

THE BUYER

CONNECTING THE PREMIUM ON-TRADE

The Buyer & Mionetto Prosecco Study Tour

Discovering, assessing and analysing the role
of premium Prosecco in the on-trade



COPESTICK MURRAY



Setting the Scene

The extraordinary rise and continued growth of Prosecco over the last five years has been a phenomenal success story for the global wine industry, but particularly in the UK where it has become a drinks category all of its own, responsible for bringing a legion of new drinkers into the idea of drinking wine on a regular basis.

The growth of Prosecco really takes your breath away. Sales volumes in the UK since 2008 have exploded by more than 6,000% and show no signs of slowing down. In 2016 the UK accounted for a third of the 410.9m bottles of Prosecco produced that year as we reached 'Peak Prosecco' status, according to the Constortium for the Protection of Prosecco.

Whilst UK sales are starting to slow down - with more single digit year-on-year growth rather than double digit - the IWSR still sees the UK reaching 8.3m cases of Prosecco by 2022, out of total production of 34.4m cases, as more demand from the US and Asia sees more worldwide distribution for Prosecco.

The IWSR/Vinexpo research predicts Prosecco will outgrow all other types of sparkling wine over the next five years, increasing by over 36%, from 25.2m cases to 34.4m cases (or 412.8m bottles), giving it a 9.2% share of the global sparkling wine market. In stark contrast its figures show Champagne only achieving 1% volume growth in that time, Cava remaining flat and Asti down by almost 6%.

Prosecco's success has been even more game changing in the UK in that it has come at a time, over the last five years, when the overall wine category has been flat or in low single digit growth.

The arrival of Prosecco into the mainstream wine market could not have been better timed and you have to wonder how many importers, distributors, merchants, retailers and restaurants would have coped without it.

Particularly when you consider the sales performance of the majority of other wine producing countries, with the exception of New Zealand and Argentina, that have either been decline or in minimal growth.

Yet for all its success and the impact it has had in changing the way so many people



now drink wine, Prosecco does not arguably get the love from within the drinks industry it arguably deserves. Often dismissed by trade commentators and critics as the “Prosecco factor” that somehow needs solving.

But ask any serious wine buyer, looking to source sparkling wine for busy, popular stores, restaurants or bars, which part of the world they pay the most attention to then it won't be the Right Bank of Bordeaux.

The chances are the producers they have on speed dial come from the beautiful region of Valdobbiadene, just north of Venice in northwest Italy, where this ubiquitous sparkling wine comes from.



Trade challenge

That is if they can find any premium Prosecco to buy in the first place. There is still very much a challenge for Prosecco to be seen by some critics and even restaurateurs and sommeliers, as a serious wine for the discerning Michelin star restaurants of the world. There are even some restaurateurs and sommeliers who put up the shutters completely and are not prepared to even have Prosecco on their list. Which really is a statement conceding how popular it probably is with a lot of their customers.

So despite all its success Prosecco does have an image problem, both with the average consumer and many in the wine trade itself, who collectively do not widely understand that Prosecco has as many different quality tiers as there are in Champagne.

Ask the average wine buyer or sommelier to draw out the different tiers of quality of wine in Bordeaux, Burgundy and Champagne and they can probably do so on the nearest napkin. But could they do the same for Prosecco?

Transforming the wine category

In fact the success of Prosecco is arguably bigger than the wine category itself. Many consumers see Prosecco as a drinks category all of its own. They simply want to enjoy drinking 'Prosecco'. The fact it is a wine, or a sparkling wine, is secondary.

This a completely new place for the traditional wine industry to be in. To have what is effectively a FMCG-style consumer goods phenomenon on your hands that stands apart from anything that has come before it.

Yet it also throws up the challenge of how you connect and engage with those drinkers to help them understand there are so many different quality tiers of Prosecco to discover.

To date the vast majority of Prosecco sold and drunk in the UK will be the standard DOC style and that most avid Prosecco fans may not yet have had the chance to taste and enjoy the best possible Prosecco for their palate.



Premium Prosecco: Seeing is Believing

As any experienced wine buyer, sommelier, importer or merchant will know there is nothing like visiting a region or country to better understand the wines they produce, and how relevant they are for your business.

Getting buyers and influencers out to Conegliano Valdobbiadene is arguably even more important for the future of Prosecco, given the level of misunderstanding about what the category can offer and provide.

