



Conegliano Valdobbiadene
Prosecco Superiore DOCG

IWSC Report

2020

What is Prosecco's highest quality tier – and is it worth it?

It enjoys a global brand awareness rivalled only by Champagne, yet Prosecco's pecking order is less widely understood – but well worth exploring, says David Kermode

As the supermarkets gear up for their Prosecco promotions, pink Prosecco starts flooding into the UK, and even pinker neon bar signs spell out 'Prosecco time', it's hard to believe that just 25 years ago, this Venetian fizz was virtually unknown outside Italy.

Its ubiquity has doubtless been helped by the way its name trips so easily off the tongue – which is more than can be said for its up-market rendering, Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG. It is here, though, in the foothills of the Dolomites, an hour or so north of the lagoon, that the towns of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene rise both literally and metaphorically above the plains of the Veneto region where the more basic DOC Prosecco is produced.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, rec-

ognised for its 'cultural landscape', or the unique interaction between man and the environment, the DOCG undulates across a series of 'hog's back' hills embroidered with a tapestry of vines, all of them tended by hand. This is where it all began. Yet for producers here, the name Prosecco – and its success – is both a blessing and a curse, almost always much less prominent on the label than Conegliano Valdobbiadene, as the DOCG seeks to differentiate itself from its cheaper neighbour, the DOC. What a difference a single letter makes.

Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Though both regions use the same Glera grape variety and, usually, the identical Charmat method (which the Italians call "Martinotti"), where the

secondary fermentation happens in a pressurised tank, the similarities end there. In the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG, yields are lower and there's a much more specific focus on terroir. Overall production is less than a fifth of that of the DOC.

"Wine lovers sometimes dismiss DOCG as 'just another Prosecco'. They are very wrong to do so," says Master Sommelier Matteo Montone, wine director at the London Edition hotel. "It is undoubtedly superior. But equally, it would be a mistake to think Conegliano Valdobbiadene wants to be a Champagne – it is happy to be a Prosecco."

DOCG Prosecco's prolixity isn't confined to the name. Deciphering the verbiage and nuances of a typical label can also require knowledge of the various sub-zones. The name "Rive" denotes the steepest sites,



while "Cartizze" – a form of grand cru – is reserved for just over 100 hectares of Valdobbiadene's most prestigious plots: San Pietro di Barbozza, Santo Stefano and Sacco. There's also "Sui Lieviti", more commonly known as "Col Fondo", a traditional, cloudy style of Prosecco, aged on its lees, that's enjoying a resurgence.

Such wines are classified according to their sweetness – though the terminology doesn't do much to help the consumer. "Extra Dry" is in fact fairly sweet, with up to 17 grammes per litre of residual sugar (RS), while "Dry" can go as high as 32 grammes. Traditionally, slightly sweeter styles were favoured, but "Brut", at up to 12 grammes of RS, has become much more popular in recent years, and an "Extra Brut" classification was added last year, with six grammes or less, in a nod to the current fashion for zero dosage sparkling wines.

Compared with Champagne's traditional method, the tank process used for Prosecco results in lower pressure, meaning fewer bubbles in bigger beads. DOCG Prosecco is usually "spumante", meaning there's a minimum of three bars

of pressure in the bottle (though it's usually closer to five). Semi-sparkling "frizzante" and "tranquillo" still wines are also permitted but cannot be labelled "Superiore".

"They are such delicate wines, so the differences are also quite subtle," says Sarah Abbott MW, a leading expert on Prosecco's top flight. "They have an essential breezy lightness of spirit – they are not setting out to be as moody and serious as Champagne, but there is more than one way for a sparkling wine to be

authentic and complex."

"The superior fruit quality is evident in the DOCG wines," says Montone, a Prosecco panel member at the IWSC. "The wines really express their terroir, and the best examples we judged this year were incredibly precise." With its mild microclimate and ancient soils of sandstone and clay, the wines here exude a teasing taste of terroir that's a million miles from the perfunctory Prosecco found at the other end of the quality scale.



The 2020 Best IWSC Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG



95

Le Bertole Dry 2019

Valdobbiadene Superiore Di Cartizze

Elegant, attractive and balanced from the nose of yellow apple, pear and lychee. The superb combination of sweet and sour flavours on the palate allowing a roundness to the finish reminding what this style should be. Properly typical and easy to enjoy in its classical nature.



93

Merotto Graziano, Cuvée del Fontadore, Rive di Col San Martino Brut 2019

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore Rive

Expressive and floral with aromas of acacia flowers, apple blossom and a touch of honey. Yellow apple and melon flavours on the palate with citrus freshness, rounded and beautifully balanced.



93

Maschio Dei Cavalieri, Rive Di Colbertaldo Brut 2019

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore Rive

Ripe red pear, golden delicious apples and hints of dried herbs on the nose. Broader palate with creamy texture and flavours of lemon and honey, creamy texture and long finish.



92

Andreola, Col Del Forno Di Refrontolo 2019

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore Rive

Aromatic nose with tinned pear, ripe red apple and quince. Intense flavours on the palate, real depth and freshness and twist of bitter lemon to finish. Great example.



