

Italy, Basilicata

By [MONICA LARNER](#), Jan 18, 2024

This is a small report of just 30 wines from a little winemaking region in southern Italy that packs a powerful punch. From the steep slopes of the extinct Vulture volcano in Basilicata (located at the arch of the boot-shaped peninsula), you can expect **distinctly powerful and age-worthy red wines** made with **Aglianico**.

The landmark volcano with its collapsed caldera can be seen for kilometers and is located loosely at the intersections of Campania and Puglia in the region of Basilicata. Soaring 1,326 meters in elevation, the volcano was active from 650,000 and 150,000 years ago with eruptions that created the two Monticchio lakes that offer shade, boating and water sports today. Mount Vulture was known to be an especially explosive and active volcano at the southern tip of the Italian Apennine Mountain chain.



The Vulture remains a very special place to grow grapes, thanks to the complexity of the soils, low pH characteristics, steep slopes and high elevations (with most grapes planted between 400 and 650 meters in elevation), erosive forces and windy weather conditions. Mount Vulture is different from any other Italian volcano like Etna, Vesuvius or Stromboli in terms of the chemical composition of the soils that emerged from this unique “hot spot” between tectonic plates.

Winemaking on the volcano is a tradition that goes back to antiquity, and the Aglianico grape is said to have originated from Greece. **This is a fascinating wine region to visit.** On the one hand, you feel catapulted back into time to a region that takes its traditions very seriously. On the other hand, the Aglianico del Vulture appellation today benefits from the know-how and can-do attitude of a new generation of vintners who want to bring their beloved Vulture wines to the world stage.

W I N E S

2021 Elena Fucci - Aglianico del Vulture Titolo – 94 + Punkte 2025-2038

Now that Elena Fucci's portfolio of wines is becoming more comprehensive (growing from one wine to four with a rosé, an amphorae-aged wine and a second Aglianico called Scceg), she has come to call this wine her "classico" expression. Indeed, the 2021 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo is classic Elena Fucci and is the wine you should buy if you love her signature style. It opens to sweet aromas that come from the velvety ripeness of the fruit but also from careful oak aging. Baked plum, rum cake and dried fruit mix with honey granola appear on the bouquet. Titolo finishes very long and is driven by acidic freshness and a grippy quality of tannins that is typical of this grape. In this case, the tannins are not too dry, and there is enough power to drive future bottle evolution. Production is 27,025 bottles.

Elena Fucci is on a roll with a renewed portfolio that offers a whole bunch of new and exciting wines. I am especially enthusiastic about her 2021 Aglianico del Vulture Scceg that offers a contemporary look at Aglianico that breaks with the norms. In other news, this dynamic young woman has restored an old winery in her village, and this new space, which is carved deep into volcanic tuffaceous rock, will be dedicated to her Riserva production.

Aglianico by Amphora 2021 – 94 Punkte

Aglianico SCEG 2021 – 93 Punkte

2019 Grifalco Aglianico del Vulture Superiore – Damaschito – 90 Punkte – 2024-2030

With fruit from old vines aged 60 to 80 years old, the single-vineyard 2019 Aglianico del Vulture Superiore Damaschito has a more chiseled and evolved bouquet with aromas that are a little wild, almost animal-like in character, with vintage leather, teakwood, rum cake, exotic spice and a floral note that appears with great intensity as the wine opens. The tannins are tame for Aglianico, offering structure without the bitterness. Production is 7,000 bottles.

Andrea Piccin's Grifalco continues to push the boundaries by experimenting with extended skin macerations, which is not always an easy proposition with a grape like Aglianico that can give off bitterness in the wrong hands. The team also favors bigger oak tonneaux instead of smaller barrique. I have reviewed two nice cru wines, Damaschito and Daginestra, in this report.

Aglianico Daginestra 2019 – 89 Punkte

Aglianico Grifalco 2021 – 88 Punkte

2017 Cantine del Notaio Aglianico del Vulture La Firma – 89 Punkte – 2024-2028

"La firma" means "the signature" in Italian. From a heavy glass bottle, the Cantine del Notaio 2017 Aglianico del Vulture La Firma has hot-vintage aromas of sunbaked roof tile, soot, lava stone and toasted spice. The fruit has faded and the bouquet is mostly redolent of evolved or tertiary tones. This wine is firmly structured and powerful in terms of mouthfeel with drying, dusty tannins. You get bitter astringency and not much else to flesh it out. Some 25,000 bottles were made.

From the tiny village of Rionero on Basilicata's Vulture volcano, Gerardo Giuratrabocchetti is one of the founding fathers of Basilicata wine. He believed in this territory at a time when this small Italian region saw more people emigrating abroad to find better lives anywhere else than in Basilicata. Some of these releases have suffered from hot-vintage conditions, but I would direct your attention to the top-shelf Cantine del Notaio 2016 Aglianico del Vulture Il Sigillo that shows very nicely.