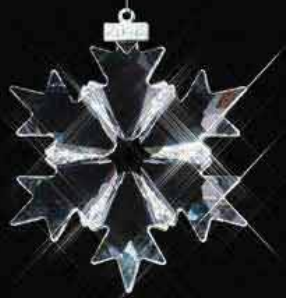


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HOLIDAY SPIRITS: RUM, TEQUILA, VODKA

Festive Italian Wines for the Holidays

by Allison Levine

THE HOLIDAYS ARE UPON US, SO WHAT SHOULD WE BE DRINKING? I SAT DOWN WITH DANIELE CERNILLI, AKA DOCTORWINE, while he was in the U.S. recently for the launch of the 2019 edition of his book, *The Essential Guide to Italian Wine*, an annual review of more than 3,000 wines. Cernilli is one of the most renowned wine critics and journalists in Italy and the perfect person to ask about festive Italian wines for the holidays.

“For me, sparkling wine is a wine of celebration, it is a wine of joy,” Cernilli explained. “Big red wines are good to drink in specific situations, but not for celebrations.” When it comes to celebrations, Cernilli continued, “the celebration is more important than the wine.” And Italy offers many different sparkling wines that will satisfy all wallets.



Prosecco is made from the Glera grape and comes from the Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia regions in northern Italy. Prosecco is made using the Charmat Method, in which the secondary fermentation takes place in stainless steel tanks. Prosecco DOC (Denomination of Origin) is produced in nine provinces whereas Prosecco DOCG (Denomination of Origin Guaranteed) is from Conegliano Valdobbiadene (north of Treviso) and Asolo.

Nino Franco Nodi Brut, Prosecco di Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore (US \$40–\$45) Nino Franco was founded in 1919 by Antonio Franco, and later run by his son Nino Franco. Today the winery is managed by Nino’s son Primo and Primo’s daughter Sylvia. According to Cernilli, this is “a typical prosecco. It is well-done. It is creamy with good bubbles. The wine has good acidity but is not too lemony. It is easy to drink.”

Lambrusco, which is the name of the grape as well as the wine, comes from Emilia-Romagna. It is a red sparkling wine, made in the Charmat Method, and can be dry, off-dry and sweet. You may remember it as an

oversweet, cloying wine, but a dry Lambrusco is a crisp and savory wine that will pair with almost anything.

Cleto Chiarli Lambrusco di Sorbara DOC Fondatore Secco (US \$17–\$20) The Chiarli family has been making wine for more than 150 years. According to Cernilli, the Cleto Chiarli Lambrusco di Sorbara DOC Fondatore Secco is a “fantastic wine. It is a light red wine that is not too sweet.” It is a wine to enjoy with salami and charcuterie.

Trentodoc, or Trento DOC, is a sparkling wine made in the Classic Method (aka Traditional Method or Méthode Champenoise) from the Trentino-Alto Adige region in the northeast of Italy. According to Cernilli, Trentino is the birthplace of Blanc de Blancs (sparkling wine made from white wines), as chardonnay is commonly grown in this area.

Ferrari Trento Giulio Ferrari Riserva del Fondatore, Trentodoc (US \$115–\$125) Named after Giulio Ferrari — a local winemaker who studied in France, noticed the similarity between the Champagne and Trentino regions, and then introduced chardonnay to Trentino — this wine spends 10

years on the lees (yeasts). The resulting vintage, made from 100 percent chardonnay, has a complex nose with mineral, honey and spice notes. This is a wine that Cernilli recommends to pair with chef Gualtiero Marchesi’s simple but signature dish of cold spaghetti topped with caviar.

Franciacorta is a hidden gem located in Lombardy, just a short drive from Milan, in northern Italy. The first sparkling wines in the area were produced in 1961, and Franciacorta became the fifth DOC in Italy in 1967.

Ca’ del Bosco Cuvée Annamaria Clementi, Franciacorta (US \$75–\$100)

The Cuvée Annamaria Clementi is the prestige bottle named after owner Maurizio Zanella’s mother. Made in the Traditional Method, the wine spends 10 years on the lees. According to Cernilli, Ca’ del Bosco Cuvée Annamaria Clementi is one of the best wines in Italy, and he described the elegant wine as an “Italian Dom Pérignon.” And, it is the perfect wine to pair with caviar, butter and a blini, in which the salty and sweet balance each other. ☼