

A photograph of Antonio Busalacchi, a man with grey hair, glasses, and a mustache, wearing a dark suit and a brown tie. He is smiling and holding a bottle of wine wrapped in gold paper. The background is a dark wine cellar with many bottles on shelves.

Vintage Expert

BY LIAM FARRELL

ANTONIO BUSALACCHI, A CERTIFIED

ADVANCED SOMMELIER, has been around wine his entire life. His family has been in the restaurant business for decades, and his Sicilian grandparents even made their own vino during the Great Depression.

"Wine was always on the table," says the director of the university's Earth System Science Interdisciplinary Center and professor of atmospheric and oceanic science. "It was just a part of the cultural upbringing."

His expertise in wine and the environment have come together on more than his résumé.

Busalacchi recently researched how climate change will impact the world's major wine regions by 2050 and 2100, finding some will be devastated and others could actually improve their prospects.

Growing up during the space race, he loved exploration and earned degrees in physics and oceanography. While working at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, he began to buy wines, read about them and network with wine professionals. Busalacchi, now working on a master sommelier certification, is using the same skills it took to get a Ph.D. to become proficient in history, blind tasting and service.

"It was just totally different than my day job. I had no real outside diversions but food and wine," he says. "Studying to be a master sommelier is really rigorous."

A consultant for vineyards on climate conditions, Busalacchi projects that the next 100 years will hurt Australia and South Africa through heat and drought. But other areas may benefit—the higher latitudes of the Pacific Northwest are one example, much to the recent interest of its local media.

Today's consumers, however, are faring well. Busalacchi says emerging areas like Chile or Greece have boosted overall quality, and a \$20 bottle can rival one five times the price.

His main advice: Don't be distracted by labels.

"There's a lot of good juice in the market," he says. "I'll never pass a bottle that's open."

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