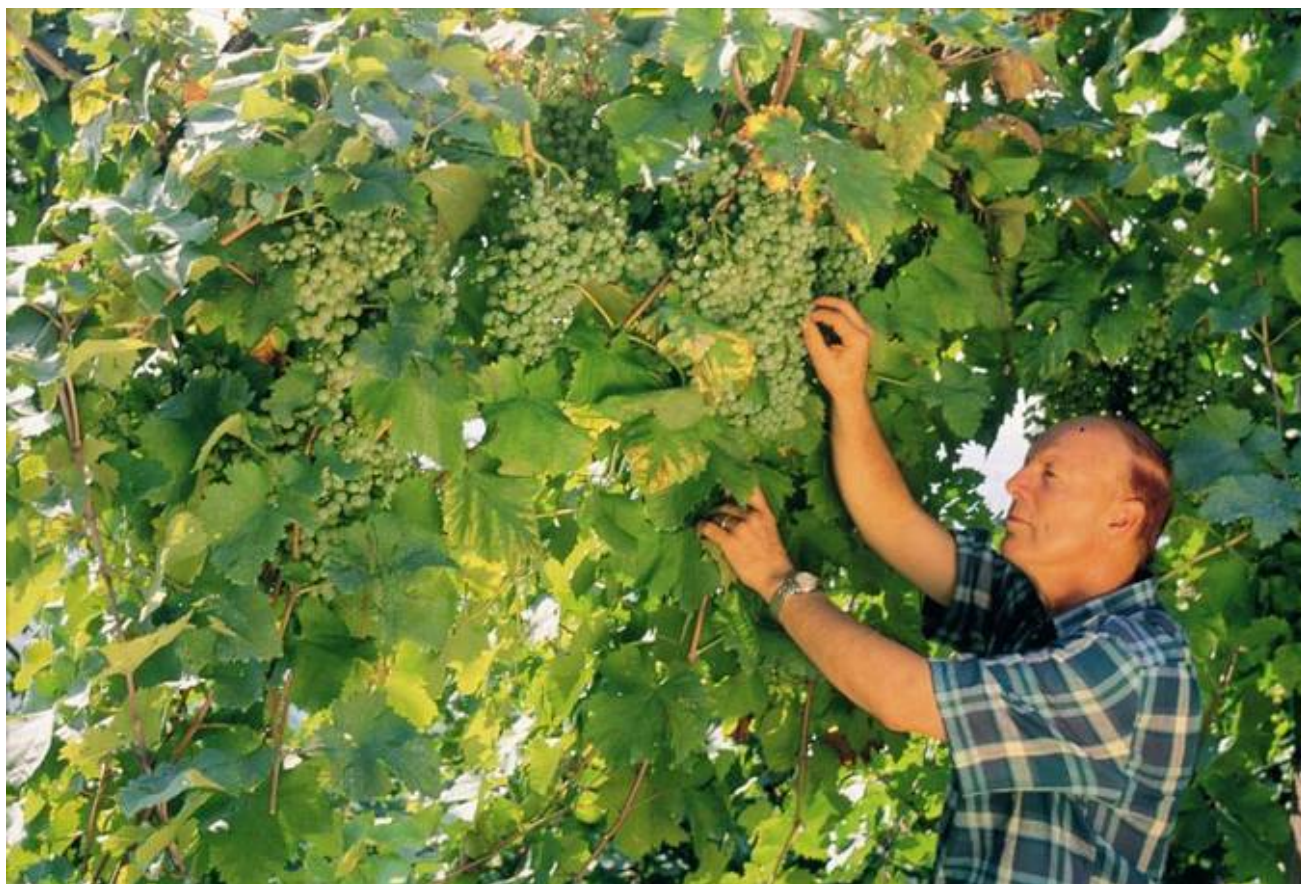




Two Italian Classics -- Prosecco and Panettone

Charles Scicolone (July 21, 2008)



Prosecco and Panettone a Perfect Combination

Prosecco DOC



When I visit Rome, the first restaurant I go to is either Da Giggetto in the Jewish Quarter or Il Matriciano on the via Gracchi near the Vatican. I do not need a menu and always order the same appetizer Fiori di zucchini ripiene con mozzarella e acciughe, fried zucchini flowers stuffed with mozzarella and anchovies. This goes perfectly with a bottle of sparkling Prosecco, a wine I enjoy with fried foods and with a variety of snacks.

Prosecco is the largest selling sparkling wine in Italy and Italians drink it all the time. They have it in the afternoon at the cafes, before dinner, and at celebrations such as weddings and birthdays. In fact, no self-respecting Roman or Venetian would go out to dinner without first having a glass of Prosecco.

Prosecco is made in the Veneto about an hour by car from Venice to the south or Cortina D'Ampezzo (the famous ski resort) in the Dolomites to the north in the province of Treviso. The two towns that form the DOC limits for Prosecco production are Conegliano and Valdobbiadene. Prosecco can be made in other areas, but the best come from here.

