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Italian
Winery of the Month



The Nicolis family

Same Grapes, Different Wines *Valpolicella, Valpolicella Superiore, Amarone*

Nicolis

Nicolis is located in Veneto in the historic Valpolicella area, whose four distinctive valleys extend to the northwest of Verona. The warm breezes from Lago di Garda blow through these valleys and meet with the cool air from the Lessini Mountains, creating wonderful microclimates for grapes, cherries, and olives. For generations, the Nicolis family has been involved with cultivating vines and wine-making in the area but began to make wine under its own label in 1953. The family owns 25 hectares in the Valpolicella Classico zone and another 15 hectares in the Bardolino Classico zone. Today, the winery is run by three Nicolis brothers, Giancarlo, who is the viticulturist, Giuseppe the enologist, and Massimo who handles marketing. Their Amarone *Ambrosan* has won Gambero Rosso's highest *Tre Bicchieri* award several times. The family established the Corte

de' Signori label in 2005 to feature wines from a particular vineyard, one of the highest in Valpolicella at an altitude of 300 to 400 meters. From this vineyard, they produce just Amarone and Valpolicella Ripasso, the super premium wines of the Valpolicella zone. And they cultivate the vineyard with maximum respect for the environment, using beneficial insects to control pests and employing pheromone traps when necessary.

La Montecchia dei Conti Emo Capodilista

The historic estate of La Montecchia lies in the Euganean hills of the Veneto region, 15 kilometers south of Padua. The Capodilista family can be traced back to Charlemagne when that king of the Franks invaded Italy in the late 8th Century. The Transalgardo brothers belonged to his retinue and one of them, Carlotto, became

See **WINERIES** *inside*



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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

Nardello

2010 Soave Classico "Meridies"

One hundred percent Garganega, this wine from the Soave Classico zone shows a softly powerful yellow hue and a nose of white flowers and yellow fruit, which follow on the palate with balance and a long finish. Serve chilled with appetizers and main courses of fish and vegetables. Alcohol is an elegant 12.5%, so don't hesitate to refill your glass. Serve chilled.

Nicolis

2009 Valpolicella Classico

This Valpolicella is a classic blend of 60% Corvina, 20% Rondinella, and 15% Molinara, with the unusual addition of 5% Sangiovese. Valpolicella is a fruity, versatile red wine that complements appetizers as well as lighter main courses from pasta to roasted chicken or pork. Aged in larger oak barrels for six months, the wine shows bright ruby color and a delicate nose, reminiscent of almonds with medium body and a pleasant balance. Serve at cool room temperature.

WINERIES *from previous page*

the head of a company, the so-called *capo di lista* and was allowed to keep this name. The Capodilista family settled near Padua, holding positions as civil and military leaders or princes of the Church, among them the blessed Giordano Forzate, founder of the abbey of San Benedetto in Padua. In 1783, Beatrice, the last Capodilista, married the Venetian patrician Leonardo Emo. Since that time, the family has used the double name of Emo Capodilista. Today, like the influential Venetian families from the 16th Century, the Emo Capoilistas are primarily involved with agriculture and viticulture. The present owner, Umberto Emo Capodilista renovated the vineyards and winery in the 1990s. His son Giordano is responsible for the management of the estate, assisted by enologist Andrea Boaretti and agronomist Patrizio Gasparinetti. They cultivate 45 hectares of Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmenere, Merlot, and Raboso. Merlot and Cabernet have been grown in La Montecchia since the 19th Century and are considered local wines in the Colli Euganei zone. The family

WINEMAKER SERIES

Nicolis

2008 Valpolicella Classico Superiore "Seccal"

Made with grapes from the Seccal vineyard, the wine is a classical blend of 70% Corvina 20% Rondinella, 5% Molinara, and 5% Croatina. What makes this Classico Superiore a richer wine than the Classico is that the grapes are fermented according to the *ripasso* method. The wine undergoes a second fermentation with the lees or sediment of the Amarone, whose grapes are a similar blend but partially dried through the winter and fermented in the spring. While not as rich as Amarone, the color, alcohol, and body are increased from contact with the Amarone lees. The "Seccal" has an intense nose, and the taste is full-bodied, warm, and reminiscent of dried fruit and spice, flavors that it obtains from the Amarone sediment. Grilled and roasted meats and game are traditional pairings, but surprisingly, I enjoyed the wine with pan fried sole, served over radicchio. Cheese courses are also recommended pairings. Serve at cool room temperature.

