



A Tour of Italy

Firstly welcome to the Pentewan Sands Sailing Club; I'm Carol Avery. It's lovely to be back with you; thank you for inviting me again. Thank you especially to Amanda for all her efforts in getting you here and to Shirley and Amanda for organising the accompanying food. A special welcome to the U3A wine club members for whom this is their first outing.

My interest in wine started as a 10 year old with homemade rhubarb wine! As some of you know that I was 20 years as an Officer in the Royal Air Force. During that time I was President of the Mess Committee and got to choose the wine for the various functions. Fast forward and on leaving the RAF I got to choose a resettlement course. I chose to do a Level 2 in Wines and Spirits at Ashburton Cookery school followed by my level 3 at St Austell Brewery. I'm starting to 'sample' level 4 and will share some of that knowledge with you. So out of my small collection of A levels I am most proud of my A level equivalent in wine and it's a subject which I don't mind revising regularly!

So let's go on a tour of Italy! Before we talk about the first wine the format of the evening is going to go like this....

After the Prosecco in your glass we'll be trying a white followed by 2 reds. I'm going to get you to do some work on the and complete tasting sheets just for the 2 reds which I'll hand out but we'll talk about the other 2 wines together first. Then there will be a final surprise! Big thanks to Marie is very kindly

assisting us tonight. I'll give you a 'You have tasted' summary sheet of everything we have tried at the end to take home to remind you.

Please join in with comments and suitable adjectives about the wines on our journey together this evening and feel free to ask any questions as we go along.

There are buckets and water for glass rinsing and for anything more serious there are toilets at the end of the corridor!

Prosecco - La Marca 'Extra Dry' Prosecco, Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG Majestic £14.99

I hope like me that you think it is always good to start the evening with something sparkling! I was lucky to travel to Venice last May and it seemed rude with the '**Prosecco Road**' so close not to visit. So we caught the train out of Ferrovia Lucia Station after arriving by Water Taxi and 50 minutes later we were in Conegliano. We then travelled by Landrover up the Prosecco Road around 25 miles all the way to Valdobbiadene stopping on the way for tastings. Here is one of my favourite pictures; tasting Prosecco in one of the most beautiful picnic spots I have ever been to. Just the two of us (Myself and my youngest daughter Ella)!, four Proseccos (at the first vineyard) and some Cichetti - Italian sandwiches in the sunshine looking over the vines of Conegliano! ([Pic with view of vineyard](#))

So the wine in your glass is a Denominazione di Origine Controllata (e Garantita) (DOCG) in other words the Prosecco equivalent of Cornish Pasty! You can see it has this authenticity on a brown printed label on the neck which says DOCG which makes it easier to recognise.

How to impress your friends! Prosecco can be produced in the whole of the Veneto and gain the DOC but only that which says Conegliano or Valdobbiadene can have the DOCG. This one unusually says both as the company uses wines from 9 vineyards in a cooperative model formed in 1968.

Going back to my trip along the road the Vines literally grow alongside the road at right angles without a fence between the road and the grapes, often roses help support them (and help them detect any insect infestations early) and they are all harvested by hand in the DOCG. This is partly because the grapes are in the hills of Treviso so mechanised picking would be difficult.

One of the advantages of a hilly vineyard though is great drainage which helps to produce fabulous grapes. A bit more about that later.

So what else defines Prosecco?

It must have 60 days second fermentation and be fully sparkling. Who has remembered amongst the 10,000 grape types of the world (yes really) the name of the Prosecco Grape from our last time together? Glera - must make up 85% of the grapes in a DOCG.

11% ABV - Alcohol by Volume

This wine is typical style from this region, fresh, light and lively style.

Zippy citrus?

So as a Re-cap for most of you White Method Simply:

Prosecco has it's first and secondary fermentation in tanks. (Tank pictures) it is cheaper to produce and less intensive (No adding of yeast or to bottles, turning of bottles or disgorgement as in the 'Traditional' Champagne method) But lets not forget the hand picking on slopes in the DOCG case and in all cases the move of the wine from the large tanks to the pressurised ones. The way that Prosecco is produced is known as the Charmat method. Eugene Charmat improved the tank method of Federico Marinotti so you may hear it referred to as the Marinotti method too especially in Italy. Federico Marinotti sought to enhance and preserve the fresh and younger expression of these grapes giving a lively and captivating profile to the wine. There is less contact with the 'lees' or dead yeast cells in this method yielding less of the toasty bread tastes you find in champagne and more fresh fruit flavours, aromatics and acidity.

