

Climate change affecting Italy's Chianti wine

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The globe's rising temperatures are threatening Europe's premier wine-producing regions and could change them irrevocably within decades, three American climatologists have warned, the Italian daily La Repubblica reported Monday.

"We estimate that within 50 years temperatures in the region of Chianti, where summers are already very hot, will rise by an average of two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit)," Gregory Jones, of the Southern Oregon University, said at an international conference.

Legendary vineyards in Bordeaux and Chianti may come to resemble those in northern Africa, and the ideal growing environments that made them prosper could shift northward.

"The ideal climatic conditions for producing what we today call Chianti will be in Germany, just as those for producing Champagne or Bordeaux wines will be found in southern England," Jones predicted.

According to the American study, presented at the 32nd world geology conference in Florence, Tuscany's climate will gradually become hotter and drier, punctuated by diluvian rains.

These altered weather conditions would not only change the alcohol content, color and aroma of Tuscany's famed "Chianti classico", but would make grape vineyards more vulnerable to parasites.

The co-authors of the study are Owen Cooper and Michael White.

Italian producers do not seem particularly alarmed by these predictions.

"It is true that the climate has changed these last years, but that has resulted in some excellent harvests as well," said the president of the Gallo Nero cooperative, Giovanni Ricasoli, also quoted in La Repubblica.

"And we are preparing for these changes – in 2002 we modified the rules to allow for irrigation of vineyards in case of drought," he added.

More than 580 grape growers and wine makers are registered in the "Chianti Classico" cooperative, with a total production of about 30 million bottles each year yielding half-a-billion euros in turnover.

