

Prosecco

on-premise training guide

Prosecco is among Italy's largest wine categories and is recognized and well-loved by consumers around the world. With sales growth rates outpacing Champagne, and the introduction of the Prosecco Rosé category, Prosecco is an important wine to understand and include in your beverage program. This guide offers an opportunity for you to dig deeper into the region and discover how the local *terroir* (i.e., all of the vineyard and cellar factors that shape how a wine tastes) and winemaking techniques make different styles of Prosecco. This knowledge will help you develop a dialogue with your guests to build trust and confidence.

*Prosecco is the ultimate in affordable luxury,
but there is more to Prosecco than brunch bubbles!*



How is Prosecco made?

While it's often compared to Champagne, Prosecco is made using a different process where the bubbles are created in a pressurized tank rather than an individual bottle (the latter is the production method used in Champagne).

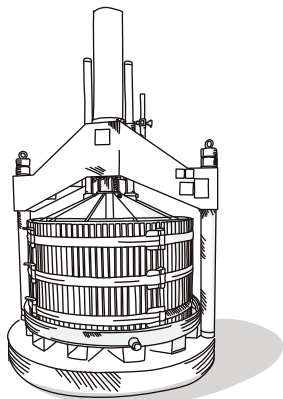
The process goes by several names including Tank Method or Charmat Method, but Italians refer to it as the Martinotti Method. Italian Federico Martinotti developed and patented this sparkling wine method in 1895, but that design was improved upon by Frenchman Eugène Charmat in 1907, and the Charmat name stuck.

Are all Proseccos sparkling?

The vast majority of Prosecco is spumante (fully sparkling), but a tiny slice of production is made as a frizzante (a fizzy style with about 1-2.5 bars of pressure) and a tranquillo(still) version.

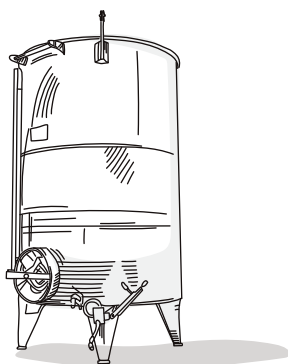
The benefits of using the tank method are that it preserves the youthful fruity flavors (perfect for the aromatic Glera grape) whereas the traditional method used in Champagne and Franciacorta (*frahn cha COR tah*) produces more of a savory yeasty character in the wines.





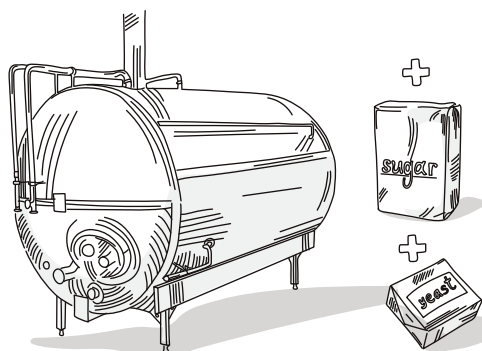
STEP 1

Prosecco starts with the aromatic Glera grape that is fermented to a dry wine.



STEP 2

This base wine is fermented in stainless steel tanks to preserve the fresh aromatics.



STEP 3

This base wine is then moved to a pressurized tank where additional sugar and yeast initiate a second fermentation, and the carbon dioxide generated is trapped in the tank.



STEP 4

Finally, the now-sparkling wine is filtered, the final sweetness is adjusted and the wine is bottled under pressure.

Glera Grape

Glera (*GLARE ah*) is the main grape of the Prosecco region, responsible for the fresh fruit and floral aromas and flavors in the wines.

Historically, both the region and the grape were called Prosecco, which meant that anyone in the New World could participate in Prosecco's popularity by growing the grape and calling the wine Prosecco. In order to protect the integrity of the region, in 2009 the grape's name was changed to Glera (a historical synonym).