To help assess and look at those opportunities, The Buyer teamed up with premium Prosecco brand, Mionetto, one of the oldest and most historical Prosecco families, to take key restaurateurs, buyers and influencers to its winery in Valdobbiadene to see, and most of all experience, the Prosecco story for themselves.

To do so we teamed up with Mionetto's UK partner, Copestick Murray, both part of the German sparkling wine giant, Henkell & Co, to host a trip that would take in the wine region, but also help see Prosecco through the eyes of Venetians.

Which meant not just a visit to the Prosecco wine region, but to the city that provides the ultimate backdrop in which to enjoy it: Venice.

Robin Copestick, co-founder and managing director of Copestick Murray, believes the story is "really only beginning for premium Prosecco". "We are slowly seeing the changing face of Prosecco in the UK. People are beginning to recognise the diversity there is with Prosecco and what a DOCG can offer over a DOC."

He is certainly not afraid to compare the opportunities for Prosecco DOCG with Champagne. "Champagne has shown how it has been able to build its category through different quality tiers, starting at retail at just over £10 and then all the way up to £100 plus. Prosecco can do the same job but starting at £8 and then moving up to £25 to £30. That's where its big opportunity is."

Copestick believes the UK's close affinity to Italy, for its food, wine and culture, has given Prosecco a great starting point. The next step is to "build on that and show its quality".

Leading restaurateur, Jason Myers, who has helped build up and control leading chains such as Busaba Eathai and now runs his own boutique hotel, pub group and new Covent



Garden Italian restaurant Bancone, says that for all the Prosecco he has helped sell he admits he was not aware of all the different levels of quality before making this trip to Italy.

"That's why I was so keen to go and see for myself. I have always been a fan of sparkling wine, particularly Cava, and wanted to go and see the different levels of quality of Prosecco that I had not had the chance to taste before," says Myers. "The trip did not disappoint. I was astounded by how quickly it can be made and the whole production process was fascinating. I have come back with so many ideas of what we can now do with Prosecco."

In particular he is looking at how he can use different tiers of Prosecco to offer customers at his new premium Bancone Italian restaurant a selection they simply would be not be used to, with its own dedicated Prosecco bar. "We're already doing Bellinis there."

Helena Nicklin, head of content at Winerist, the influential consumer wine, food and travel website, believes Prosecco is ideally placed to build in more premium tiers as it already has a loyal customer base who "as their palates mature they can then move onto

more drier styles”.

She says there is a long way to go, but if Prosecco producers and the trade can do more to introduce different styles and explain why they are different then there is enormous opportunity to grow the category.

She explains: “Educate everyone more about the difference between the sweetness levels, the quality levels and the difference between Spumante and Frizzante. In the UK at least, consumers have zero idea that all Prosecco is not equal and don’t understand how or why one can be substantially any more expensive than others.”

Quality In Diversity

By visiting the region the buyers and influencers had the chance to taste and experience the diversity of styles for themselves.

Myers was very impressed. “I did not expect there to be so much difference between them, but there was. I was also, to be fair, surprised by how sophisticated they were as well. But you have to go there to really take it all in. Only then can you come away and appreciate the level of investment that has gone into making the wines and get on board with what they are trying to do.”

Shara Myers, Jason’s wife and business partner, also very much welcomed the chance to get out in the region and taste the large range of different styles of Prosecco there are which is not easy to do in the UK.

“I had never been to the region and wanted to see the wine in situ and how it’s made at the winery as I hadn’t seen those tanks before. I also wanted to get a view on how easy it was to combine a Prosecco adventure with a Venetian one, so we could talk about this to Winerist customers.”

She adds: “I knew that Prosecco wasn’t just a one trick wine style pony, but it was really helpful to see lots of very different styles all in one go, made by the same producer,” she says. “I haven’t had the opportunity to do that for a long time, so the differences popped out. It also hammered home how the consumer needs to be further educated in this area, especially as there is an - albeit very slow- move away from Prosecco as people deem it too sweet. Getting a good handle on all this is important for translating that back to consumers.”



Diana Isac, chief executive and founder of Winerist, was equally pleased to have the opportunity to see the region for the first time. “The trip was one of discoveries for me. In the UK, on the consumer and trade side, I find we know a lot less about Prosecco than we perhaps should do and as a result don’t communicate it too well to the consumers. There are so many styles and so much to know.”