La Montecchia

2007 "Ireneo" Cabernet Sauvignon

Normally, wines with Gambero Rosso's highest *Tre Bicchieri* award fit into only our Collector Series, but occasionally we can include such a wine in the Winemaker Series. This delicious 2007 Ireneo Capodilista is such a wine, made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. Gambero Rosso describes it as having "complex aromas of fruits and flowers, followed by a vibrant, nicely textured palate. The winery at located in the Colli Euganei zone, where Bordeaux varieties have been cultivated for two hundred years. Serve this beautiful wine at cool room temperature.

also cultivates the whites Pinot Grigio and Muscat. The estate's first wine to receive Gambero Rosso's prestigious *Tre Bicchieri* award is the 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon *Ireneo*.

See **WINERIES** next page

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

Nicolis

2005 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico

A blend of 65% Corvina, 20% Rondinella, 5% Molinara, and 5% Croatina, the grapes are air-dried for three to four months after harvest to intensify and concentrate flavors. Then they are gently pressed in the spring and fermented over the course of a month with natural yeasts in the environment. Finally, the wine is aged in oak casks for about three years. This labor-intensive process produces Amarone, the noble wine of the Veneto, a full bodied, elegant, and intense wine with unmistakable spicy flavors of cinnamon and hazelnuts. Amarone pairs with game, roasts, and aged cheeses, but served by itself with nuts and dried fruit, Amarone is known as a *meditation* wine. Serve at cool room temperature.

Corte de'Signori

2005 Amarone Valpolicella Classico

This Corte de'Signori Amarone, also made by the Nicolis family, is 70% Corvina, 25% Rondinella, and 5% Molinara. Both this wine and the Nicolis 2005 Amarone della Valpolicella were made from grapes that were harvested in 2005. Both are 15% alcohol, which is typical of Amarone and the result of drying the fruit and concentrating sugars. Both are remarkably complex, full-bodied wines with deep color and spicy flavors, but the Corte de'Signori shows a bit more tannin and acid, no doubt because the fruit was harvested from a high-altitude, rocky vineyard. The Corte de'Signori is totally compatible with food whereas the Nicolis Amarone, also food friendly, might lean more in the direction of a *meditation* wine, which could be served with a last course of cheese, nuts, and dried fruit.

WINERIES from previous page

Nardello

Nardello vineyards are located between Mount Zoppega in Monteforte and Mount Tondo in Soave, both within the "zona classica" area that is most prone to yield a prestigious Soave. Documentation of the family's history goes back to the second half of the 1600's when their vineyards first appeared on the land registers.

Family members were wine merchants in Monteforte from the early 1900's. Current leaders of the company, Daniele and Federica built a state-of-the-art winery in 2000 when they began to produce wines under their own label instead of selling all of their grapes to other wineries in the area. The company now has 35 hectares of land, and the average age of the vines is 40 to 50 years old.

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JUST ITALIAN?
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Winemaker Series:
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Artisan red-Winemaker red:
\$48/month
Winemaker red-Collector red:
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REGION OF THE MONTH



V E N E T O

Venezia, a city built into the sea, is like no other, haunted by the princes and poets of its noble past and by centuries of tourists. The cities of Padova, Vicenza, and Verona, originally frontier posts on the Roman trade route between Venezia and Genova, grew into Renaissance splendor and are marvels in their own right. In the 16th Century, the region's great architect Andrea Palladio worked throughout the area and his buildings are everywhere, in the cities and in the countryside. Nature exhibits its own marvels in the region, the spectacular Dolomite Mountains in the north, the rolling Euganean hills in the south, vast Lake

Garda, Italy's largest lake, on the eastern border, and to the west, the Adriatic with its beaches and ports.

Today, Veneto is a thriving agricultural center, a lush land of vines, ranking third after Apulia and Sicily in wine volume but the first with classified DOC wines. There are three general areas of premium production: the western province of Verona in the hills between Lake Garda and the town of Soave, the central hills in the prov-

inces of Vicenza, Padova, and Treviso, and the eastern plains of the Piave and Tagliamento river basins along the Adriatic coast northeast of Venezia.

Verona is the leader in classified DOC wines and the site of Vinitaly, the largest wine trade fair in the world. A major part of the DOC wines in the region are Soave, Bardolino, and Valpolicella, a blend of Corvina, Rondinella, and Molinara. When young, Valpolicella is a full, fruity red, but when the grapes are partly dried, they are made into Amarone, one of Italy's most noble wines. Bardolino is made from the same grapes as Valpolicella but is a lighter version. Similar to Soave, Bianco di Custoza is another DOC white as is Lessini Durello, a steely dry wine, usually sparkling.

The central hills produce whites similar to Soave as well as Tocai, the Pinots, Merlot, and Cabernet. Prosecco, a dry to lightly sweet white, is produced in the area as is the renowned Venegazzu, both usually sparkling.

The eastern plains have been dominated by Merlot and Cabernet Franc for decades, but the local red Raboso and white Verduzzo still have admirers. Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon, and Chardonnay are also gaining ground.



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