In addition to the sparkling variety, it can also be made secco, as a dry, still wine. It is difficult to find still Prosecco because there is such a large demand for the sparkling that there are not enough grapes for the still variety. The first time I was in Valdobbiadene, the producers called still Prosecco tranquillo (tranquil) to distinguish it from the sparkling. There is amabile (sweetish) Prosecco and dolce (sweet). The sparkling can be produced in two types frizzante (slightly sparkling) or spumante (sparkling). It can be Brut or Extra Dry. Brut is drier than Extra Dry. It is made from the Prosecco grapes (85- 100%) with the addition of Verdiso, Pinot Bianco, Pinot Grigio, and Chardonnay up to 15%. Most Prosecco is non-vintage.

Sparkling Prosecco is made by the Charmat method, meaning that they are given their second fermentation in a temperature controlled stainless steel tank rather than in the bottle.



The average vineyard holdings in the DOC area are very small and most large producers have to buy their grapes from many different vineyard owners. The Cartizze is a sub-zone in the heart the DOC area: 106 hectares of vineyards in the municipality of Valdobbiadene among the steepest slopes of San Pietro di Barbozzo, Santa Stefano and Saccol. This is a Super Cru and it is divided into very small plots with many different owners. Prosecco Superiore di Cartizze will cost two to three times as much as regular Prosecco.

For a perfect summer drink, blend white peach juice with Prosecco for that famous drink invented at Harry's Bar in Venice: The Bellini.

Recently I went to a Prosecco tasting in the Time Warner Center in Manhattan and was able to taste a number sparkling Prosecco's. Here are some of the producers whose wines I enjoyed:

Bisol - This producer has over 50 hectares of vineyards, including 3 in the prize Cartizze zone.

Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Spumante Brute "Crede" (\$24) is a special Cru which gets its name from the clayey soils and subsoils known as crede. It is made from Prosecco, Verdiso and Pinot Bianco grapes. It makes an excellent Bellini.

Prosecco di Cartizze 2007 (\$48)

Mionetto



Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbiadene Spumante Extra Dry (\$20)

Valdobbiadene Spumante Superiore di Cartizze Dry (\$40)

I was invited a few days later to a seminar: Sergio Component Tasting and Luncheon (at Remi Restaurant). The speaker was Sergio Mionetto, one of the owners of this family operated winery. We tasted Mionetto Sergio, a sparkling wine that can not be called Prosecco because it only has 70% Prosecco di Valdobbiadene and such grapes as Verdiso, Bianchetta, Perera and Chardonnay. All of these grapes come from the Veneto.

Signor Mionetto is a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker. He spoke about both Prosecco in general and his own wines. One of the most interesting parts for me was the component tasting. Each one of the grapes that go into Mionetto Sergio (\$24) was tasted as a still wine. Then we tasted them all combined: the Sergio base wine in its tranquil state and finally, the Sparkling Sergio Cuvee. It was very informed to see how each grape is necessary to make the final blend. We were also served a Mionetto Sergio Rose' (\$27)

Mionetto's production is more than 1,000,000 bottles.

Mionetto also uses a crown cap closure (like the ones on beer bottles) on its Prosecco. We were informed that this was the closure used in the Italian market for Prosecco. It also is used in Champagne before disgorging. It keeps the wine fresher and prevents it from becoming corked. I do not see anything wrong with the crown cap for this type of wine.



Francesco Drusian- Prosecco "Guyot" Extra Dry" (\$ 18)

Valdo -

Prosecco di ConeglianoValdobbiadene Spumante Brut "Cuvee del Fondatore"

(\$ 18).

Valdobbiadene Spumante Superiore di Cartizze Dry "Cuvee Vivana"(\$40)

Adami - Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbiadene Spumante Dry "Vigneto Giardino" 2007

(\$21)

Cantine Maschio - Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbiadene Brut "Maschio del Cavalieri"(\$18)

Zardetto - Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbiadene Spumante Dry "Zeta" 2007

(\$ 22).



Cantina Colli Del Soligo – Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbianene Spumante Brut

(\$ 18).

Two weeks later I was invited to a breakfast at the Italian Trade Commission hosted by the Bauli Company. This is an Italian company with headquarters in Verona. They are the makers of Panettone, a yeast cake made with raisins and orange peel, and Pandoro di Verona, Italy's most popular Christmas cake. Michele Bauli spoke about the history of his company and why he believed they make the best products. They use only premium butter and natural yeast in compliance with Italy's strict standards and legal requirements for the products in compliance with DOP regulations. Only the best ingredients are used and only natural leavening that gives the products a long shelf life. It takes 40 hours to produce a product with such lightness and fragrance and they do not use chemical additives or preservatives. Signor Bauli said that there were some companies that were selling Panettone in this country made with inferior ingredients. I called these "Phony Panettone".

When I tasted the Panettone I had to agree with Signor Bauli, it was light, fragrant and moist, with the flavor of the raisins and orange peel. The same can be said for the tender, buttery Pandoro di Verona. There was also a great tasting Panettone Bread Pudding. I complemented Signor Bauli on the wonderful aroma coming from the Panettone. He replied that "in Italy they place Bauli Panettone near the radiators to fill the house with the wonderful smell."

What does all of this have to do with Prosecco? When I asked Signor Bauli what do you drink with Panettone his first answer was Prosecco!

I am going to France for three weeks at the end of July and the beginning of August to enjoy the second part of a trip I purchased at a Cancer Care for Kids Auction last year.



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