While the overwhelming majority of Prosecco will be 100% Glera grapes, local wine laws allow up to 15% of other grapes, including indigenous grapes like Verdiso and international grapes like Chardonnay.

Prosecco Rosé also starts with a base of Glera and 10 - 15% of Pinot Nero is added to achieve the delicate rosé color.



Tasting Prosecco

When it comes to tasting Prosecco, all of your senses are put to the test!

First, note the appearance. While color doesn't offer any important clues (unless it is a tawny color indicating that the Prosecco is past its prime), your attention should go to the bubbles. There will likely be a froth at the rim, but bubbles may not form in the wine if the glass is, oddly, *too* clean. But even without seeing bubbles, the carbon dioxide will still be dissolved in the wine to tickle your palate.

Serving Prosecco in a white wine glass, rather than a flute, will greatly enhance the aromatic experience and enjoyment of the wine.

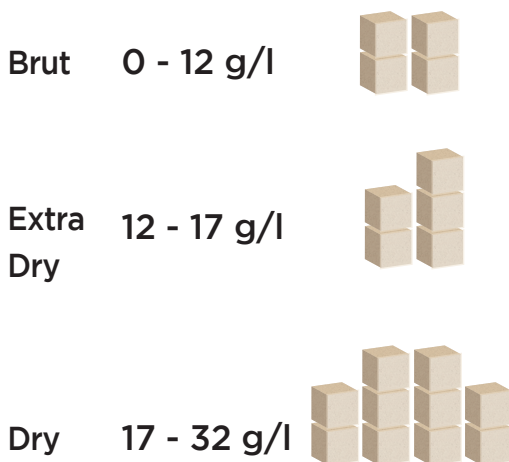
While smelling the wine, there is no need to aggressively swirl the glass as the bubbles bursting at the surface will help carry the aromas upwards.

Aromas of Prosecco range from youthful with fragrances of fresh peaches and a touch of cream to more complex aromas of ripe apples and peach blossoms with a touch of *Panettone* (an Italian sweet bread).

Aromas are very important, but Prosecco really comes alive on your palate. You will likely first notice an impression of sweetness on the tip of your tongue, but this sweet fruit will be balanced by the effervescence and juicy acidity. The mousse should be more frothy and lively rather than aggressive, with juicy acidity experienced on the sides of your tongue.

Both the bubbles and the acidity will cut through the sweetness and leave a fruity finish. While most Prosecco is sweeter than Champagne or Cava, it should not leave your tongue covered in sugar like you have just finished a lollipop – good Prosecco leaves an impression more like the delicate sweetness of fruit juice. The final taste should echo the fruit and floral aromas and flavors with perhaps a creamy texture on your tongue.

How sweet is my Prosecco?



Opening a Bottle of Prosecco

Being able to open a bottle of Prosecco with ease and confidence will make a positive impression of your professionalism on your guests.



Make sure that the bottle is well-chilled. Use a 50/50 mixture of water and ice to cool a bottle down quickly.

Present the bottle to be sure that is the bottle that was ordered.



Remove the foil either using the tab or your wine key.





Hold the cork securely in place while you loosen the cage.

It is important to remember that once that cage is loosened, your hand must never leave the cork as the pressure inside the bottle is higher than the pressure of a car tire!



Tilt the bottle to about a 30° angle while gripping the cork. Use your other hand to grip the base of the bottle. Be very aware of your surroundings and, however tempting, do not point the bottle at anyone.

Holding the cork in place, *twist the bottle* while keeping pressure on the cork to keep it from popping out prematurely.



