



valpolicella

From prawns to prada, it goes with everything

PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSORZIO PER LA TUTELA DEI VINI VALPOLICELLA

by Kathryn Holland Besser

Valpolicella wines are produced in the Veneto region of Italy. Situated north of Verona and east of Lake Garda, the zone covers approximately 30,000 hectares with about 7,800 hectares of vineyards. Featuring a moderate climate and hillsides built up over limestone, the area is subdivided into three distinct sections: 1) **Valpolicella DOC Classico** which includes the valleys of Fumane, Marano and Negrar and its southern neighbors, Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella and San Pietro in Cariano; 2) **Valpolicella DOC Valpantena** encompassing the centrally-located Valpantena valley; and 3) **Valpolicella DOC** which includes the Avesa and Quinzano valleys (located between Classico and Valpantena) along with five valleys in Eastern Valpolicella (Tregnago, Mezzane, Cazzano di Tramigna, Illasi and Marcellise). The primary grapes used in Valpolicella wines are Corvina, Corvinone and Rondinella. These varieties are indigenous to the Veneto region and are not found elsewhere. Since Valpolicella wines are made from the same grape varieties, it is the winemaking techniques that set them apart from each other and from other noteworthy Italian wines.

The four designations of the appellation are **Valpolicella DOC**, **Valpolicella Ripasso DOC**, **Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG** and **Recioto della Valpolicella DOCG**.

Ripasso refers to an ancient practice from the Verona area. It involves a second fermentation of Valpolicella varieties over the skins of dried grapes previously used to make Amarone or Recioto (typically 15-20 days). Originally used to strengthen the structure of the wine in bad harvest years, it later morphed into a conscious style choice for Valpolicella winemakers. In 2010, "Valpolicella Ripasso" was formally codified by a set of production rules, becoming a controlled designation of origin (DOC). Amarone is made from dry grapes that have been left in fruit drying lofts for 90 to 120 days. The extended drying increases the sugar content in the grapes, giving Amarone one of the highest aging potentials among Italian wines. Recioto is made in a similar manner to Amarone, however fermentation is stopped (naturally) at a higher sugar concentration.

Note: Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) guarantees the geographic authenticity of the wine and its quality. Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) guarantees the geographic authenticity and wine quality but not as strictly as DOCG standards.



ALLESANDRA SGAGGIO AND OLGA BUSSINELLO FROM CONSORZIO VALPOLICELLA WITH DANIELLE BOLLA, PONTE PR & MARKETING

Q&A WITH CONSORZIO VALPOLICELLA

At a recent tasting event in San Francisco, California, GEV spoke with [Olga Bussinello](#), Director of Consorzio per la Tutela dei Vini Valpolicella. Founded in 1924, the consortium is an association of grapevine growers, winemakers and bottlers within the Valpolicella wine production area. Representing about 80% of Valpolicella producers, the organization promotes activities to enhance the value of the territory as a whole. It takes responsibility for the tutelage of brands and viticulture in addition to being in charge of surveillance, safeguarding and protection of the four designations.

GEV: First of all, as a woman representing a magazine founded by a woman, it's delightful to meet a female head of a wine consortium! It isn't something I've encountered before and it's exciting to meet a female leader representing an entire region. It feels like such a different conversation when women discuss wine.

OLGA (OB): Well, we are talking about just the right wines then! Amarone in particular is a wine that is so lovely for women. We have seen many American consumers fall in love with it. I would characterize our

Valpolicella wines as very feminine: sensual, romantic as well as passionate. Did you know that women comprise about 65% percent of Amarone fans?

GEV: That makes perfect sense. The name Amarone sounds like love, doesn't it? It conjurs up the word "amour" or "amore". And, of course, the city of Verona brings to mind the story of Romeo and Juliet. It seems like a wine women will inherently understand and feel connected to right away.

OB: Yes, for women, this wine is soft and approachable. The deep red color suggests romance. And it's very round on the palate, with a violet, perfume-like nose.

GEV: On a personal level, I felt immediately drawn to it. How deep is the penetration into the U.S. market?

OB: About 11% of our exports are to the U.S.; it's one of our top markets for Amarone and Ripasso—mainly to California and New York but also Boston, Massachusetts, Miami, Florida and Washington, D.C. On a year to year basis, we are definitely seeing an upward trend in sales to the United States.

GEV: In your opinion, when is the best time to drink Valpolicella wines?

OB: Anytime! I think our wine varietals fit a woman's or a man's life very well. They are good for every situation. To me, Amarone is versatile in that it works alone as a cocktail, then pairs equally well with meat and cheese courses at dinner. But I think it might be best late at night with dark chocolate or a cigarette!

GEV: And romance, of course?

OB: Absolutely! I think it's very important to convey that the landscape where Valpolicella comes from is beautiful and also very relaxed. The towns nearby, including Venice and Verona, are such romantic places. I think the wine in the glass is, of course, even better after a visit to our region!

