

## OUR SUB-REGIONS

# ROSSO DI VALTELLINA DOC, VALTELLINA SUPERIORE DOCG, SFORZATO DI VALTELLINA DOCG

## OVERVIEW



Located in the northernmost part of the Lombardy region, Valtellina is one of Italy's most breathtaking wine landscapes. Bordering Switzerland and situated in the Rhaetian Alps, the Adda river runs through the region for 132 miles from East to West, ending at Lake Como. More than 25 miles of interconnected vineyards are perched on impossibly steep slopes at elevations up to 2500 feet above sea level. The vineyards, often less than a half-acre, grown on terraces held together by dry, stone retaining walls called *muretti*, some of which are over 1000 years old. In 2018 Valtellina became a UNESCO World Heritage site, serving as a testament to the historic and remarkable nature of this unique architecture.

The soils are alluvial – sandy and loamy with granite stones and rich in silica. The vines are positioned in the traditional Valtellina *rittochino* system, in which they are trained to curve downward instead of being stretched across wires which helps to regulate the flow of water while reducing erosion and the risk of landslide. One of the most difficult areas to harvest, the grapes are picked by hand in traditional baskets called *protini*.

Valtellina has a cool microclimate, but the elevation and position of the vineyards allow for long sunny exposure. The large granite stones in the vineyard gather the heat during the day and moderate the nighttime temperature. They also benefit from the alpine breeze and the *La Brega* winds from Lake Como.

Valtellina has been producing wine for more than 2,000 years, however the area did not receive DOC recognition until 1968. Since then, two zones have received DOCG status: Valtellina Superiore in 1998 and Sforzato di Valtellina in 2003 (the first *appassimento* wine to receive the DOCG). The vineyards are primarily planted to Nebbiolo, locally known as Chiavennasca (and named after the nearby town of Chiavenna). Documentation from the 12th Century refers to the grape as *Ciu Venasca*, translating to "more winery", suggesting that grape had potential to make great wine.

The Nebbiolo-based wines from Valtellina are a little lighter and less tannic than their Piemontese counterparts, primarily due to the higher elevation and cooler temperatures. The stony soil contributes to its delicate character. What they lack in power is made up in finesse and elegance. The DOC and DOCG only require 90% Nebbiolo, which might be

blended with Rossola, Pignola and Brugnola.

The total area under vine are 2100 acres. There are 5 sub-zones in the area: Grumello, Sassella, Inferno, Valgella, Maroggia. If any of these appear on the label, the grapes must come 100% from that zone. These wines must be produced with a minimum of 90% Chiavennasca and 10% of other authorized nonaromatic red grapes. Rosso di Valtellina offers a fresh style, while Valtellina Superiore is more structured and complex. Sforzato di Valtellina is the Amarone of Valtellina, where the grapes are harvested later and dried for two months, creating a more concentrated and powerful wine.