Untold Italy Episode 179 - Italian Sparkling Wine: Toasting the Best From Prosecco to Franciacorta

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 179.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy
Buongiorno everyone! Or should I say cin cin! Today we're starting a new series on Italian wine with my good friends, and really the beating heart of my extended Italian family in Rome, Olivia Windsor and Andrea.

If you've been listening to our podcast for a while, Olivia's voice will be familiar to you as she's appeared on many episodes about Piedmont and also cheese. For which we share a big passion. Olivia is also the amazing leader of many of our Untold Italy tours and has a myriad of talents. But today we're going to chat about one of our other passions - wine - together with her partner Andrea.

This is the beginning of a series of episodes about Italian wine with Liv and Andrea that you'll hear in the coming months and years! There is a lot to unpack about Italian wine because not only is it delicious but winemaking and the vendemmia or grape harvest is an extremely important part of Italian culture and has significance not only in each region but on each hilltop and community where wine has been made for centuries.

First up we're chatting about Italian sparkling wine. Most of us know Prosecco but perhaps some of the other varieties you may not be aware of and/or have relegated to some bad memories in the 1970s and 80s. Well, I love Italian sparkling wine and I've had my eyes and tastebuds awakened recently so let's hear all about it from Liv and Andrea.

Katy

Welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast, Liv, and Benvenuto, welcome for the first time, Andrea.

Olivia

Hi, Grazie, Katy.

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Andrea

Thank you.

Katy

Thank you. It's so exciting to have you here now. Liv, most of our listeners have heard your voice many times, and I've just explained that you're part of my very special Italian family. But you're here on the podcast today to talk about something that we all love, and that's wine. Perhaps we should backtrack a little and get you to tell your story and how you and Andrea came to know so much about Italian wine and really wanted to make it a focus of your life at the moment and your studies and everything.

Olivia

Thanks, Katy. As you said, we're Andrea and Olivia, an Italian - Australian couple and the founders of Italian Wine Tales, which is a new online website all about Italian wine. We're launching wine guides on all of the regions of Italy, information on where to go wine tasting or on wine tours, and just general advice like, "You like this wine - why don't you drink this?" We know that the wine world can be a little intimidating at times, a bit stuffy, and even sometimes a bit boring. So we decided to help change that by creating an online resource all about Italian wine, like a one-on-one guide, but in a fun and approachable way. A bit of background on me, in case you don't know me, I've been living in Italy for the last four years, and I'm really passionate about food and wine, and in fact, the host of many of the Untold Italy tours. In Australia, I studied the WSET course or Wine and Spirit Education Trust, which is regarded as one of the world's leading providers of wine education. When I moved to Italy, I worked in some wineries in Tuscany and in Piedmont, where I also did my first wine harvest in Italy, I've become really interested in organic wines or even just small wineries that are all about quality, not quantity. And together with Andrea, I really wanted to deepen my knowledge of Italian wine specifically. So we decided to start the AIS or the Association of Italian Sommelier course.

Andrea

Hi, I'm Andrea, and I am originally from Piedmont, where I first met Olivia. I've worked in restaurants before for some years, but I've always felt a connection with wine. And the reason can be partially attributed to the fact that my family comes from the Langhe wine region, where Barolo and Barbaresco are made. I've fallen in love with those fables like rolling hills since I was a little kid. And therefore, I decided to start the AIS course with Liv because I felt this duty to keep alive the heritage of my own region and to know as much as possible about wine. And then while taking the classes, we started to realize just how much there is to know about wine and about Italian wine in particular. But as Liv said, how intimidating all of this can be. For example, did you know that in Italy alone, there are at least 350 grape varieties and that the wine has been made here for 4,000 years? So the idea for Italian Wine Tales came up out of the class, and here we are now.

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Katy

It's amazing. And I was so privileged to go with your mum, Andrea, to one of the wineries that was a connection to your family. And she was really, really thrilled to be able to see that winery where I think her grandfather had been playing. And it was really, really lovely. And Liv, I'm so in awe that you're doing this study, especially in Italian. It's so technical. Brava. Well done.

Olivia

Thank you. With Andrea's help, of course.

Katy

For our listeners, I've been extremely lucky to be the beneficiary of some excellent wine selection from both of these two. It seems only fair to share it with all of you, if only virtually. Today, we wanted to have a bit of a chat about sparkling Italian wines. I think everyone knows Prosecco, but there's so much more to the story than that. Shall we clink our virtual glasses and get started? Perhaps you can explain to the listeners what sparkling wine is.