So when you are buying Prosecco the superior kind (and price) will likely be the DOCG and remember it can only come from Valdobbiandene or Conegliano (or both!).

Before we move on I'll just mention the International Wine Sparkling Sweetness Scale. It's one of those things that just when you think you know...it might not be perhaps quite as you remembered (and that's at the start of the evening!) Feel free to take a photo if you like when I pass it round.

This wine is Extra Dry
So Brut is - Dry
Extra brut - Very Dry
Brut Nature - Bone Dry
....start going the other way Extra Dry is Medium Dry
Dry isMedium Sweet
Demi Sec - Sweet
Dolce - Very Sweet
Well done... it is the dry which sometimes causes the issue.

Sweetness handout

I'm loathe to leave the Prosecco Road but we have a journey to make...let's take a trip south (We'll wave at Venice and Bologna on our way and arrive in Marche!

Wine 2 - White Pecorino Saladin Pilastrini 2021 - 13.5% Pecorino Marche Majestic

Pecorino is a traditional aromatic Italian grape. Its home is in the rolling hills of Marche close to the Adriatic Sea. Nestled in the borders of both Marche and the Abruzzo sits the cream of the crop exemplified in the DOCG. So it's important to use the **nose** to smell the wine in order to have the full olfactory experience. (Remember the jelly bean test we did when we met last time?) We held our nose and could only taste sugar in the jelly bean.



So let's first look:

Colour, (Intensity) clarity (Clear dull)

Then smell: **Aroma** - Clean/unclean - Any fruit or floral smells? Which ones?

Taste Delicate florals, fresh, zingy citrus, ripe stone fruits, nectarine? Light Mineral finish.

What can you taste? Apple? Ripe Stone Fruit (Peach?), Pear? Zingy Citrus - Lemon? Nectarine? Tropical Fruit? - Pineapple? Starfruit? Fruit, Honey? Tropical fruit? Delicate Florals? Mint? (Not mint for me!)

There is also value in swilling the wine around your mouth before swallowing so that the various sensors on the tongue ([show pic](#)) can identify the various flavours. High Acidity? Definitely!

Dry - yes because it does not taste sweet like fruit juice. But we can still taste fruit!

So a bit more about this specific wine. The family of Saladini Pilastrri have been in viticulture for 3 centuries. The 2320 hectare property (Think small palace!) is located in the very south of the Marche production zone overlooking the Abruzzo border. (*Opposite coast to Rome*) The wine is matured solely in stainless steel and therefore unoaked. Pecorino thrives on mid mountain slopes, which experience wide temperature variations, it is gravelly soil which helps promote some minerality. Typically 10 year old vines. The energising minerality makes it a wonderfully refreshing wine.

Vinification white method with 'deburbage' (*Level 4 Stuff*) So the wine is fined or cleared by letting the sediment drop rather than centrifugal force or adding Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) or low temperatures as may be used in making other wines. If the skins have been in contact with wine for a length of time there are unwanted flavours and substances. With Deburbage there is lower unwanted smells and it reduces the unwanted alcohol elements.

In order to present this wine to you tonight I tried two of Majestic's Pecorinos along with my in house tasting team including the girls boyfriends! This one was slightly more expensive and is organically made. This was certainly more complex in it's flavour profile. The other whilst easy drinking was a bit one dimensional in taste.

Saladini Pilastrri were one of the first winemaking estates in Italy to convert to organic farming so no pesticides were used in its production. **Any Vegans or vegetarians here? Show chart about Vegan wines.**

No 3 Sea Change Montepulciano D'Abruzzo £7.50 x 4 £30 (LWC) 13.5
% ABV Abruzzo 2021 OPEN A FEW HOURS BEFORE
SERVING

Let's move on now to wine number 3. We have travelled just south I had an open top sports car in mind although since this is an eco friendly wine we better make a sustainable travel choice!