92

Conte Collalto, San Salvatore Brut 2018

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore

Floral nose of lemongrass and lime, leading to a riper palate with tangy fresh apples. Bright acidity with a long finish - a great example.



92

Il Colle Brut NV

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore

Cool, steely example; lightly frothy with a crisp lemon nose followed by citrus, apple and pear pastry.



92

Uve Vettoretti Extra Dry NV

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore

Yellow apple skin clean aromas lead to a more fruitful palate of cooked apples and baking spices. Light, balanced and full of flavour. Delicious and a very good example of its type.



91

Drusian Francesco, 30 Raccolti Dosagio Zero NV

Valdobbiadene Superiore

Lemon curd, fresh pear and golden apples combine with spring flowers and a touch of honey. Fine and delicate.



91

Casa Vinicola Bosco Malera, Vini dei Cardinali Extra Dry NV

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore

All the freshness of white orchard fruit creating an attractively pleasant acidic roundness. Developing ripe orchard fruits on the palate it stays balanced. Fresh, delicious and wonderfully delicious.



91

Conte Collalto, Isabella Rive Di Collalto Brut 2018

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore Rive

Yellow apples and pears with a hint of tangerine and white pepper. Fine mousse and concentrated orchard fruit flavours; an elegant style with long and refreshing finish.



91

Fillipo Sansovino Extra Dry NV

Valdobbiadene Superiore

Clean and bright nose with focused green apple, pear and lemon aromas transcending into fresh acidity and a savoury finish. Wonderful freshness and weight.



91

La Farra, Rive di Farra di Soligo, Extra Brut 2019

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore Rive

Rich, deep nose of rustic apples and custard. It has a generous, zingy fruit palate: juicy melon, pear and citrus offset well with a pleasant earthy hint.



91

Valdo, Cuvée Viviana NV

Valdobbiadene Superiore Di Cartizze

Noticable attractive mousse lifts yellow apples and pears on the nose. Incredibly crisp clean palate of sweet and sour pear drops with underlying peachy delicate finish.



90

Borgo Molino Dry 2019

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore

Attractive, perfumed nose with complex aromas of lime, quince and apple. Lively acidity balances the creamy texture with fresh fruit core continuing through on the long finish.



90

Il Colle Brut Millesimato 2019

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore

Perfumed and floral aromas of apple blossom and acacia flowers. Invigorating mousse with a crunchy fruit and sharp, chewy green apple finish.



90

Salatin Brut 2019

Valdobbiadene Superiore

From the hills of NE Italy this has a beautiful depth of flavour, with bright, elegant peach and watermelon followed by subtle nuances of almond slivers, musky rose petal and an enchantingly delicate mousse.



90

Val D'Oca, Rive di Santo Stefano, Extra Brut 2019

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore Rive

Delightful; creamy mousse textured by pure fresh ripe fruit: lemon, peach, pear and yellow plums. Juxtaposed and well-balanced with a yeasty, earthy character.



90

Valdo, Di San Pietro Di Barbozza, Brut Nature 2018

Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore Rive

Ripe pear and apple with citrus blossom and hints of lemongrass. Fresh, elegant and well balanced.

The IWSC Judging process & judges

By Alistair Cooper MW

The eclectic breadth and depth of experience and wine knowledge among the gathered judges sparked stimulating discussion and debate during the typically rigorous judging process. Panels of three judges formed tasting teams for the day and were all given information on each wine spanning grape variety, provenance and alcohol levels but, importantly, excluding price. Each day normally focused on either a specific country or region and was split further into logical flights. These flights are carefully ordered so as to minimise palate fatigue, and unlike at other awards, numbers of wines are capped at 65 per day. Each flight is appraised by all of the judges individually and without discussion, scores are recorded and notes are taken. Then at the end of each flight, scores are compared and each wine is discussed by the panel.

This is the crux of the judging process. We are not there to choose personal favourites, but rather to subjectively analyse the wines. It is possible to overlook an intrinsic quality in the wine without considered discussion among the panel. So verdicts are evaluated, cases made, and a score and possible medals are given. A member of the Wine Judging Committee oversees each day's proceedings and tastes any wines that panels may disagree on and well as Gold and Silver winners.

Judges:



Alistair Cooper MW
Wine Consultant, Author & Educator



Christopher Horridge
Wine Consultant



Clément Robert MS
Wine Director - Caprice Holdings



David Kermode
Journalist, writer & broadcaster



Emma Dawson MW
Senior Wine Buyer - Berkmann Wine Cellars



Eric Zwiebel MS
Head Sommelier - Summer Lodge Hotel



Helena Nicklin
The Three Drinkers



Joseph Arthur
Italian Buyer - Bibendum



Kelly Stevenson
Owner - JetVine Ltd



To see how the IWSC judging process works, scan here:

Judging Committee:



Dirceu Vianna Junior MW
Wine Consultant, Author & Educator



John Hoskins MW
Owner of The Old Bridge & Chairman of the Master of Wine examination



Mick O'Connell MW
Owner of Neighborhood Wines



Matteo Montone MS
Wine Director - Edition Hotel



Nicolas Clerc MS
Buyer - Armit Wines



Sergio de Luca
Italian Buyer - Enotria & Co

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