Olivia

Awesome. We love sparkling wine, me especially. I guess there are a few different categories of sparkling wine. You might have heard of Spumante, Miedes Frizzante, the sparkling aromatic wine, the sweet sparkling wine. And basically, what they all have in common is that they're made from a first or a second alcoholic fermentation. So that can come from fresh grapes, grape must, or wine itself. What they all have in common is that they release carbon dioxide when you open the bottle, so hence the bubbles.

Katy

Pop.

Olivia

Yeah, pop. Exactly. And a little technical, but we want to go too technical, but they have bars of pressure. So they're normally three bars of pressure, and they have a certain alcoholic strength that varies between Spumante or a Metodo Classico. But that's just a very general definition.

Katy

I think most people, when they think of Italian sparkling wine, they think of Prosecco, right? And Prosecco is very widely known across the world. It's got a bit of a funny reputation, I think, because I think the French... I don't want to get too political here, Andrea, just relax. But I think the French have done a very good job of making sure that champagne or

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champagne is very well regarded as a luxury item and probably the pinnacle of sparkling wine. But in fact, Italian sparkling wines have a very long and amazing history that unfortunately, they didn't really keep up with the marketing. So I think this is a really great discussion because we're going to go into the different types of sparkling wine. And it's probably not maybe what a lot of people may have tried in the past. I know one of the first alcoholic beverages I tried was actually Spumante. And let me tell you, I don't think that's what we're going to be talking about now. But anyway, go on and tell us about Spumante.

Andrea

So Spumante literally means, as the word says, something that has the spuma, which is the bubbles and fizziness that you get once you open the bottle and pour the wine into the glass. 375 million bottles of Italian Spumante are made every year, especially in the northern regions. And as you can expect, Italy and France are the top producer of sparkling wine in general in the world.

Katy

But Spumante, is it a sweet wine? How would you describe that wine?

Andrea

Yes, I would describe it as typically associated as a sweet wine and to have with sweet food, typically with the dessert that you have at the end of the meal.

Olivia

You can find dry versions as well.

Andrea

Yes, as well, exactly. Not the best of the sparkling wine, as you said. I agree with that. There are better qualities of sparkling wines that we can discuss. But it's an easy wine to start to get to know the sparkling wines, I think.

Katy

Yeah, because I think this is actually a really funny story that I was gifted a bottle of Asti, and I just completely forgot that it was quite sweet. And it was really funny because Julie, who was on our tour in Puglia last year, was over and we were having open this wine. And I was like, Oh, it was at the start of the meal. It was so sweet. We were like, Oh, no, this is not right. We can't have that. So one of the important things where we had to, unfortunately, we had to not drink that because we weren't in the right eating mode for that wine. And I think this is a really important point is that when we talk about Italian wine, it's always, always with respect to food. So we're not really drinking wine on its own as a contemplative style

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that some of the other more famous ones. And we're always going to be eating food. And I think that's probably why we love it so much.

Olivia

Yeah, exactly.

Katy

All right. So should we go and talk about Prosecco?

Andrea

Of course, we can start from Prosecco. The wine takes its name from a little town in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region called, in fact, Prosecco. But now it's associated with a nearby region, Veneto, where it's now massively produced and way more popular. It is perhaps one of, if not the most well known Italian wine abroad, and 180 million bottles out of the 300 million that are produced every year are exported. If you're interested into about the aromas and the taste, you will find pear, apple, citrus, white flowers, bit of beautiful wisteria, and sometimes even peach and apricot. It can be interesting also to know how Prosecco is made. Prosecco is made mostly from the Prosecco and Muscato grapes, and it's done using the Martinotti Charmat method which is a peculiar name derived from two surnames. The first one is from this wine producer from Asti in Piedmont, which was called Martinotti, and the first one to invent this method. The second from the Frenchman, which patented it first. The two surnames created this method, the name for the method. To quickly sum it up, this method, the thing that you need to know is that it's fermented twice, and both fermentation happened in stainless steel baths.

