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Italian Police Seize 2.5 Million Liters of Fraudulently Labeled Wine in Nationwide Crackdown

Authorities uncover €4 million worth of counterfeit DOC and IGT wines as part of sweeping anti-fraud operation Vinum Mentitum

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Italian authorities have seized 2.5 million liters of wine falsely labeled as high-quality DOC and IGT products in a nationwide operation targeting wine fraud. The operation, named Vinum Mentitum, or "Wine of Lies," began in 2024 and was carried out by the Food Inspectorate and the financial police unit Guardia di Finanza. Officials estimate the

value of the seized wine at more than €4 million ($4.6 million).

The investigation focused on illegal marketing of quality wines, use of grapes and musts that did not meet production standards, and false declarations of origin for raw materials not sourced from certified growing areas. Authorities found 59 cases where physical inventory did not match digital records in the SIAN system, resulting in administrative fines totaling about €410,000. Eleven additional warnings were issued for violations that could be corrected.

Tax audits conducted during the operation uncovered further irregularities. Investigators found missing documentation for taxable transactions worth over €280,000 and unpaid VAT amounting to approximately €800,000. They also discovered undeclared labor and irregularities related to excise duties on wine.

Twenty-four individuals have been reported to administrative authorities as a result of the investigation. The operation is part of a broader increase in controls within Italy’s agricultural and food sectors, following recent parliamentary approval of new offenses targeting fraud in these industries.

While officials have not released details about specific regions or wineries involved, local media in Parma indicated that wines from Emilia-Romagna were among those implicated. No further information has been provided about other regions or appellations affected.

Italy’s Minister of Agriculture, Francesco Lollobrigida, stated that the government will not tolerate unfair competition through falsified documents. He emphasized that protecting the "Made in Italy" brand is essential for supporting honest producers and maintaining the quality of Italian wine denominations.

The Vinum Mentitum operation highlights ongoing challenges in safeguarding Italy’s reputation for high-quality wine production amid increasing global demand and complex supply chains. The authorities have signaled their intent to continue strict oversight to protect both consumers and legitimate producers from fraudulent practices.