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# Italy Approves a Law That Reserves Gran Selezione for Pre-2026 Appellations

The change protects Chianti Classico’s top tier by barring the broader Chianti denomination from later using the same label term

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Italy has approved a change to its wine law that would reserve the term Gran Selezione for appellations that had already written the designation into their production rules before January 1, 2026, a move that protects the top tier of Chianti Classico and ends a

long dispute with the broader Chianti denomination.

The Italian Senate gave final approval to the ColtivaItalia bill on November 4. The measure includes a change to article 31 of Italy's 2016 consolidated wine law, known as law 238/2016. The new language says Gran Selezione can be used only by wines with protected appellations whose rule books already allowed and regulated the term before the start of 2026, provided they meet the legal requirements attached to that designation.

For Chianti Classico, the change is significant because Gran Selezione has been the highest tier of the denomination since 2014. The amendment blocks other appellations from adopting the same term later, reinforcing Chianti Classico's claim to a category that producers there have spent more than a decade building in the premium market. At the time the measure was reported, the bill had completed its parliamentary passage, but publication in Italy's Official Gazette and the date it would take effect had not yet been confirmed.

The issue has been contentious in Tuscany for years. In November 2019, the Chianti DOCG consortium began pursuing a change that would have added Gran Selezione to its own rules. The proposal was opposed by the Chianti Classico consortium, which argued that the term had become central to its strategy of differentiating its wines and raising their value. The requested change for Chianti DOCG did not receive ministerial approval, but the broader legal question remained open. In 2022, Tuscany's regional government chose not to take a position on introducing Gran Selezione for Chianti while the dispute continued.

The new law appears to settle that question in favor of established use. By tying eligibility to appellations that already regulated the term before January 1, 2026, lawmakers adopted a grandfathering approach rather than allowing wider expansion. The same provision also introduces the term Supremo as a separate traditional mention under Italian wine rules, though it remains unclear how that designation may be applied across different appellations once the law takes effect.

The dispute has drawn attention because Chianti and Chianti Classico are often confused by consumers even though they are separate DOCG appellations with different territories, regulations and producer groups. Chianti Classico comes from the historic area between Florence and Siena and is identified by the black rooster symbol used by its consortium. Chianti DOCG covers a wider area of Tuscany and includes several subzones. Both are built around sangiovese, but they follow different production rules and have developed different market strategies.

That distinction matters on the label. Using the same top-end term across different appellations could have made it harder for buyers, especially outside Italy, to understand the difference between the two categories. By limiting Gran Selezione to appellations that had already established it, the law may reduce confusion and strengthen the link between a high-value label term and a specific wine identity. For the drinks industry more broadly, that could support clearer labeling standards and protect the international positioning of a premium Tuscan wine segment that relies heavily on origin and brand recognition.

Gran Selezione was added to the Chianti Classico quality pyramid in 2014 as a level above annata and riserva. To qualify, the wine must meet stricter conditions than other Chianti Classico categories. The rules require at least 90% sangiovese, grapes sourced only from the producer’s own vineyards, and a minimum aging period of 30 months, including at least three months in bottle. Producers may also use additional geographical units, known in Italian as Unità Geografiche Aggiuntive, on the label to identify more specific origin areas within the denomination.

Over time, the category has become an important commercial tool for Chianti Classico producers. According to figures cited by the Chianti Classico Wine Consortium, 33 wineries had certified wines as Gran Selezione when the category was introduced in 2014. The consortium now says 197 wineries have obtained at least one Gran Selezione certification, covering 256 labels. Even so, the category accounts for only about 5% of total Chianti Classico production, making it a small but influential part of the denomination’s output.

Those numbers help explain why the legal protection matters. A designation that represents a limited share of production can still carry disproportionate weight in export markets, restaurant lists and specialist retail. Premium tiers are often used to signal quality, justify higher prices and distinguish one region’s wines from those of close competitors. For Chianti Classico, producers have argued that Gran Selezione is not simply an aging category but part of a broader effort to present site-specific wines and raise the perceived value of the denomination.

The category’s evolution has also been visible in producer portfolios. One example cited in Italian wine coverage is Fèlsina’s Rancia, which moved into the Gran Selezione category with the 2021 vintage under the Castelnuovo Berardenga geographical unit. Cases like that show how producers have used the designation to reposition established wines at a higher tier while linking them more closely to place of origin.

Supporters of the legal change say it gives producers more certainty around investments they have already made in vineyards, cellar work and marketing tied to Gran Selezione. Because the amendment does not change the production requirements for Chianti Classico itself, its effect is mainly on who can use the wording, not on how the wine must be made. That distinction is important for companies managing inventories and labels across multiple markets, where regulatory clarity can affect packaging decisions, distributor communication and long-term brand strategy.

Giovanni Manetti, president of the Chianti Classico consortium, described the Senate approval as an important result and said producers had worked for years to defend the identity and value of the project. His comments reflect the central argument advanced by Chianti Classico producers throughout the dispute: that Gran Selezione had become a defining part of the denomination’s premium identity and should not be extended to a different appellation with its own rules and territory.

The measure now leaves Chianti Classico in a stronger legal position if and when the change is published and enters into force. It also sets a marker for how Italy may handle traditional wine mentions in the future, balancing the interests of appellations seeking new marketing tools against the claims of those that say a term has already acquired a specific meaning in the market. For wineries, importers and retailers, the practical effect will be felt most directly on labels and in sales language, where Gran

Selezione will remain tied to a narrower set of wines under Italian law.