Nicklin says there was also not as “much difference in perceived sweetness levels as I was expecting, especially given the huge differences in residual sugar”.

“It also reinforced just how different this style of wine is from traditional method fizz, not just in how it’s made, but how it’s drunk. Seeing the huge tanks also showed just why traditional method fizz/Champagne is so much more expensive, which was both a good thing and a bad thing,” says Nicklin.

Isac says she was also impressed by the diversity in styles. “I had no idea there were so many and it was a real education to taste these rather different wines. The Cartizze was a pleasant surprise as was the Organic Brut style. I would definitely use these as great points of differentiation and would not be afraid to put them in front of the consumer.”



Nicklin also has a key bit of advice about how Prosecco is currently labelled: “Change the sugar level names. Seriously, calling a sweet style ‘Extra Dry’ is just silly. Now is the time.”

She also feels more needs to be done to talk to consumers about the different sweetness levels across Prosecco. “Most consumers, as we know, have this pre-conceived idea of Prosecco - that it is sweet. It’s how most of the trade pushes Prosecco to their customers because it appeals to their palates. It is up to the trade to showcase different styles of Prosecco to customers who are currently less inclined to drink it. It will take time. However, there is a gap in the market for something less expensive than Champagne and that does not necessarily mean a sweet Prosecco.”

Copstick agrees: “The Brut Nature and Rive de Guia DOCG styles are the ones that can take people from standard Prosecco to more premium ones. Moving from DOC to DOCG is where the action is going to be in the future.”

“I think a lot more can be made in the UK with the zero dosage style as well,” adds Nicklin. “I was surprised how much I like the Bio Brut. The Bio element was a good point of difference.”

Myers says he was more taken with the drier and the organic styles he tried. “But there are so many layers to take in. Being able to promote the different quality tiers is definitely the future so that people get the chance to try and taste them when dining out and realise they can move up from the sweeter style.”

Brand opportunity

Then there is the issue of brands. Where Champagne has done so well is that its most famous brands have also helped push, and explain, the quality message and the difference in quality between a grower Champagne, non-vintage, vintage, Premium Cru and Grand Cru.

That’s the challenge and opportunity for the Prosecco category, to develop and create widely recognised brands at different quality levels, says Copstick.

Get it right and Nicklin believes the most premium Prosecco producers should be looking to hit price points “about £5 to £7 less than Champagne”.

Pushing Prosecco prices up is certainly what Copstick Murray hopes Mionetto can achieve, particularly as it already has what it claims is the biggest selling Prosecco brand in the world with its Prestige Brut Orange label Mionetto (IWSR Prosecco category sales in 75cl bottles for 2017).

“No-one in the UK has yet created a brand for Prosecco. It’s an open door for someone and we certainly have the name and the volume with Mionetto to do so,” claims Copstick.

It’s also why it has worked hard to develop a clear premium tier strategy, all under the Mionetto name, with its Luxury and Avant Garde ranges for the on-trade (see The Mionetto Range box).

Prosecco/Venice: The Tourism Opportunity

Where else in the world offers you the chance to be up in the hills and valleys that make up the stunning Valdobbiadene wine region, to then, in just over an hour's drive, be then whisked by motor taxi across the choppy waves to arrive, James Bond-style into the heart of Venice? The most romantic and breathtaking city in the world.

Welcome to the world of Mionetto and the region that is synonymous with Prosecco. After all the world fell in love with the glamour, the decadence, the style, and the allure of Champagne. And whilst the Champagne region might have beautiful, historic Champagne houses of some of the famous brands in the world, the region is itself if a far cry from the natural beauty of the sweeping hills of Valdobbiadene that stretch down through the valley to the waiting Venice below. It's also a long way away from the standard, pile it high, sell it cheap image that Prosecco has, for some, in the UK.

Prosecco is as much a part of Venice as the gondolas and canals that weave and take millions of tourists through the heart of this beguiling city.

It's Prosecco, after all, that is behind Venice's most famous drink, the Bellini. Created in 1948 by Giuseppe Cipriani, head bartender and owner of Venice's most famous drinking spot, Harry's Bar, with his combination of Prosecco and pureed white peaches (succo di pesca). It's the image of Prosecco that Mionetto believes it is ideally placed to capitalise on. Yet ask the average consumer where Prosecco comes from and you're likely to get a blank stare.