Katy

Yeah, that's very different to champagne, isn't it? It's a very different method because in that case, the fermentation happens in the bottle and it produces a very different effect. I think we do love Prosecco because it's very light and it's summery. And in a lot of ways, it's a little bit easier to drink sometimes than champagne. It's a little less complex, but that's fine. And that's amazing because it goes really well with foods like seafood. And also, you can mix it with other drinks too.

Olivia

Spritz.

Andrea

Yeah. And it's an easy aperitivo wine to start the night.

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Olivia

But there's Prosecco and there's Prosecco as well. So there's the supermarket Prosecco, which you probably want to mix that because it's not so tasty to drink by itself. It might give you a terrible headache. And then there's the really good Prosecco for which we want everyone here to be learning about that and drinking that one. So Andrea has got some tips on how you can find that too.

Andrea

We would recommend, if your budget allows it, to go for the Valdobbiadene Superiore di Cartizze DOCG. Just to clarify, since you might be looking at many labels, Italian labels when looking for a good Prosecco, you might wonder what DOCG stands for. It literally translates to Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin, which is a guarantee for you that this wine has been produced following strict rules. As well, Superiore, it means there is a wine produced with higher quality obtained through stricter regulation.

Olivia

That's the best one from that Cartizze area. You probably don't want to use that one to mix into your spritz. That's the one that you'd be having for your glass of Prosecco and really enjoying that glass.

Katy

The thing about Prosecco is there's a lot of complicated Italian names. What's the region again that we're looking for? Say it slowly this time.

Andrea

So the name is Valdobbiadene Superiore di Cartizze DOCG.

Katy

I love it. It sounds really great when You say it.

Olivia

Cartizze.

Andrea

Exactly.

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Olivia

It's the key word. And there's two other ones that are still very good quality, not the top, top, top. It's still worth looking out for if you can't find that one.

Andrea

Yes. Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG and Asolo Prosecco Superiore DOCG.

Katy

We're going to put all of these names in the show notes because when Andrea says it, it sounds amazing. When I say it, it sounds terrible, that would be the when Liv says it, it sounds amazing too. But yeah, we'll definitely put all the names in the show notes so you can know what to look for. But this area is so beautiful around Treviso, it's a really nice area. You can actually visit there. There are day trips from Venice, actually, that you can do. But I totally recommend spending a little bit more time around that area because it's very beautiful.

Olivia

Stunning, absolutely. We've got some wineries that might be interested to go and visit.

Andrea

Near by Treviso, in fact.

Olivia

Slightly bigger ones that speak English. A little bit more commercial because, of course, the smaller family-run wineries are harder to visit. You really need to go with a group tour. For example, on our Untold Italy tours, we like to visit smaller wineries, but these are some options for wineries that you can visit as individuals or in a couple or with some friends.

Andrea

We would definitely recommend Villa Sandi or otherwise Sorelle Bronca or again, Belle Casel.

Katy

Are they all in the same area? So you could perhaps do a little day of it.

Olivia

Exactly, yep.

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Katy

So just for people that don't know, Treviso is in the north and this area is maybe about an hour and a half out of Venice, which is why it makes a day trip as well. And I would highly recommend spending time in Treviso as well as that wine area. It's very beautiful. And they also have sparkling wine. I'm mean, amazing. What's not to love?

Olivia

Yeah what's not to love?

Katy

And now there's another region that's fairly close by to there too, right? And this is actually my favorite. And this is a very new but it's a very special wine, right?

Olivia

Exactly. Franciacorta in nearby Lombardy. And that's - me and Katy are good friends because we like similar things as well. So Franciacorta, I love. And that's the Metodo Classico method. So different to Prosecco, the second formation happens inside the bottle. So Prosecco, it's happening all in stainless steel tanks. Franciacorta in the bottle. So that's why it's often compared to champagne. You might hear it referred to as Italy's version of champagne. They're both their own separate drinks, and we can talk about that a little bit later. But yeah, the similarity is the way that they're produced. So Franciacorta, it's a delicious bubbly wine. It's very sophisticated and elegant, a little bit heavier, as you were saying, Katy, than the Prosecco. It's got really delicious sense of butter and vanilla and citrus, white flowers on the palate and on the nose. Yeah, it's really tasty. I love Franciacorta, but it is a heavier style of wine than the Prosecco.

