

FAKE WINES SOLD UNDER EXPENSIVE ITALIAN LABELS OFF THE MARKET

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[Press Release](#)

Empty bottles of high quality wines were refilled with low quality beverage and marketed online as genuine ones “on offer”





The Italian NAS Carabinieri of Florence (Arma dei Carabinieri), supported by Europol, took down a network of wine counterfeiters, selling online fake premium Italian wines. Law enforcement officers carried out raids in eight Italian provinces (Avellino, Barletta-Andria-Trani, Brescia, Como, Foggia, Pisa, Prato and Rome). The investigation discovered that low quality wines were refilled in bottles under original labels and then sold as real ones on a big online auction platform. The wines were sold in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United States, often ending in the glasses of unaware customers of wine bars and catering services.

BOTTLES FILLED WITH FAKE

The empty authentic bottles were gathered from restaurants and delivered mainly by two individuals working in the food industry. These bottles were then refilled with cheap wines from different origins, purchased online or at hard discount stores. Afterwards, the bottles were sealed with corks and counterfeit capsules of a different or similar colour to the original. Packaging films and false masking guarantee seals were finally applied to conceal the lack of distinctive signs on the capsules used for the counterfeit units. Once a contact with a buyer was established via the a big e-commerce platform, the counterfeiters expanded even further their promotional offers, setting prices way below the ones seen usually on the market. A magnum format (1.5 l) of some of the counterfeit wines typically exceeds € 1000 per bottle.

This action is part of operation OPSON IX. Europol's Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition (IPC3) coordinated OPSON IX, facilitated the information exchange and provided technical and analytical support to the participating countries. The outcome of this action day will enable Europol to further develop the operation and provide the other countries involved with targeted information.

Europol's IPC3 is co-funded by the EUIPO (European Union Intellectual Property Office) to combat intellectual property crime.

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