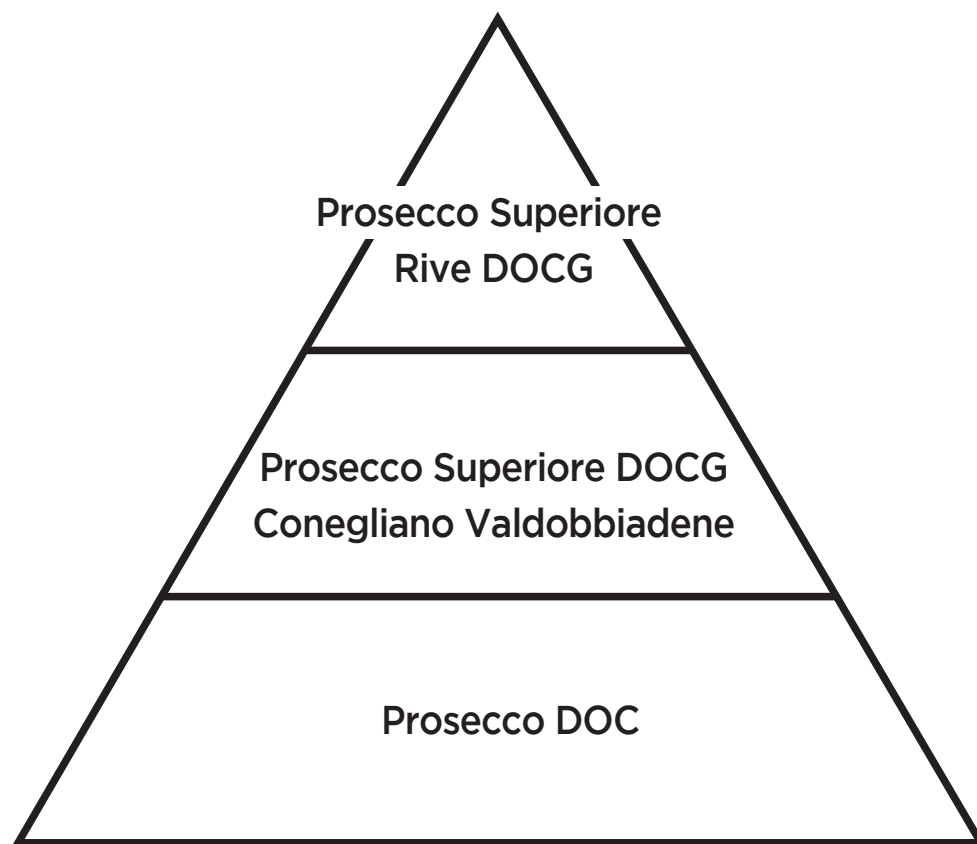
Once the cork starts to loosen from the sides of the bottle neck, you can control how quickly (and loudly) the bottle will pop. The louder the pop, the more bubbles you lose, so you should aim for a quiet hiss.

After the cork is removed, quickly wipe the lip and serve. White wine glasses are best for Prosecco as the larger surface area will allow you to experience more of the delicate aromas.



The Prosecco Region

Prosecco is made in Northeast Italy and can be made under three different defined and protected areas (also called denominations).



Prosecco DOC

Prosecco DOC is the largest denomination and comes from a wide area including central and northeastern Veneto plus all of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Because it is one of Italy's largest denominations geographically, soil types, aspect and the local mesoclimate can vary widely. That said, Prosecco DOC wines are generally made in a fresh, fruity and easy-to-drink style.