How many of the 28 million tourists that visit Venice a year ever get to go to Valdobbiadene or even realise they have the home of the world's most famous wines on their doorstep.

There simply is not a tourism industry yet in Valdobbiadene. It only has one hotel with 21 rooms.

It's why the team from Winerist were particularly taken by the enormous opportunity for producers like Mionetto to offer new experiences to their customers.

As Isac explains: "I had no idea it was so beautiful and so easy to visit and so perfect for a Winerist trip and to offer as a wine destination for our customer base.



Our UK and US database loves to drink Prosecco and they often enquire about it. We now know how to put this in front of them. Venice and Valdobbiadene is a match made in heaven!

Nicklin hopes more Prosecco producers will work harder to “get onto the key newspapers and magazines which have travel content and get them writing about the region so that more people can go and see for themselves”.

There is also a good food and wine pairing opportunity for Prosecco and brands like Mionetto, adds Nicklin, where it can really show its diversity and “fight off-dry wines for the sushi and Thai food matching crowns”.

Isac agrees: “Sushi and Asian food in general. Anything that is a main dish, is slightly sweet and has a coconut, cashews, ginger and citrus flavours.”

Isac and Nicklin were also able to spend some extra time exploring the wine tourism aspect within and around Venice itself. “From the landscape, to the proximity to Venice and how easy this was to reach as a region, it all flowed perfectly. There’s nothing better than having two days in Venice, followed by two days in Valdobbiadene. The food also stood out. I enjoyed learning about the local cuisine of Valdobbiadene. More meat, and more rustic, earthy flavours,” says Isac.

“We can now send people there with confidence. We have identified some great places to stay on the trip which will do very well with our database. We have started offering it as a long weekend option. Two nights in Venice, two in Valdobbiadene. The best of both worlds and a truly immersive cultural, wine and gourmet experience.”

Myers was equally blown away by the double act of Venice and Valdobbiadene and what producer like Mionetto can offer. “It’s such a fantastic place to be able to go to. You’ve got it all really. Amazing scenery, wonderful food and the wine. You can go and there and ski in the winter or relax and enjoy the sun in the summer.”





The Mionetto Story

The Mionetto story dates right back to 1887 when master winemaker Francesco Mionetto first opened the Mionetto winery. It has gone on to become not only one of the first and oldest Prosecco producers in the region, it is today one of the few businesses that still make their Prosecco from the original site. Visiting the property today you can step back in time, look through old records and photograph and see some of the old machinery in its nicely presented family museum. History and tradition are understandably very much at the heart of the Mionetto brand which is all about emphasising its core values of premium quality, premium taste and style, that look to capture the spirits of Italy's Dolce Vita in its iconic bottles.

Sourcing strength

What gives Mionetto another significant edge over most of its competition is the fact it is not only one of the oldest producers in the area, it still has Mionetto family involved in the business, from the same winery, sourcing grapes from growers they have been working with for decades.

With land so scarce in Valdobbiadene and global demand so high, being able to guarantee your supply of grapes really marks one Prosecco producer out from another.

You simply can't just turn up with a cheque book and expect to be able to get your hands on the most in demand sources of quality grapes.

Copstick says it is working towards what he sees as the ideal combination of directly owning a third of the grapes you source, a third coming from contract growers and a third you can buy in on the open market. Its current mix is 30% owned, 20% managed and up to 50% bought on the spot market.

To do that means owning more of its own supply and Mionetto has bought 80 hectares of land in the last year across the DOC area in Montereale, part of the Friuli region.

It is also carrying out extensive development work at its traditional main Mionetto winery to help upscale production and bottling to cope with international demand. It is vital work if it is going to be able to build its DOCG volumes for under local rules all fermentation of DOCG Prosecco must be done on the same site as where you bottle the final wine.

Mionetto hopes to have the new extended winery finished towards the end of next year.

Prosecco's Quality Tiers

There is Prosecco and then there is Prosecco. Just as there are attacking footballers, and then there is Lionel Messi.

Like so many wine regions around the world, particularly in northern Europe, Prosecco is made at different quality levels and tiers based on how they are made and which specific part of the region the grapes in the wine come from. There are clear and very different quality and profile styles between DOC and DOCG.

We can break down Prosecco into the following four levels of winemaking, quality and terroir with a particular focus on the DOCG levels:

Top Tier:

Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG.

