

## Prosecco Superiore

in recent years, production of the firmer, more structured wines of Asolo Prosecco Superiore has gone from strength to strength. The pioneer of premium winemaking here is the organic, family-owned estate of **Bele Casel** ([www.belecasel.com](http://www.belecasel.com)), whose excellent handcrafted Proseccos continue to set the standard for the denomination.

Conegliano Valdobbiadene is traditionally an area of growers. A family with a few hectares of vines will typically sell its grapes rather than make and bottle its own wine, but there is also a nucleus of top-quality, small-scale grower-producers. One of the pioneers is the **Frozza** family ([www.frozza.it](http://www.frozza.it)), whose origins go back to the turn of the last century and who set an example for many when they began their own production, to wide acclaim, in the 1990s. Another is **Silvano Follador** ([www.silvanofollador.it](http://www.silvanofollador.it)), who represents a new, young generation of wine-growers. Follador inherited a small plot of prime vineyard and, fresh out of high school, made the life-defining decision to become a wine producer. A minimal interventionist in the vineyard and the cellar, he makes just two Prosecco Superiore wines, either extra brut or nature depending on the vintage, one of which – an absolute rarity – is a metodo classico.

## Array of styles

Stylistically, Prosecco is far more diversified than it was 10 years ago. The carefree, semi-aromatic, fresh-fruit and floral profile remains a reference point, but it is no longer the default setting. Alongside it, in particular at the top end of producers' ranges, a more 'adult' Prosecco – as Paolo Bisol from **Ruggeri** ([www.ruggeri.it](http://www.ruggeri.it)) calls it – has developed. The style is dry (even austerely so, in brut nature versions) with more lees character and possibly the mature notes of autolysis, which used to be anathema to oenologists in Conegliano Valdobbiadene. Ruggeri is one of its most influential proponents. The producer launched the bone-dry Vecchie Viti before brut became trendy and released an extra-brut label before the DOCG even contemplated such a thing (though the latest revisions now include it). Pushing the boundaries further, Ruggeri's latest release is a subtly complex vat-aged wine called Cinqueanni, which ages on the lees for five years.

One of the revolutionary provisions of the 2009 DOCG was for vintage labelling, which prepared the way for longer vat and/or bottle ageing. One of the very first to successfully develop a riserva-style Prosecco was the house of **Bortolomiol** ([www.bortolomiol.com](http://www.bortolomiol.com)). It was one of the main architects of the post-war reconstruction of the wine industry in



Above: Paolo Bisol with daughter Isabella in the Ruggeri vineyards

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Valdobbiadene, and founder Giuliano Bortolomiol was an early promoter of the brut style in Prosecco. The brut nature Gran Cuvée del Fondatore created in his honour is a late-bottled special selection which defies preconceptions of Prosecco by evolving depth and complexity with age.

## What's old is new

Another element of stylistic diversification is, in fact, a return to the past. The wine traditionally known as 'col fondo' (or 'sur lie') is bottled in early spring with its own yeasts and allowed to slowly re-ferment, producing a completely dry Prosecco with tangy salty-lemon flavours and a delicate frizzante. Once a rustic product made for local consumption, >



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## Prosecco Superiore

It produces two selections, an extra dry and a brut. Both have undergone a label restyling in the current vintage with the addition of the brand name RDO, but the wines are the same 100% Glera Prosecco Superiore produced since the institution of the five sub-denominations. The Brut 2019 has an enticing nose of violets, aniseed and pear skins with a hint of bread crust from the extended lees ageing. It shows good presence on the palate with concentrated fruit flavours and an aromatic finish. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 11.5%**

④ **Ruggeri, Vecchie Viti Brut, Valdobbiadene Superiore 2019** 95  
 £26.75-£32.99 Exel, The Great Wine Co, Valvona & Crolla

Prior to harvest, the Ruggeri agronomists go through the vineyards on the terraces of Cartizze and Santo Stefano, individually tagging the old vines that provide the fruit subsequently picked separately to make the Vecchie Viti selection. The annual production of 5,000 bottles has remained constant since the first release in 2005. In some vintages it can be a little austere, but the 2019 is wonderfully expressive. The nose has ripe yellow pear and apple fruit framed by dark blossoms, and the palate is richly textured with delicious depth of fruit and great concentration on the finish. **Drink 2021-2023 Alc 12%**

⑤ **Villa Sandi, La Rivetta Brut, Superiore di Cartizze 2019** 95  
 £30 Bellavita, Millesima

First bottled in 2008, this single-vineyard selection comes from a 1.5ha plot with vines up to 50 years old. In addition to the development of a fine perlage, 90-day re-fermentation and lees ageing gives the wine a longevity not usually associated with Prosecco: the 2017 and the delicious 2018 are both drinking excellently now. This current 2019 vintage is complex and refined on the nose, with suggestions of ripe pear and orange peel behind aromas of lilac and marjoram. Suavely round on the palate, the ripe candied fruit is supported by fresh acidity. **Drink 2021-2023 Alc 11.5%**

⑦ **Adami, Vigneto Giardino Asciutto Rive di Colbertaldo Dry, Valdobbiadene Superiore 2019** 94

£18.33-£21.75 Millesima, Sociovino  
 Although not declared on the label, with its 20-21g/L of residual sugar, Adami's Vigneto Giardino just creeps into the category of dry. The vinification and

ageing aim at showcasing the fruit and aroma, which emerge with all their exuberance in the 12 months after release, so the recommendation is to drink the current vintage before the next one comes out. The nose has peach, melon and marzipan, but there's also a hint of lime and acacia honey. Light and airy texture, bright and juicy flavours, delicately sweet but not sugary. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 11%**