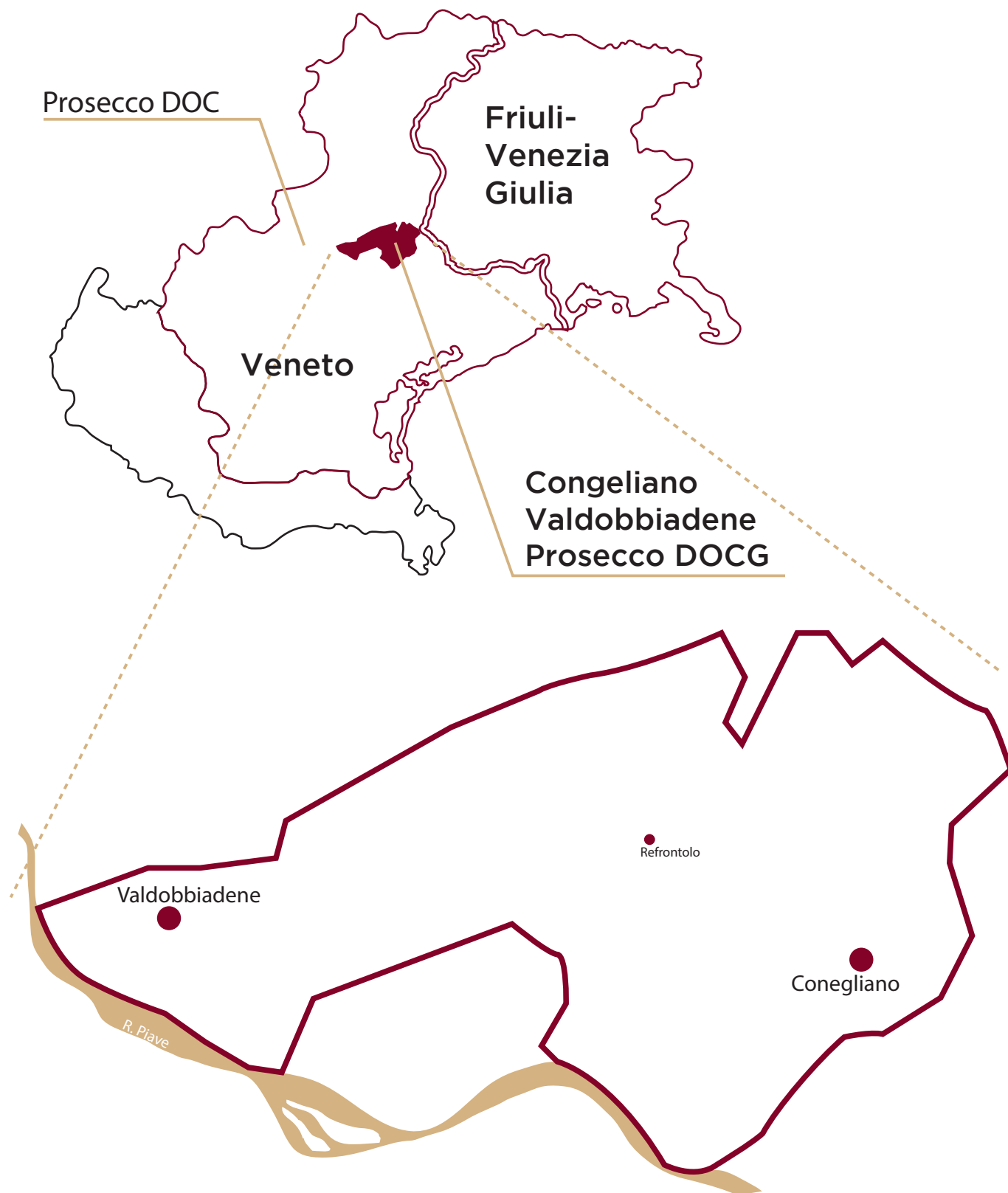
Prosecco Rosé DOC

Appealing to both Prosecco and rosé wine lovers, Prosecco Rosé is a new category of sparkling wine created to debut in 2021. Though this is an extension of the Prosecco DOC category, there are some interesting differences between Prosecco DOC and Prosecco Rosé DOC to know about.

The blend is obviously different, with Prosecco Rosé using predominantly Glera (the main grape of Prosecco) with 10-15% Pinot Nero (aka Pinot Noir). Also different from Prosecco DOC, Prosecco Rosé must be vintage-dated and only allowed in Brut Nature styles (very dry with no dosage) through Extra Brut, to Brut, to Extra Dry (delicately sweet). Sweeter styles beyond this are not allowed for Prosecco Rosé. Production must be using the Charmat (or tank) method, which is how most Prosecco is made anyway, though total production time is twice as long at 60 days.

