

be tainted if you didn't wash your feet beforehand." I received an unexpected reply: "Oh, it wouldn't make any difference at all, the fermentation destroys all impurities." I sincerely hope this is correct, because there seemed to be plenty on them. The grapes themselves are generally dusty and grimy, birds perch on and peck at them, whilst stray bees and wasps feasting on the sweet juice are often trapped amid the berries and finally squashed up with them.

The zealous trampers, their legs stained a bright purple, resume their task, and in due course all the "mosto" is drawn off. The heaviest of the job is now over, and both men thankfully clamber out of the vat and take their rest. Little drops of juice fall from the hairs of their legs to the ground as they savour their leisure and slowly drink the real wine—"a man's drink"—which has been brought specially to refresh them at this particular moment.



*The bunches of grapes are taken to the vats in panniers.*

After an hour or so of trampling, when about half the vatful of grapes has been trodden over, the first draw-off of juice takes place. The plug at the bottom is carefully removed, and a rather dull, dirty looking liquid flows out. This is called "mosto" and to me is among the most delectable of drinks. It is nothing but pure grape-juice (plus a proportion of impurities!), and is delightfully sweet and palatable. But it does not appeal to the Italians, who, accustomed to drinking the matured article, scornfully refuse it. "Too sweet and no kick," they say. Jim and I always used to come back for a second and a third time. "Ach, these crazy English," they mutter disdainfully, regarding us with a wondering eye, "How can they stomach it? Why, plain water is far better."

There is now little left to do. The stalks and skins, the seeds and pulp, now bereft of the all-important juice, are due for a further crushing: this time a mechanical one. They are carefully scraped into a wine-press, a sort of cylinder the size of a 20-gallon keg and squeezed and compressed until every last drop of liquid is extracted. This is not, as I first imagined, due to the inherent thriftiness of the peasant, but because the sap of these stalks and the juice inside the skins themselves both provide the best ferments or "starters," and the more of it that can be obtained the better the brew will "boil." Finally the press is dismantled, revealing a solid cake of what is called the "resti" (remains). These, one would think, would represent the final "unusables," except perhaps as manure, but