GEV: With Amarone, it seems "special occasion" due to the price points. Are there everyday Amarone wines?

OB: Yes, there are. But more importantly, each person has to define their perfect Amarone and how often they like to experience it. For me, it's an Amarone from the [Terre di Leone](#) winery in a little town called Marano. It's a wine I drink often and enjoy very much. I also like [Valentina Cubi](#) from a town called Fumane. They make fantastic organic wines and some carry the new RRR Valpolicella certification.

GEV: Can you tell us about the RRR program?

OB: In Valpolicella, we started a program last year called RRR (*Reduce, Respect, Retrench*). It aims to provide comprehensive protection for the consumer, for the landscape and for the winemakers. It's a very important project within our organization and is similar to efforts in California. In Italy, only in Valpolicella has this voluntary, sustainable certification effort taken off within the wine industry. What makes it different is that it covers the landscape as well as the whole production process. The wellness of the grape is deeply tied to the overall wellness of the area. This has paid off with respect to healthful benefits in these wines via the grapes. For example, under analysis, we found there is more resveratrol in biodynamically-produced grapes. For women, this is fantastic news: more wines on the market with beauty benefits! This year, we are seeing the first RRR bottles released to market.

GEV: What's next for Consorzio Valpolicella?

OB: Two current goals are to foster more tourism to our region and promote our new [Valpolicella Wine app](#) (for iOS and Android) to help plan visits. The app offers the best places for agro-tourism, biking tours, spas and more as well as listing all the wineries. I think there are fantastic Amarone wines from 2016 to try—2015 was good but 2016 was perfect. Valpolicella wines are for every occasion; in summer, have it with lake fish or lobster. Try it iced for a refreshing summer cocktail!



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE SECREST



CLAUDIA BNAZZOLI | PHOTO BY STEPHANIE SECREST

BENAZZOLI

Benazzoli Winery was started in 1974 by Fulvio Benazzoli. Located in the Morain Hills near Lake Garda, the winery previously sold Bardolino and Charetto grapes in bulk. In 2009, they began bottling their own wines. In 2013, Benazzoli acquired acreage in the Valpolicella wine region (Monte di Sant'Ambrogio) and began producing Amarone della Valpolicella with Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara grapes. The [Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG Classico 2013](#) is a standout vintage for the winery: the bouquet is intense with notes of ripe red fruits and spices. The grapes were hand picked in small crates from a selection of the best grapes then dried in fruit drying lofts for 3 months. After slow fermentation and maceration in stainless steel tanks for 20-30 days, the wine aged for 3 years in oak casks. Ideal with roasted or braised meats, game and hearty cheeses, this Amarone is capable of being aged for up to 15 years.

Alcohol (% vol.): 16.00
Acidity (g/l): 5.70

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VILLA CANESTRARI

Villa Canestrari was founded in 1888 by the Bonuzzi and Franchi families. Located in the Illasi Valley between Colognola ai Colli and Illasi, the acreage overlaps the regions of Valpolicella and Soave, allowing the winery to produce both types of wine. Above the cellar in Illasi, the winery has constructed a wine museum dedicated to preserving the history of local winemaking and Villa Canestrari's passion for experimenting with ancient (native) grape varieties. The [Amarone della Valpolicella DOC Riserva 2009 "1888"](#) is an exceptional vintage. Made with a blend of Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella, Oseleta and Croatina grapes that are dried in fruit lofts for over 3 months, the wine undergoes 40+ days of maceration in stainless steel vats followed by a few years in oak barrels then back to stainless steel vats for 6 months with a final year of maturation in the bottle. Recommended with hearty meat and game dishes, and strongly-flavored cheeses, this Amarone is capable of being aged for up to 15 years.

Alcohol (% vol.): 16.00
Acidity (g/l): 5.90

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FRANCESCO BONUZZI | PHOTO BY STEPHANIE SECREST

et voila vin



LUCA FORMENTINI, PRESIDENT OF CONSORZIO LUGANA (ALSO AT THE TASTING), CHATS WITH WINE EXPERT, DEBORAH PARKER WONG (DWSET)



VALPOLICELLA OFFERINGS FROM DOMINI VENETI | PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY STEPHANIE SECREST



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VALPOLICELLA WINES—BY THE NUMBERS

Wine region: 30,000 hectares
Vineyard area: 7,844 hectares
Grape growers: 2,286
Cooperatives: 7
Vertical companies: 229
Bottlers: 286

Grape Varieties (97% indigenous):

Corvina: 57%
Rondinella: 21%
Corvinone: 13%

Total Production:

Bottles per year: 60 million
Valpolicella Ripasso: 42%
Valpolicella DOC: 36%
Amarone della Valpolicella (DOCG): 21%

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