Nestled between the foothills of the Apennines and the Adriatic coast, the Abruzzo region is one of Italy's most mountainous areas. The region's altitude not only gives the hillside vineyards the perfect amount of exposure to the sun but also ventilation from the cool, dry sea breeze of the Adriatic.



Montepulciano is both the name of this grape variety and the name of a village. Montepulciano d'Abruzzo is the wine produced from the Montepulciano grape when grown in the Abruzzo region.

This wine is part of a collection of European wines called 'Sea Change' It's estimated that 56% of the planet's whale, dolphin and porpoise species have consumed plastic. In one study in the UK, all the animals washed up on Britain's shore that were examined by scientists had traces of plastic in their stomachs. There were no unnecessary plastic wraps around the corks when I uncorked them earlier - just simply the cork in the neck of the bottle. The labels are from certified forests. The idea is that even small things can make a difference.

So let's get to work on the tasting sheet.... just something to ponder when you taste the fruit... start by thinking if it tastes of Red or Black fruit and then what kind of fruit it reminds you of...

GIVE OUT TASTING SHEETS

REVIEW TASTING SHEETS

Taste:

Hints of cherry and raspberry are intertwined with cinnamon and smoky spice.

The delicate tannins help give the wine a smooth mouthfeel coupled with gentle acidity. A balance wine is often a good wine.

Food Pairings:

Ideal with casseroles, barbecues, and other roasted dishes. It should be a good partner for the **salami** we are passing round. It also matches wonderfully with rich chocolate desserts.

It's a DOC so Denominazione di Origine Controllata. So a grade down from the Prosecco and Pecorino we tried earlier but still very strict rules about its quality and authenticity. They also must follow stricter production regulations than the 4 grades of wine beneath it! A DOC wine can be promoted to DOCG if it has been a DOC for at least 10 years. In addition to fulfilling the requisites for DOC wines, DOCG wines must pass much stricter analysis and tasting by a Government Tasting Panel! [HANDOUT ABOUT WINE CLASSIFICATIONS](#)

It contains sulphites used in the finings but they are vegetarian and vegan friendly.

Carbon, China clay! limestone, silica gel, and vegetables plaques (made from pea and potato proteins) are all suitable vegan friendly alternative finings.

so a bit about **Corks**

Natural cork seals better but can give way to “cork taint” or TCA. TCA is trichloroanisole results from the interaction of of mould, chlorine and phenols in cork. These chemicals are found in all plants.

Keeping wine on its side helps keep the cork moist, which is key for long-term storage, as a dried out cork can cause seepage and premature ageing.

Plastic corks are only being used on bottles that are to be consumed with five years or less which are not meant to age. As solid cylinders they do not allow for air to naturally flow in and out of the wine bottle to develop flavours. I say ‘plastic’ but I have here a wine cork from Sugar cane polymers.

Wine No 4 Amarone Casa Giona DOCG 15% ABV

For wine number 4 we are back to the Venice area. When I tried this at a tasting last month it was so stunning that I knew I wanted to showcase it tonight to you. So a quick flight for us (shhh). I think the quality of this will still taste great at altitude! It’s a limited release and is priced accordingly!

Lets fill out the tasting sheets again for this one.

It’s almost the last work of the evening and then we can relax and enjoy the final wine.

REVIEW TASTING SHEETS

Colour - Garnet Red?

Rim v Core?



Valpolicella is the number one Italian appellation by value. It is produced in the foothills of the Alps on limestone soil, from the following grapes:

Corvina 65%

Rondinella 20%
Other 5%

The respective blends (with a minimum of 45% Corvina for Valpolicella DOC) produce a variety of wines.

Taste? Notes of black cherry and blackcurrant. Aromas of ripe red and black fruits with notes of oak.

Spice? Yes

Earth, toasted coffee and leather. Liquorice? Not for me on this wine.

Tannins are also robust and velvety, although still on the young side so the wine would accept some ageing.

Full Bodied

A bit more about Amarone - it has only existed since 1938. In short: Amarone is made using dried grapes. Drying grapes is very common in Italy. That's standard practice for sweet wines. As the water volume in the grapes evaporates the percentage of sugar increases.