⑥ **Cà dei Zago, Brut Nature, Valdobbiadene 2019** 94  
 N/A UK [info@cadeizago.it](mailto:info@cadeizago.it)

In the last two vintages, Christian and Marika Zanatta have begun to push back the boundaries of the col fondo style by giving their wine a brief period of maceration with the skins. The 2018 was a little imprecise, but the 2019 vintage is much more self-assured. The mid-straw shade is already an indication of the direction the brother and sister team have taken. On the nose there are damp straw notes, hints of green tea and salted butter, sour apple and apricot in the background. The palate has volume and texture, very refined bubbles and a satisfying bone-dry finish. **Drink 2021-2024 Alc 11%**

⑧ **Casa Coste Piane, Frizzante... Naturalmente Brut Nature, Valdobbiadene NV** 94

£18.82 Tannico  
 From the top slopes of the Rive di Santo Stefano, vines ranging from old to ancient, Loris Follador uses no chemical products in the vineyard and vinifies with indigenous yeasts and minimal added sulphites. The wines are non-vintage but typically have at least a year in the bottle before they come out. Follador makes

wines with great purity of expression which are artisan without being rustic. The nose recalls wild herbs with a faint touch of leafiness. On the palate, think crisp green apples and salted lemons with a long, tangy finish. **Drink 2021-2024 Alc 11%**

⑨ **Frozza, Giovanin Fondo Naturale Brut Nature, Vino Bianco Frizzante 2016** 94

N/A UK [valdobbiadene@frozza.it](mailto:valdobbiadene@frozza.it)  
 Hail damage in 2019 prevented Frozza from bringing out its top-selection Rive di Colbertaldo this year, but it did present a limited-edition reserve from the 2016 vintage which represents a return to the estate's origins. Re-fermented in the bottle, it could qualify under the new regulations as sui lieviti, but is released simply as Vino Bianco Frizzante. There is a marked autolysis character on the nose, but also sweet almonds, thyme, tomato leaf and something saline, like samphire. The palate has volume and depth and a dry, herby finish. **Drink 2021-2024 Alc 11%**

⑩ **Merotto, Cuvée del Fondatore Rive di Col San Martino Brut, Valdobbiadene Superiore 2019** 93

N/A UK [www.merotto.it](http://www.merotto.it)  
 The Cuvée del Fondatore is Merotto's top selection, from a rive site associated with richly aromatic wines. Graziano Merotto highlights this feature with late harvesting, which adds an extra layer of personality. The nose is a big floral hit of acacia and violets with hints of pressed flowers and then ripe pear and tropical fruit. The long, slow Charmat re-fermentation produces a creamy texture and very fine, persistent perlage. Quite soft and round for a brut, it finishes with notes of milky almonds and pears. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 11.5%**



### Vecchie Viti... Valdobbiadene Prosecco made from ancient vines

Some of the vines tended by Ruggeri's faithful supplier-vignerons in Valdobbiadene were planted more than 100 years ago. The expert knowledge that comes with their cultivation has enabled Ruggeri to be one of the first to make a cuvée to take advantage of this wonderful patrimony.

The first "Vecchie Viti" (Ancient Vines) Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore D.O.C.G., with grapes from vines of 80-100 years old, saw the light of day in 2005. The yield is very limited but the harvested grapes are of the highest quality and the result is a unique sparkling wine that delights with its complex fruity and floral aromas.

## Ruggeri

### Back to the future with D.O.C.G. Prosecco in Valdobbiadene

As striving for the future through evaluation and development of the past. A more complete understanding of the possibilities furnished by the terrain. Sustainability and innovation. All these are the themes driving a constant programme of experimentation at one of Prosecco's most distinguished proponents: Ruggeri.

What's the background to Ruggeri? One of the most historic producers, dating back 70 years, based in the Prosecco Superiore D.O.C.G. region. Total production is over 1.6 million bottles, starting with an impressive 12% of the total harvest of the ultra-prestigious D.O.C.G. Cartizze cru. Quality is paramount and recognition from the critics consistent.

Innovation has always been part of this company's make-up. The latest creation is a cuvée of Prosecco left on the lees for an unprecedented five years, appropriately called Cinqueanni, and of course, Ruggeri was one of the very first to make an Extra Brut quality of Prosecco

*"Innovation has always been part of this company's make-up."*

Superiore, with a very low dosage, to get at the true expression of the Glera grape in a wine that is perfect with food.

The other great project is the experimental vineyard, planted with more than 100 ancient clones of Glera, Bianchetta, Verdiso and Perera grapes in 2012, now ready for evaluation as part of local viticulture in a project supported by the Consorzio di D.O.C.G. Prosecco Superiore.

Innovation and sustainability are indissolubly linked, and for Ruggeri sustainability is becoming reality through what the company calls the "Objective Reduced Impact" project. Agronomist Gianluca Tognon explains: "Reduced impact comes from finding a better environmental balance



with fewer treatments in the vineyard. In practice, this means using active ingredients that have a shorter life in the soil, resulting in a reduced impact on the ecosystem."

Tognon continues: "We are also researching new lighter-impact fertilization techniques, coupled with increasingly effective processing systems, resulting in the precise environmental balance that our superior-quality wines require." The aim is to make fine wines, but it is also to safeguard the precious territory of Valdobbiadene, where Ruggeri makes its D.O.C.G. wines.

UK: Available through Enotria&Coe - [enotriacoe.com](http://enotriacoe.com)

