

ITALIAN WINE MERCHANT

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TOP PRODUCERS LAUNCH COMITATO GRANDI CRU D'ITALIA

Twelve of Italy's greatest cellars have joined forces to launch the Comitato Grandi Cru d'Italia (Council of the Grands Crus of Italy), an organization to be modeled after Bordeaux's Conseil des Grands Crus Classés du Médoc. Some of Italy's leading winemakers are among the founding members, including Biondi-Santi, Antinori, and Marchesi de' Frescobaldi. The Council's founders hope to build a membership of 300 wineries. To qualify, wineries must be able to show that they have consistently produced at least two exceptional wines for 20 years (in the case of single-vineyard or "cru" wines, only one wine is required). These wines must be recognized as outstanding by the market and critics. The council's founders foresee that the not-for-profit body will help to promote Italy's image as one of the greatest wine-producing countries in the world. The council will also be a forum where Italy's leading producers can exchange ideas and discuss the future of the trade. The organization will hold a gala dinner each year where a journalism prize will be awarded (the first event is slated to take place at the 2006 Vinitaly).