This represents sparkling wine produced in the hills between Conegliano and Valdobbiadene and represents the top-quality expression of Prosecco. Here 85% of the grapes must be Glera but the remaining can be a blend, up to 15%, of Verdiso, Bianchetta Trevigiana, Perera and Glera Lunga.

Within this tier also sits the two top tiers, Cartizze at the top, followed by Rive. Noticeably only 40% of the DOCG wines are currently exported compared to the vast majority of DOC wines.

Valdobbiadene Superiore di Cartizze DOCG

The highest quality level categorises grapes that come from the Cartizze sub-zone that has had its own specific regulations since 1969. It covers just 107 hectares of vineyards, in the shape of a pentagon, lying amidst the steep hillsides of San Pietro di Barbozza, Santo Stefano and Saccol, in the commune of Valdobbiadene.

Here the vines sit in clay, white marly and sandstone soils and are south west facing so they receive the maximum amount of sunlight a day. They help produce wines with a golden hue, often blended with Verdiso, that offer more complexity, texture and depth with stronger fruitier notes thanks to the higher concentration of residual sugars that come from more sun exposure. A great culinary wine as they best expressed in wines with both bone-dry and off-dry styles with balanced sweetness. Here the maximum yield is of 12 tonnes of grapes per hectare.

Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Rive DOCG

The term "Rive" describes grapes grown from an individual vineyard in a single commune and therefore have characteristics from that particular terroir. These cru sites are showcased by producers making both the driest styles and rounder styles of Prosecco DOCG like Mionetto's Rive de Guia. It is now the fastest-growing of all Prosecco DOCG sales in Italy. These cru sites are showcased by producers making both the driest styles and rounder styles of Prosecco DOCG. More specific still, the 100 hectares of historic and vertiginous Cartizze vineyards are expressed in both bone-dry and off-dry styles with balanced sweetness.

There are 43 separate Rive, each with their own distinctive combination of soil, exposure and microclimate. Rive Proseccos come from yields of 13 tonnes of grapes per hectare, and must be picked by hand. The vintage is always shown on the label.

Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore is a DOCG

Sparkling wine produced exclusively in the hills of the Conegliano Valdobbiadene zone. Its made up of 15 communes (municipal areas) and only grapes grown within a DOCG area can be used in the blend. Up to 13.5 tons of grapes can be used per hectare.

Second Tier

Asolo Prosecco DOCG.

Established as a DOCG in 2009; former alternative name Colli Asolani Prosecco deleted in 2014

Vineyard Area: 1,500 ha / 3,700 acres (2016, C)

Production: 58,100 hl / 645,000 cases (2016, C)

Third Tier

Prosecco DOC Treviso

Here only grapes within the Treviso province of DOC can be used.

Four Tier

Prosecco DOC

These Proseccos cover those made from grapes across DOC vineyards where 18 tonnes of fruit per hectare can be picked.

The Mionetto Range

Mionetto has one of the most extensive ranges of premium Prosecco from the region, with styles and brands aimed at different channels of the market. Here are the wines specifically aimed at the premium on-trade:

Prestige Collection

Part of Mionetto's main range is Mionetto's hero product and best seller the Mionetto Prosecco DOC Treviso Brut – also called Orange Label.

Luxury Collection

Mionetto's most premium range, signified by a unique emboss on the bottle. Within this collection there are five different wines:

- Cartize DOCG, the very best the Prosecco vine can achieve, produced in a small area of 107 hectares by about 110 growers.
- Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Rive di Guia, a 2017 Millesimé Brut Nature that is a fine example of this growing area's truly exceptional quality.
- Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG produced from grapes harvested from the best two sites in the DOCG area.
- Prosecco DOC Treviso, a creamy, versatile Prosecco that has all of the properties classic to the Glera grape variety.
- Completing the collection are the Cuvée Sergio 1887 and Cuvée Sergio 1887 Rosé, homage to the history and tradition of Mionetto.

Avantgarde Collection

Design and labelling are also an important factor in the Avantgarde Collection that takes the retail style bottle and adapts it for restaurants. The range covers four quality tiers.

