

REGIONS 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 west-

ern province of Verona in the hills between Lake Garda and the town of Soave, the central hills in the provinces 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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Dicembre 2005

One of Italy's most noted wine producers, Casa Vinicola Bertani is located in Veneto, a few miles north of the city of Verona. Villa Novare is the name of the palatial villa, which serves as headquarters for the winery, and which produces the winery's more modern wines, like Cabernet Sauvignon. The Grezzana winery continues to produce traditional wines, especially Amarone. Founded in 1857 by brothers Gaetano and Giovan Battista Bertani, the winery produces a full spectrum of fine Veronese wines, such as the white Garganega and the red wines Valpolicella and Amarone. Bertani is in the fortunate position of owning its own vineyards instead of buying grapes from growers, so is able to supervise the complete wine making cycle from start to finish. This com-

prehensive approach to wine making is the key to Bertani's maintaining its reputation for excellence for nearly one and a half centuries.

Bertani family members remain a presence at the firm to this day though operations are now largely coordinated by a hand-picked team of experts and consultants, led by director Gian Matteo Baldi and winemaker Cristian Ridolfi. To maintain its extensive vineyards, Bertani engages the skills of some of Italy's most eminent viticulturalists. From its vineyards to its cellars to the magnificent Villa Novare, Bertani offers a fascinating and memorable introduction to Veronese winemaking, where progressive techniques and equipment are allied with extensive experience and a deeply felt respect for tradition.

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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES



Bertani 2003 Due Uve

Due Uve, which translates to “Two Grapes,” is 50% Pinot Grigio and 50% Sauvignon Blanc from estate vineyards. The two varietals are vinified separately in early autumn and then blended together in January. The new wine is then transferred to stainless steel tanks, where it remains on its lees until early summer. The wine is then bottled and aged for an additional three months. In some vintages, Sauvignon Blanc dominates with grassy, herbaceous aromas and flavors, whereas in this 1993 vintage, the wine is rounder and more noticeably influenced by Pinot Grigio with peach and apricot aromas. Serve chilled.

Bertani 2003 Villa Novare Valpolicella Classico

The Villa Novare Valpolicella is 70% Corvina Veronese, 25% Rondinella, and 5% Molinara from the estate vineyard in Arbizzano di Negrar, located in the heart of the Valpolicella Classico zone southeast of lake Garda. Aged for one year in Slavonian and French oak barrels, the wine is then aged in bottle for an additional 90 days prior to release from the winery. Bright ruby red, the wine shows alluring scents of fresh, ripe cherries and plums and rounded flavors of red berries with a hint of almond in the finish. Serve at cool room temperature.

WINEMAKER SERIES



Secco-Bertani 2002 Valpolicella Valpantena

In continuous production for over 150 years, this wine is the “grandfather” of the *repasso* technique. In this classic process, the Valpolicella rests for a few days in spring on freshly drawn skins and solids from Bertani’s Recioto Amarone wine, rendering the Secco-Bertani a richer wine than it otherwise would be without this contact. For 18 months, 75% of the wine ages in large Slavonian oak casks and 25% in French oak barrels. The wine is then aged for an additional 90 days in bottle before release from the winery. Deep garnet red, the wine shows scents of spices and nuts. Serve at cool room temperature.

Bertani 2001 Catullo

The Catullo is an innovative blend for the region, 50% Corvina and 50% Cabernet Sauvignon from estate vineyards. Its name pays homage to the Latin poet Catullus, who over 2,000 years ago found inspiration for his haunting, romantic odes in the scenic beauty of the Veronese hillsides that are today the source of this intriguing red wine. The striking label features an artist’s rendition of a traditional quill pen, with the fronds of the feather forming lines from one of Catullus’s most famous odes to his faithless lover, Lesbia. The Cabernet is aged in French oak barriques for 12 months, while the Corvina is placed for the same length of time in Slavonian oak barrels. Garnet red in color, the wine shows cherries and red berry fruit on the palate with structure and complexity allied with harmony and finesse.

WINES OF THE MONTH

COLLECTOR SERIES

Bertani 1997 Amarone della Valpolicella

This Amarone is a classic blend of 70% Corvina Veronese, 25% Rondinella, and 5% Molinara. Harvest begins in early October, after which the grapes richest in sugar and extracts are dried on cane mats, which are stored on raised platforms in airy lofts, sheltered by a roof but otherwise exposed to drying breezes on all sides. By the time the fruit undergoes fermentation in February, it will have lost up to 60% of its water content. A lengthy maceration period ensues, the process responsible for Amaron’s tremendous body and structure. The wine is then transferred into oak casks for a period of five to eight years, during which time it is racked twice annually from one barrel to another, leaving behind solids that fall out of solution to the bottom of the barrel. The foremost wine-rating board, *Gambero Rosso* awarded this 1997 Amarone its highest honor, *Tre Bicchieri* or “Three Glasses.” Generous aromas of sweet cherries mingle with notes of sour cherry, vanilla, and a trace of spiciness. Cherries, red berries, and a hint of vanilla lead into a dazzling finish that recalls walnuts and hazelnuts.



Bertani 2000 Amarone della Valpolicella Valpantena

This Valpantena Amarone is made from the same blend of grapes as the Amarone della Valpolicella and undergoes the same wine-making process, but the fruit is grown on the Valpantena hills north of the city of Verona in the towns of Quinto, Grezzana, and Santa Maria, whereas the Amarone della Valpolicella fruit is grown in vineyards at Fumane, Marano, and the Novare Valley. While both wines have intense raisiny flavors and aromas from the partially dried fruit, this Valpantena Amarone shows fresher red fruit and softer, supple tannins, followed by a memorable finish. Both wines are an outstanding match with roast meat and game, as well as hearty, flavorful cheeses served with figs and nuts.

PICK & CHOOSE

JUST RED? JUST WHITE?
JUST CALIFORNIAN?
JUST ITALIAN?
HOW ABOUT A COMBINATION?

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Artisan red-Winemaker red: \$46/month

ITALIAN WINES
Artisan Series: \$32/month, a red and a white
Winemaker Series: \$62/month, 2 reserve reds
Collector Series: \$112/month, 2 collectable reds
Artisan red-Winemaker red: \$48/month
Winemaker red-Collector red: \$87/month

CALIFORNIA-ITALIAN COMBINATIONS
CA Artisan red-IT Artisan red: \$33/month
CA Artisan white-IT Artisan white: \$29.50/month
CA Winemaker-IT Winemaker: \$62/month
Alternate CA & IT Artisan Series: \$29.50/\$32/month
Alternate CA & IT Winemaker Series: \$59.50/\$62/month

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