Note in all cases, Prosecco Rosé covers the broader Prosecco DOC area. The smaller and more premium Prosecco DOCG area (located between the tongue-twisting towns of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene) still prohibits the production of a rosé wine.





Prosecco Superiore DOCG

Accounting for only 17% of all of Prosecco production, the Prosecco Superiore (*su pe rió re*) DOCG is a much smaller area producing more concentrated and complex sparkling wines. Located between the tongue-twisting towns of Conegliano (*co nael YAH no*) and Valdobbiadene (*vahl doh bee AH deh nae*), this is Prosecco's historical heartland and the most respected area in the Prosecco region.

The local climate is mild and influenced by both the warmer air coming up from the Adriatic Sea and the cooler air coming down from the Dolomites. This pre-Alps area is defined by its hills (see boundaries of Prosecco Superiore DOCG below) with soils of sandstone and clay around Valdobbiadene turning to clay, limestone an alluvial mix near Conegliano.

This local *terroir* plus stricter requirements including lower yields in the vineyards and lighter pressings at the winery means that the wines are more multi-layered in aromas with an intense concentration of flavors.



Rive

Within Prosecco Superiore DOCG is a collection of crus called 'Rive' (*REE veh*) which represent a higher quality and very rare subcategory in the Prosecco region. In the local dialect, Rive means a very favorable site on a steep slope. As such, the wines:

- Can only be made from a single village
- Must be vintage-dated
- Must be hand-harvested
- Have a lower vineyard yield and press yield than even Prosecco Superiore DOCG

The wines will then be labeled as Rive followed by the name of the village (there are currently 43 Rive).

Two other DOCG Proseccos made in the towns of Asolo and Cartizze, respectively, are very high quality though relatively little wine is produced.



The bottom line is to remember that Prosecco is the name of a place and can only come from this area in Northeastern Italy, and that there are different quality levels within Prosecco.



Selling Prosecco

With refreshing bubbles and bright acidity, Prosecco can be very versatile with a wide range of dishes. Classically part of the mimosa cocktail at brunch, Prosecco has such wide recognition and loyal following, that it is an easy suggestion to make to your guests.

Suggesting Prosecco as you first approach the table can be very effective, especially if you can sense that this is a celebratory meal.

Prosecco DOC and Prosecco Rosé DOC are generally made in a fresh, fruity, easy-to-drink style that makes an ideal aperitif.

On the table, think about dishes that are light and delicate like salads (where the fruit would complement the acidity of salad dressing), sushi, frittatas, simply-prepared chicken or fresh seafood and shellfish, where the fruit in the Prosecco will highlight and contrast with the salty flavors of the sea. The bubbles in Prosecco will be particularly refreshing with fried dishes—pair it with fish and chips.

Most guests think of Prosecco as separate from wine, but more intense offerings like Prosecco Superiore D.O.C.G. or Rive can be an effective pairing throughout an entire meal. The elegant mousse can refresh your palate for the next bite and the greater complexity and intensity of Prosecco Superiore D.O.C.G. will not get overwhelmed by heavier dishes such as rich pasta, grilled seasonal vegetables, creamy risotto, pork or leaner cuts of steak.

Prosecco in the Extra Dry, Dry or Demisec style can be wonderful with the dessert course, especially where you can contrast the bubbles with something creamy like mousse, sweet souffles or even light sponge cakes. And because something fruity and sweet usually accompanies the cheese plate, the fresh fruit of Prosecco would be a wonderful pairing.



The Bellini Cocktail

In 1948, Harry Cipriani of Harry's Bar in Venice mixed Prosecco with fresh peach puree and called it the Bellini, associating Prosecco with the Bella Vita in post-war life in Italy. This is also how most Americans first tasted Prosecco.

Wines to try

Santa Margherita Prosecco Superiore DOCG

The Prosecco Superiore DOCG is grown on the slope-blessed area around the town of Valdobbiadene and shows vibrant acidity and the signature minerality you should expect from a DOCG Prosecco.