- DOCG Extra Dry
- DOC Treviso Extra Dry
- DOC Treviso Brut
- DOC Organic

Mionetto Vivo

Produced just outside the Prosecco DOC area this is a range designed to offer a good value Italian sparkling wine option with two choices:

- Mionetto Vivo Extra dry
- Mionetto Vivo Rosé



Mionetto
Prestige Collection



Mionetto
Luxury Collection



Mionetto
Avantgarde Collection



Mionetto
Vivo

Prosecco's Impact In The On-Trade: Buyers And Distributors

To assess how different quality tiers of Prosecco are making an impact in the premium on-trade we asked those who know. The importers and distributors selling them into the trade.

John Graves, on-trade development director at Bibendum says Prosecco makes up half of the 600,000 nine litre cases of Italian wine it sells as a group to its 5,000 plus on-trade customers a year. The rate of growth continues to astound him.

“I joined Bibendum 12 years ago and we did not have a Prosecco producer. It is now is our biggest selling single wine and we have over 50 different Prosecco SKUs. So you can see how quickly it has grown in the market.”

It is, though, premium Prosecco where he now sees the future. “Our goal is to sell decent quality Prosecco and if we can achieve that then that we have made some real progress. The opportunity is to work with people who sell good quality wine and you can sell Prosecco alongside those wines as a wine, as opposed to a commodity.”

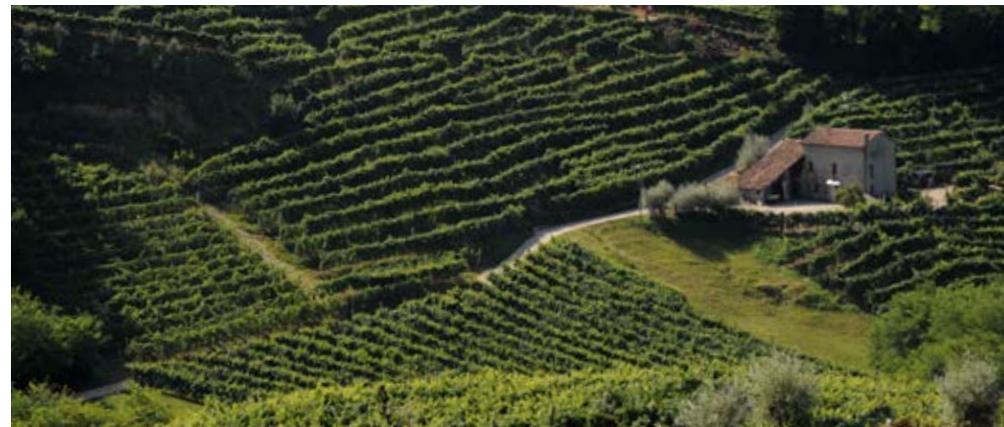
He concedes, however, that only about 15% of its Prosecco sales are currently at a premium level.

“I am not embarrassed to say it has become a commodity in some areas. The vast majority of Prosecco that is sold in the UK on-trade is entry point that's made to a price point. So we have to be careful. The first thing a lot of our restaurant customers will say to us is 'how much is your Prosecco?' Which is a ridiculous situation to have got out ourselves into.

“I can remember what happened to Cava in the late 1990s. It just chased volumes and chased and chased. It was cheap everywhere and it almost disappeared. It almost destroyed itself. So the key thing for the Prosecco market is protecting the quality and not chasing volume.”

“Everyone involved in the wine trade has got a duty to protect Prosecco as it's a brilliant product. Which involves trying to educate the consumer about the different premium Proseccos there are.”

Joy Edmondson, buying and marketing director at North South Wines, agrees that premium



styles of Prosecco are where future sales lie and that as a business it has “always focused on premium Prosecco and believe that is the future and what we are building on”.

She adds: “The category is starting to focus on the top end and there is definitely a market for the top end out there. There are consumers now who are regular sparkling wine drinkers, they drink it on every occasion, it's an everyday drink and they are willing to experiment and trade up into more expensive Prosecco.

“Our business is 25% on-trade and 75% off-trade and over half our business is Italian wine. We have some very important partners like Villa Sandi from Prosecco.”

Chris Carson at Carson & Carnevale Wines works with five Prosecco producers covering different aspects including biodynamic, organic, estate production, commercial volume Prosecco and smaller, family businesses. He believes more work needs to be done by importers and distributors identifying the right Prosecco for different channels of the market.

“We need to be doing more to identify which Proseccos should be going into which outlet. What is best suited for a particular restaurant, bar or hotel. In terms of education that might be an interesting challenge as the British consumer has understood the brand as ‘Prosecco’ and does not understand there is a DOC and DOCG. So where this gets divided comes back to the trade and where they are selling their DOC and DOCG Proseccos.

