

Sparkling wines are a favorite of mine, however I almost always forget to try Prosecco. What is the commercial where the gentleman whacks his forehead and says “I coulda had a V-8”? I feel the same when it comes to Prosecco because, let’s face it; Prosecco is a darn good drink. I have written about Prosecco before, but I find now that things have changed... for the better that is. Imports into the United States are way up and the pricing is very competitive. Our friends at Wine Spectator tell us that in 2010 the import figure was just under 1,000,000 cases. By 2015 the figure had jumped to over 4,000,000 cases.

Prosecco comes to us primarily from Italy. If you are feeling your youthful best you can wander the 50,000 acres under vine in the Prosecco region. As you wander you will find the grapes that go into the making of Prosecco. Mostly you will find Glera, with small amounts of pinot blanco, pinot grigio, and an indigenous grape called verso. According to Karen MacNeil, She writes in the Wine Bible, Glera was at one time called Prosecco and the wine was made from the so-called Prosecco grape. To eliminate confusion the producers changed the name to Glera. This change occurred at the same time that the Ministry of Agriculture elevated two sub zones that encompass 25 percent of the Prosecco area, the Asolo and Conegliano Valdobbiadene areas, to Denomination (sic) di Origine Controllata Garantita (DOCG). This is the highest designation of quality in wine in Italy and, as a result, some of the Prosecco labels will carry the designation Prosecco Superiore DOCG.

The acreage that I mentioned above is located mostly north of Venice, spanning the Veneto and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia regions. Eighty percent of the acreage is planted in the Veneto. Alison Napjus writes in the Wine Spectator about Mr. Giancarlo Polegato and several other producers of Prosecco. Mr Polegato and Mr Angelo Rebuli produced two Prosecco wines that were above the average price of twenty dollars, however, in the tasting evaluation, there was NOT a noticeable increase in quality. Mr Polegato brought the Villa Sandi to the market and Mr. Rebuli brought the Extra dry Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore. Both of the Prosecco wines scored above 90 points in the tasting. Most of the other Prosecco wines scored 85 points and stayed in the area of twenty dollars. It is realistic to assume that, with some aggressive shopping, you will be able to stay within or below the twenty-dollar range.

Questions should come up such as: Whatever happened to Champagne or Sparkling Wine? The answer is found in simple economics. The US experienced an economic downturn in the early 2000s with the climax coming in 2008, known as the Housing Crunch. Americans were forced to alter their way of life and find economies in any area that they could. One area was in their choice of Alcoholic Beverages. If you were a Champagne or Sparkling Wine drinker,

Prosecco became the less expensive and go-to choice. David Flachek, a writer for the Times Tribune of Scranton, Pa. put it as follows: There was this curious grape called Glera that was used in Italy to produce Prosecco wine. In the early 1990s only a few hundred cases made it to the US. There was not more than a handful of wine drinkers that knew anything about it except a few dedicated Italian wine enthusiasts. As time passed Prosecco grew in popularity primarily because of a low price range and some very pleasant flavors. Prosecco carried some flavors similar to Champagne. The fact that it is bulk fermented helped to keep the price down. So, Prosecco had a lot going for it and . . . voila! You saw what happened with the import figures.

I went back to the Spectator article and I found a review on a Prosecco that is offered right here in Beaufort. It is called Belstar and it is served in local restaurants. It is from the Prosecco region in Italy and is produced by the Bisol Family. The wine should carry flavors of lemon, apple peel, and some spice. This Prosecco should be with us for quite a while as it is a very pleasant glass of wine.

WINESPEAK. The Bisol Family really does “get it.” They have been producing wine for centuries. However they, along with other Prosecco Producers, realize that Prosecco is a very real alternative to the Champagnes and Sparkling Wines. Gianluca Bisol is the managing director of Bisol and he describes his winemaking efforts as working tirelessly with passion so that Conegliano will gain the same prestige as Reims, Valdobbiadene the same charm as Epernay and Prosecco the same notoriety as Champagne. Sounds like a full frontal assault on Champagne. I trust that it is not but rather a statement of good clean competition. There must be a way that Champagne, Sparkling Wine, and Prosecco can peacefully coexist.