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La Valentina Turns Basic Grape Into Pleasing Wine

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The trebbiano grape produces something like one-third of the white wine made in Italy. That's a depressing statistic for a grape whose chief distinguishing qualities are squinching acidity and otherwise utter neutrality. Those aren't bad traits for some purposes; the grape is grown in France under the name ugni blanc and is a primary contributor to cognac, which is, after all, a distilled spirit. Most of the wines made from trebbiano in Italy's grape-growing regions, though, are shrill and bland simultaneously.

Some wine producers, however, manage to overcome trebbiano's inherent scorching acid and nowhere flavors to make a wine of considerable delights. Such a producer is La Valentina, located in Spoltore, in Abruzzo, not far from the Adriatic Sea. The trebbiano vines there are 27 years old, giving them a nice heft of maturity to work with for winemaker Luca d'Attoma.



For Your Very Own Bottle

Wine Market

4700 Spottswood, \$14
(Owner Scott Smith acquired the wholesaler's entire supply of this wine.)

Made all in stainless steel, so there's no oak influence, La Valentina Trebbiano d'Abruzzo 2009 is fresh and clean and offers brisk acidity that sweeps the palate and makes one long for another sip. Aromas of roasted lemon and lemon balm blend with notes of almond and almond blossom, tangerine and dried thyme. The wine is quite citrusy and leafy in the mouth, though it admits

hints of pear and melon, along with a chalky, slightly flinty element and a finishing fillip of spice. We had this with ricotta ravioli in a creamy sauce, but it would be terrific with fresh shellfish and ceviche.

For more about wine, check out Koepel's blog at <http://www.biggerthanyourhead.net>.