James Snoxell, head wine buyer at Armit Wines, says Prosecco is also “one of our biggest selling lines”. But he thinks there will be “an evolution in what people want from Prosecco”.

“They will start to want drier styles, thinking about their health they will want skinny Proseccos and they will want single vineyard Proseccos. Restaurants will also want to offer something different to their customers, so there is still a huge amount of potential and real future for Prosecco. It’s certainly still trendy and has made it a lot harder to sell cheaper Champagnes. There’s still at least another five years success story for Prosecco.”

Driven By Diversity And Viticulture

“Our young people are returning - they see a future here,” is what one producer told Sarah Abbott MW, UK wine consultant who is working with the Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG to help raise its profile in the UK trade.

“Inspiring young vigneroni are returning to family vineyards, benefiting from their experience in previous careers in finance, marketing, and product design. They bring dynamism, innovation, and a global perspective,” she adds.

“There is also a major drive for sustainability. Practical, social and ethical considerations are driving this movement. New viticultural protocols developed by the Consorzio, producers and technical specialists are being implemented across the region. Individual estates are turning even deeper green, with organic, biodynamic, and biodiverse cultivation philosophies succeeding despite the challenges of this densely cultivated and humid terroir.”



All of this differs enormously from the standard Prosecco DOC that most wine drinkers see in the UK, in which a single base wine is adapted to become anything from Brut to Dry.

Producers in the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG area select vineyards specifically for their suitability for their eventual wine style, and level of sweetness.

Abbott says on-trade buyers and sommeliers should look out for the emerging “Colfondo” style which is starting to take Italian the on-trade by storm.

She explains: “This low-sulphite, unfiltered, bottle fermented frizzante is hugely popular in the hip Italian on-trade. A typical Colfondo Prosecco DOCG is fleshy, lightly cloudy, frizzante, and dry but fruity. It is an updated version of what grandad used to make. Undoubtedly influenced by the natural wine movement, many Colfondo styles are made from base wines fermented using natural yeasts, and extensive lees ageing, and are low in sulphur. When it comes to Brut Nature and other bone-dry styles, growers are also using techniques such as skin maceration to build in balancing but lively richness. Several growers with prize Rive sites are using the traditional method. And some have reintroduced historic old grapes alongside Glera. Some are even making still (“Tranquillo”) Prosecco from prize Rive to show off the mineral perfume of the terroir.”



Prosecco: Did You Know

- Prosecco's DOC region is the largest in Italy and covers nine provinces. But only one province, Treviso, can put its name on the bottle due to its high quality level. It is the Treviso province that is closest to Valdobbiadene.
- Prosecco's typical light, refreshing taste with fine bubbles in thanks to its short fermentation period.
- Any Prosecco has to be made from 85% Glera grapes, with the rest made up of large selection of white grape varieties that have to come from the same DOC.
- All of Mionetto's Proseccos are made from 100% Glera grapes even though they are more expensive to source, in keeping with its premium taste and quality values.
- Average price of Glera grapes 2017 was €2.45/kg.
- The grapes to make Cartizze Prosecco are the most expensive worth €800k per hectare in a DOCG area and €300k per hectare in DOC.
- The average price per hectare for a Cartizze vineyard is €1.8m to €2m, and the grapes can fetch €5 to €6 per kilo.

Prosecco: Facts & Figures

(Figures from Valoritalia, 2017, CIRVE, 2017 and Consorzio di Tutela)

Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG:

- DOC: achieved DOC status in 1969
- DOCG: the area has been producing DOCG Proseccos only since 2009
- Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco area: 7,706.2 hectares
- Rive area: 274 hectares
- Superiore di Cartizze area: 107.8 hectares

DOCG 2017 harvest:

- Total bottles produced overall 94.4m
- Number of wineries: 181
- Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore: 86.5m bottles
- Rive: 3.1m bottles
- Superiore di Cartizze: 1.2m bottles
- 40% of production is exported to 130 countries

Key export countries for DOCG:

- 1 Germany 7.3m bottles (20.6% share)
- 2 Switzerland 7.1m bottles (19.8%)
- 3 UK 5.5m bottles (15.3,%)
- 4 Benelux 2.8m (8%)
- 5 United States 2.7m bottles



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