Region: Valdobbiadene, in the heart of the Prosecco region

Grapes: 100% Glera

Production: Charmat (tank) method; rested on its lees for three months before bottling

Tasting Note: Dry, pleasantly fruity bouquet with perfumes of apples and peach blossom; its flavor is rounded and well-balanced

Pairing: Versatile enough for your festive brunch and ideal with seafood or cheese appetizers



Santa Margherita Sparkling Rosé

While there is no such thing as pink prosecco (Glera is a white grape after all), Santa Margherita's Sparkling Rosé uses Glera to bring a core of fresh fruit and floral notes. Try it and see if you can find the Glera in the blend!

Region: Northeast Italy

Grapes: 55% Chardonnay, 40% Glera (grape of Prosecco), 5% Malbec

Production: Charmat (tank) method; rested on its lees for four months before bottling

Tasting Note: Elegant perfumes of strawberries and citrus leads to an attractive palate with mixed berry fruits that linger on the finish

Pairing: Wonderful on its own, pairs well with savory appetizers, complex seafood dishes and anything spicy



Did you know? Santa Margherita's first Prosecco was released in 1952, years before their iconic Pinot Grigio was crafted.

Torresella Prosecco DOC

A classic example of authentic Prosecco DOC is made by Torresella. Joyful and fruity, Torresella Prosecco embodies the true Venetian style for immediate consumption and enjoyment. The grapes come from vineyards around the town of Portogruaro (around the hamlet of Torresella).

Region: Prosecco (about 70km outside of Venice)

Grapes: 100% Glera

Production: Charmat (tank) method

Tasting Note: Extra dry (14 grams of residual sugar); fresh and fruity with juicy acidity, gentle mousse and a delicately dry finish;

Pairing: Very versatile sparkling wine! Excellent aperitif and pairs particularly well with salads, shellfish and other fresh dishes



Torresella Prosecco Rosé DOC

Fruity, sparkling, and rosé makes this the perfect partner for whatever your mood.

Region: Prosecco region of Northeast Italy

Grapes: Mostly Glera with 10-15% of Pinot Nero (all certified sustainable)

Production: Charmat (tank) method, finished in Brut (dry) style.

Tasting Note: Bright citrus, white flowers, and perfumes of strawberries and cherries are lifted by the joyful bubbles to a long, flavorful finish.

Pairing: The light and fresh nature of this Prosecco Rosé is a natural partner to light and fresh cuisine like seafood, or an interesting textural contrast with creamy risottos.



Santa Margherita Prosecco Superiore 'Rive di Refrontolo' DOCG

By definition, Rive is a rare wine. Santa Margherita makes one that is from a 10 hectare (about 25 acre) estate in the village of Refrontolo. From steep slopes (see the photo of our Rive vineyards on page 11) that enjoy ventilation from the pre-Alps and strong diurnal temperature variation, the vineyard naturally produces a complex sparkling wine with delicacy and power.

Region: Village of Refrontolo between Conegliano and Valdobbiadene

Grapes: 100% Glera

Production: Charmat (tank) method; rested on lees for three months before bottling

Tasting Note: Rich aromas of peach and acacia blossom with rennet apple and pear. It is invigorating and fresh with a long, multi-layered finish

Pairing: Ideal partner for elaborate starters and an outstanding match for fresh fish.



Review Questions

1. What are the main steps in the production of Prosecco?
How is it different from how Champagne is made?
2. What is the main grape of Prosecco?
3. What are some of the primary aromas and flavors you would expect to encounter in a glass of Prosecco?
4. Are all Proseccos sweet?
5. Once the cage is removed, what is the best way to extract the cork from a bottle of Prosecco?
6. How would you describe the terroir differences between Prosecco DOC and Prosecco DOCG?
7. What is Rive?
8. What dishes (in your own restaurant) would you recommend for Prosecco DOC? Prosecco DOCG?