The wine is made from grapes often from higher altitudes with great access to sunlight. They are then raked in a Fruttaio (essentially a large shed with racks and racks of grapes) until they have up to 60% less liquid about 120 days. This process is known as Appassimento. They are literally then picked over by hand to choose only the best grapes. They are then crushed and de-stemmed. They are Fermented for 35-50 days which is much longer than normal wines with the skins in Oak barrels then further aged in the bottle. The length of these techniques is up to the winemaker. The wine is intense and has some length to the taste, fruity with hints of cherries in spirits and prunes, dried flowers? and sweet spices. It is full in body and very smooth with velvety tannins.

But Amarone ferments the grapes to dryness, meaning it's got a lot of alcohol, a lot of viscosity - legs and a lot of flavour. It makes for a seriously opulent wine. Plush. Layered with both fresh and dried-fruit flavours. There really is nothing quite like it. Fantastic with aged cheese like Gran Padano or Parmesan or indeed meat dishes.

Wine No 5 Vin Santo Valdichiana Toscana DOC 2018 - 14%

As is the tradition in Tuscany, (Left hand leg top) each zone produces its own Vin Santo. In Valdichiana, the grapes Trebbiano Toscano and/or Malvasia Bianca (minimum 50%) are used, along with local green grapes. This wine is 50% of each. This one is bottled in Florence.

The grapes are delicately picked and freshly harvested they are then placed on straw mats in a warm and well ventilated area of the house and some producers age it for 4 years in Caratelli - oak barrels under roof tiles or it can be hanging on racks indoors. They are then vinified and can only be pressed between December 1 of the harvest year and March 31 of the following year. The result is balanced and smooth. technically a dessert wine, a Vin Santo can vary in [sweetness levels](#) from bone dry (like a Fino [Sherry](#)) to extremely sweet. The colour can be straw yellow to amber and over to golden or a brownish yellow. While the style is believed to have originated in Tuscany, examples of Vin Santo can be found throughout [Italy](#).

So there are a couple of thoughts as to where the name Vin Santo came from: The [Greek](#) island of [Santorini](#) came under rule of the [Ottoman Empire](#), the ruling Turks encouraged the island's wine production of a sweet dessert wine made from dried grapes. Over the next few centuries, this wine became known as Vin Santo and was widely exported to [Russia](#) where it was used as a communion wine by the [Russian Orthodox Church](#) and sometimes referred to as holy wine.

Another claim is that when the island of [Santorini](#) was ruled by Venice, packages were sent from the island were labelled "Santo" to denote their origin, while their contents were labelled "Vin"; thus the term "Vin Santo" was born.

The mandatory aging is 3 years, of which a minimum of 24 months in oak barrels ([caratelli](#)).

Colour: Amber yellow/ Gold

Smell: The nose shows the traditional aromas of pastry, raisins, apricots, Cinnamon, Caramel and Vanilla and candied fruit of the along with the hazelnuts.

Flavour - The palate is full bodied, supple with a good balance and acid hints. Fragrant on the finish and aftertaste where the nutty sensations including almond first felt on the nose reappear.

Contains sulphites

Suggested pairings with this Vin Santo

This wine from Tuscany is perfect with bakery and it is also perfect of course with **panettone** filled with candied fruits, blue cheese, chocolate and a 'greedy heart' of crème patissière. Oh my arteries!

I hope you have enjoyed my brief tour of Italy and your jet lag is not too bad tomorrow! Grazie Mille to those who have helped me tonight in all the preparation and serving!

'Wine with Carol' U3A Wine Tasting at Pentewan Sands Sailing Club 21st April 2023

You Have Tasted:

1. Prosecco Superiore La Marca DOCG Extra Dry £14.99 ABV 11% Veneto
Available Majestic
2. Pecorino Saladini Pilastrini DOCG Organic £11.99 ABV 13.5% Marche
Available Majestic
3. Sea Change Montepulciano D'Abruzzo 2021 DOC £12.99 12% ABV Abruzzo
Available Online Seachangewine.com
4. Casa Giona Amarone Della Valpolicella DOCG Guide price £25.50 - £49! ABV 15%
Verona Tricky to find!
5. Santa Cristina Vin Santo Valdichiana Toscana DOCG £17.49 ABV 14% Tuscany
Available Waitrose