

Region: Friuli Venezia Giulia

Country: Italy

Population: 1.2 million

Capital: Trieste

Located in the northeastern corner of Italy, the cuisine in the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia combines Friulian peasant fare, sophisticated Venetian food and influences from its neighbours Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia.

The mountains cover about 40% of the region, used mainly for grazing. The Alpine cattle produce milk for cheeses such as Montasio, and from the pigs come the world-famous San Daniele prosciutto, which rivals the ham of Parma.

Polenta is the staple food in the northern parts of Italy - it has its roots in poverty, first made by the indigenous people of Friuli Venezia Giulia. Stewed meats, game and cheeses are often eaten with it, especially in winter.

To the south, the region faces the Adriatic Sea. Here along the coast, seafood is abundant. The busy seaport of Trieste is famous for many of its seafood dishes made, for instance, with turbot, shrimp, crab, cuttlefish, mussels and scallops.

The white wines of Friuli Venezia Giulia are amongst the best in Italy - the region is widely known as "White Wine Heaven". The first vines appeared around a thousand years ago, imported by the Greeks. Famous varietals are Pinot Grigio, Pinot Bianco, Sauvignon, Friulano, Ribolla Gialla and Chardonnay. Friulian red wine is also rising up the ranks - for example, Pignolo, the native red grape makes for good wine, along with Schiopettino, Refosco, Pinot Nero, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. This region is also the birthplace of grappa, a liquor distilled from pomace that is left over from winemaking after the grapes are pressed.



*(Image credit: Wikipedia)*