



FAST FACTS

TOTAL AREA:	
GRAPE VARIETIES:	Nebbiolo (Chiavennasca), Moscato Bianco, Rebo, Merlot, Corvina, Croatina, Gropello
TOTAL WINE PRODUCTION:	1,183 hl
APPELLATIONS:	Rosso di Valtellina DOC, Valtellina Superiore DOCG, Sforzato di Valtellina DOCG, Garda DOC, Provincia di Pavia IGT

PRODUCERS

CENTORRI, TENUTA SCERSCÉ

OVERVIEW

Lombardy is one of the largest regions in Italy, yet its name is not as well known as some other regions of Italy. Nevertheless, its capital Milan is one of the main gateways to Italy for Americans, and its lake district particularly Lake Como is a favorite destination for tourists. Lombardy (Lombardia in Italian) is a prosperous, energetic region that holds many treasures for visitors and for wine lovers.

History: Lombardy takes its name from the Lombards, a tribe of people that originated in Sweden long ago and migrated over several centuries southward into Germany and Austria. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Lombards moved into northern Italy and established the Kingdom of the Lombards, which extended from Friuli across to Piedmont and halfway down the Italian Peninsula. The Lombard capital was Pavia in present-day Lombardy. Though the Lombards themselves were conquered by the Franks under Charlemagne, the name stuck, as Charlemagne took King of the Lombards as an additional title.

From Charlemagne's time onward for a thousand years, modern-day Lombardy was largely in the orbit of the German-based Holy Roman Empire, but the emperor generally paid little attention to his Italian possessions, and the real power was wielded by local nobility and religious authorities in a constantly shifting mosaic of realms. The territory of Lombardy was more of a generality than a recognizable entity. The leading city-state was the Duchy of Milan, but Pavia, Cremona, Mantua, Bergamo, and Brescia were at times autonomous power bases as well.

In the late 15th century, eastern Lombardy came under the control of the Republic of Venice, while western

Lombardy remained under the Holy Roman Empire. The region was united again as part of Napoleon Bonaparte's Cisalpine Republic around 1800. After Napoleon, the area was given to Austria, but the people rebelled and eventually joined the unification of Italy. Led by Milan, Lombardy went on to become one of the most affluent and business-oriented regions of Italy.

Geography: Lombardy occupies the middle position among the northern tier of Italian regions. Its northern half is mountainous terrain bordering Switzerland. This scenic area includes several glacial lakes that are tourist magnets, the main ones being Como, Maggiore, Lugano, and farther to the east Iseo and Garda. The southern half of Lombardy is defined by the flat plains of the Po River Valley. Naturally, most of the population and the agriculture can be found in this southern part. The Po marks Lombardy's southern border, except in the southwest, where a triangle of land on the south bank also belongs to Lombardy. This area, in the province of Pavia, is called Oltrepò (Beyond the Po) Pavese. Some 20 miles (32 km) north of Pavia, Milan is Lombardy's capital and the second-largest city in Italy.

Climate: Like most of northern Italy, Lombardy has a continental climate with hot and humid summers and long, cold winters. Precipitation falls year-round, with rain and sometimes hail in summer and snow in the winter. At higher elevations, temperatures are cooler and snow is more abundant. Around the lakes, both summer and winter temperatures are milder, and Lake Garda in particular provides a more Mediterranean mesoclimate in its immediate vicinity.

Primary grape varieties: Lombardy's most-planted grape variety is Croatina, a red variety that's not well known on export markets. Its other major grape varieties are either international varieties (Pinot Nero, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Grigio, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon) or Piedmont-associated varieties (Barbera, Nebbiolo, Moscato Bianco). Though small in proportion to most of those other grape varieties, a potential future signature grape for the region is Groppello, a red variety used to make pink wines near Lake Garda.

Key wine regions: The most prestigious denominations of Lombardy are located in the mountains. Around Lake Iseo, Franciacorta DOCG produces some of Italy's top sparkling wines, resembling long-aged vintage Champagne but from a warmer region. Meanwhile, farther north, almost in Switzerland, Nebbiolo locally known as Chiavennasca rules in an east-west valley called Valtellina; of three collocated denominations here, the primary one is Valtellina Superiore DOCG.

The majority of Lombardy's wine, however, comes from the wide-open Po Valley. Several denominations are located in Oltrepò Pavese, including ones specializing in Croatina, Pinot Nero, Pinot Grigio, or sparkling wines. Some up-and-coming denominations can be found on the Lombardy side of Lake Garda, too particularly Lugana DOC for white wines made from a Verdicchio biotype called Turbiana and Riviera del Garda Classico DOC for rosato wines, which in this area are called charetto.

Cuisine: Due to its history and geographic position, Lombardy's cuisine has significant differences from the foods of central and southern Italy. Seafood was historically unavailable, so most of the dishes of Lombardy are based more on game and farm-raised products. Butter replaces olive oil in recipes, and rice and polenta are more prevalent than pasta. Risotto, often flavored with saffron, is a favorite first course. If pasta is served, it will usually be filled, as in tortellini. A classic main course is cotoletto alla Milanese, a breaded veal cutlet. Lake fish and eels take the place of seafood, especially in the mountains.