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Italy’s wineries turn hospitality into a growth engine

Producers are drawing millions of visitors with tastings, art, architecture and food as wine tourism becomes a pillar of the industry.

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Italy’s wine renaissance has produced some of the country’s most celebrated bottles, but it has also helped turn winery hospitality into a major business, with producers across the country using tastings, architecture, art and food to draw visitors into the vineyards. That was the message at Vinitaly 2026 in Verona, where a master class

focused on top wineries and wines tied to enotourism highlighted how the sector has become one of the strongest parts of Italian wine at a time when the industry is facing pressure from multiple fronts.

Luciano Ferraro, deputy editor of Corriere della Sera and co-author with James Suckling of I migliori 100 vini e vignaioli d'Italia, said some companies were among the first to build this model, combining production with a broader experience that goes beyond a simple cellar visit. He described these wineries as part of the "renaissance" of Italian wine and as examples of a style of hospitality that has become distinctly Italian. The format now includes events, cultural programming and educational experiences designed for wine tourists, not just buyers.

The numbers help explain why producers are paying attention. Italy's wine tourism sector draws about 15 million visitors and generates roughly €3 billion in value. Beyond direct revenue, it supports jobs, local economies and tourism flows, while also reinforcing the role of wine as part of Italian cuisine and culture. Wine tourism has become a way to tell the story of place, linking vineyards to landscapes, communities and food traditions.

Among the wines presented was Ceretto's Barolo Brunate 2018, introduced by Roberta Ceretto, president and communications director of the family company. Ceretto has long been associated with Barolo and the Langhe, but also with contemporary art and landscape projects that helped bring international attention to the region. Starting May 5, Le Brunate in La Morra, where Sol Lewitt and David Tremlett's Cappella del Barolo stands, will also serve as a new meeting point for wine, food and landscape.

Another featured wine was Turriga 2021 from Argiolas in Sardinia, presented by Valentina Argiolas, who oversees sales and marketing for the family estate. The wine is tied to a history that began with the first bottle of Turriga in 1988, an idea associated with Antonio Argiolas and winemaker Giacomo Tachis. The estate has helped define modern Sardinian wine for international audiences.

Masi's Costasera Amarone Classico 2006 Limited Edition Costasera Contemporary Art by Fabrizio Plessi showed another side of this trend: the pairing of iconic wines with cultural projects. Under chairman Sandro Boscaini, Masi has played a central role in

raising the profile of Valpolicella wines abroad. Its Monteleone21 project is intended as an eno-cultural hub for the area, while its collaboration with Plessi reflects a long-standing investment in contemporary art.

In Trentino, Endrizzi's Trentodoc Masetto Privè 2014 represented a family history that dates to 1885. Paolo Endrici, chief executive and owner, pointed to the company's Austrian-style cellar as part of its identity. The estate has also found success in sparkling wine, helping secure a place among Italy's leading producers of bubbles.

From Sicily came Cottanera's Etna Bianco Calderara 2024, presented through Mariangela Cambria, who is responsible for hospitality at the estate and also serves as president of Assovini Sicilia. The winery reflects the quality push that began in the 1990s on Mount Etna and helped transform the volcano into one of Italy's most sought-after wine destinations for visitors from around the world.

Feudi di San Gregorio brought Cutizzi Greco di Tufo Riserva Docg 2023 from Irpinia in Campania. Antonio Capaldo's group has invested not only in preserving old vines but also in architecture and art, including a winery designed by Japanese architect Hikaru Mori. The company is also involved in plans for Pompeii to produce wine again on land linked to ancient Roman viticulture.

Ambrogio e Giovanni Folonari Tenute presented La Pietra Toscana Igt 2023 40 Vendemmie, described as the first white Supertuscan made from Chardonnay grapes planted in 1983. The company is building a new Cabreo winery in Chianti Classico and continues to use wine tourism as a way to connect visitors with the history of the Gallo Nero and Supertuscans.

In Valpolicella, Villa della Torre from Marilisa Allegrini's group stood out as both an architectural landmark and a working winery. Built by Giulio Romano as a tribute to Roman civilization, it now serves as a place for meetings, literary events and hospitality centered on wine.

Caprili in Montalcino showed another version of this model through its Brunello di Montalcino and Rosso di Montalcino 2024 wines. The Bartolommei family has run the estate since the 1960s, maintaining a classic approach rooted in place. At Il Borro in

Tuscany’s Valdarno valley, Salvatore and Vittoria Ferragamo have built an organic estate that combines vineyard work with hospitality under Relais & Châteaux standards. The property also houses the Vino & Arte Gallery, one of Italy’s largest private collections of engravings on wine.

Eros Teboni, a wine consultant and sommelier who led the tasting selection, said these estates show how Italian wine can remain competitive by focusing on identity, grape varieties, soils, tradition and aging potential while also offering experiences that bring visitors closer to the culture behind each bottle.