roman Empire](#), these tactics were being spread beyond the country. The concept of viticulture decreased significantly during the fall of the Roman Empire. There were very few producers once it collapsed. However, it rose in the Middle Ages due to churches. The maritime trade of the Renaissance really helped solidify its comeback. At this point, regulations to preserve Italy's wine and prevent it from cross country contamination were instilled, playing a part in the four tier triangle when it comes to categorizing wine.

Wine is a common symbol amongst religion and mythology. Bacchus is the god of wine in Roman mythology. He is often depicted in pleasurable activities, including indulging in wine. Wine is also commonly associated with [religious practices](#), especially as a symbol for the Blood of Christ.

Created by [Arnaldo di Villanova](#), wine had begun to be used in medicine. It was started as a therapeutic method in the latter half of the Middle Ages. It was used to treat diseases and ailments as it hid the flavor of curative substances.

The legacy and traditions of wine in Italy have evolved with the world. In turn, schools for wine tasters and sommeliers began to pop up. This has allowed wine culture to remain sophisticated in the hands of outsiders that genuinely care about the history and production of wine. Todd Bolton, a Californian turned Florentine, is a wine expert that runs Tucan Trails. Tuscan Trails provides wine tours where Bolton gives them a look into the behind-the-scenes of wine making and history. Once intrigued by wine in the United States, the passion developed during his time in Florence. "I had free time, I wanted to learn more about it, and I haven't looked back," he says in regard to his experience.

The Pazzi Family

When the [Medicis](#) were in power, they had many allies but also gained some enemies. Of these were the Pazzi family. The word "pazzo" means crazy, and the Pazzi family definitely lived up to this. In collaboration with the Pope, the Pazzi planned to assassinate the Medici brothers during Easter mass on an April morning. The Pope had a falling out with Lorenzo. They wanted to overthrow the Medici brothers. They were young, so they thought this would be a perfect time to strike.

It was often difficult to find places where the brothers were together. Due to their status, they were walking targets. It was common for them to take precautions. To try and combat this, the Pazzis tried to create events where they would both show up. The mass in the Duomo ended up being the best place to execute their plans.

Giuliano de Medici was killed after being stabbed multiple times. Lorenzo survived and escaped barely wounded. He killed many of the conspirators not long after. He killed all but one member of the Pazzi family. He was spared because he was married to his sister. Lorenzo's power only strengthened after this, as he had the support of the people and the absence of his major enemies.

The Winemaking Process

Italy remains a leader in wine production throughout the world. Wine has become a staple in the Mediterranean diet, as both a drink and an ingredient. It was even recognized in 2011 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by [UNESCO](#).

The fermentation process remains relatively similar between wineries and vineyards. Though the process has evolved with new technologies, the concept has mainly remained the same. The fruit is selected for high quality by hand in the fields. This takes a lot of work and time, as they may walk the fields multiple times. Lesser quality fruits may be used for table wines. The grapes are then put in machines. Here, the grapes are stripped and stored in stainless steel tanks. The temperature is what starts the fermentation process. There is so much carbon dioxide created in the process that it can be dangerous for workers. They are usually encouraged to work with two or more people in the room as a precaution.

In a discussion of the wine making process, Todd Bolton elaborated further. "It's a relatively quick process, right? Like within a month, I've got my alcohol. Usually somewhere between 12 to 25 or 30 days is when the skins are in contact, so I've got the color," he says. He goes on to state that some wines may go through a secondary fermentation called [malolactic fermentation](#).

The Categorization and the Importance of Wine

As previously mentioned, the wine making process and the regulations regarding it can be discussed as a four tier triangle with different "levels" of wine: vino, IGT, DOC, and DOCG.

The bottom tier, VINO, simply has to be wine. It is not completely without rules, as there are still certain laws regarding this. Wines in this category can only be sold as white or red, and no other details can be given. The year found on the bottle is the year when the grapes were picked. Just because a bottle of wine falls into the last tier does not necessarily mean that it is bad.

The second tier is IGT. This is a newer category that was created more on a marketing basis. According to Todd Bolton, this is a "glorified table wine." For a wine to fall into this category, the grapes must be grown in one single region. Of the twenty regions, they must be grown in one, and only one. There is a broad range of quality and type. For example, Masseto is one of the most expensive wines, but it is an IGT. This category of wines catered more towards North American audiences, as these wines are also typically seen on American menus.

The next tier is DOC. More rules and regulations are introduced in this tier, allowing the wines to be limited in the market. The recipe is dictated by the government, but the flexibility depends on the zone where the grapes are grown. In this tier, wines are basically told how they will be produced, which is often very specific. There can be a lot of these wines on the market due to the huge size of some of the zones.

The final, and top, tier is DOCG. In this category, there is a guarantee of authenticity and minimum level of quality. Rules must be followed in the creation of the wine. The government will come out to make sure it is of the utmost quality. They will take about 6 bottles to do a few things: conduct a chemical analysis, oversee a blind tasting, and keep for spot checking later. There is a band in the neck of the bottle that is specific to each one, allowing them to be tracked back to where they came from.

Stella Dixon, a visitor from the UK, joins her husband on their Italy adventures. When it comes to wine, she adapts a “when in Rome” mindset. “I think it’s important to eat and drink things that the country is known for,” she says. “Wine is everywhere in Italy, so I think it would be a waste to, you know, not drink and immerse yourself in something so well known.”

Wine stores and restaurants with wine bottles or decor can be found through the streets of Italy. Many individuals like to grab a glass with their meals or to be with friends. This has become something of importance that runs through the veins of the country. The beauty of castles and vineyards is one thing, but the history behind places like Chianti bring so much more to the ever growing enjoyment of wine.