Katy

Yeah, and it's a little bit more expensive because of the different method because you can imagine to get the taste and the bubbliness, this is my technical term, right in the bottle as opposed to in a vat is going to be quite a different thing altogether. So let's just have a chat about where Franciacorta region is because Italian wine is very focused on the region. And this is when Andrea said about the DOCG, it's about the region and the method of the way the wine is produced. So you can't just go around calling anything Franciacota because it's not going to be from the correct region.

Andrea

Yeah. If you want to visit Franciacorta, you have to go to Lombardy near the town of Brescia. It's encasinated between Brescia and Lake Iseo. It's beautiful there. And this part of Italy is peculiar because the wind coming down from the Camonica Valley, mixed with the warmer air that it's over Lake Iseo. So even in winter, there is not much fog there, so there is not much

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humidity. And this is why Franciacorta is such a peculiar product that can only be found and cultivated in that specific area.

Olivia

I was there last year and it just is beautiful, that area. It's a small area, too. A very small area. Compared to...

Andrea

5,000 hectares, if I'm not wrong.

Olivia

Yeah, it's very small and it's just stunning. It's well worth the trip and visiting a few wineries in Franciacorta.

Katy

Yeah. Now, Brescia isn't very well known, but this is a city that I absolutely love. It's so cool. It's got years and years of history all in one little pocket. But its closest place it's near to is probably the people would know, it's probably Lake Garda. So if you're heading to Lake Garda, this is a great area to head around. It's wedged between Milan and Venice.

Olivia

Nice little wine trip down there.

Katy

Well, you could do the Prosecco bit if you're coming from Venice, and then stop off at Franciacorta and compare and contrast. I'm totally up for that. That's an idea isn't it?

Olivia

Delicious. Chin chin.

Katy

And are there some wineries you'd recommend stopping off in the Franciacorta region?

Olivia

Yeah, absolutely. So last year I was in a beautiful family run winery that speak English and they can organize picnics in the vineyard. It's called Mosnel. And that's a really lovely one to visit. Otherwise, a more famous, a little bit more commercial that you might have heard is Ca

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Del Bosco. And finally, Bellavista. That's another really nice winery. And they've got a range of different tours at different price points as well, and different timings that you can choose.

Katy

And you can book in on those on the website?

Olivia

Yeah. And the benefit of those, or all three is that they'll offer the website in English too. So it's just really easy to make your experience there.

Katy

Yeah. Liv and I like to find the small ones, but it comes with its own little challenges in terms of lack of information. I mean, it's so worthwhile understanding and getting that real family connection to these wineries. But you need to really have a really good command of Italian and you need to have a tenacity that is only known to Liv. It's really, really, really, voracious at finding these wines. Okay. Oh, yeah. I mean, I love Franciacorta. Thank you for that. And did you have something else?

Olivia

Yeah, we've got a few tips if you want to find a really good Franciacorta. Just the first one, understand if you want something dry or sweet. When it comes to the process of making Franciacorta, we're not going to get too technical, but basically they need to add what's known as dosage. A little bit of sugar at some stage. That means there's a whole different scale of sweeteners in Franciacorta. So you might want to get familiar. If you don't like sweet wine, but you want your diet Franciacorta, go for the Pas Dosé. It's the least amount of sugar in the Franciacorta. I mean, I probably prefer an extra Brut or a Brut, which is a dry. But if you like sweet wine, they've got that for you too. So you can go for the Dolce, which has got 50 grams per liter of sugar. So that's quite sweet. So that would be my first tip. My second, if your budget allows, always choose a Millesimato Franciacorta. It essentially means that all of the grapes used are from the same vintage, the same year, rather than a mix from all different years in the Franciacorta, it's just a higher quality product.

Olivia

Third tip and really important, on the bottle of your Franciacorta, they will have the year that it's produced, as well as the Spaccatura. Technical term, you just need to know that when that happens, basically you want to drink the wine between 6 to 18 months after the date of the sboccatura. So just have a look on the bottle, it'll be somewhere that date. Because essentially, once the sboccatura happens, which is when they add the sugar that we were talking about before, they reopen the bottle, add a bit of sugar and some other secret elements that differ from each producer, the quality of the wine starts to slowly go down. So

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you don't want to keep Franciacorta after that date for years and years and years because it's just a shame. The quality doesn't improve.

Katy

That's good to know. And I mean, not that that would last long in our house, but no one's going to be going around cellaring that one. But yeah, it's good to know. Sometimes people hold on to bottles for special occasions, and that'd be a real shame, wouldn't it? Because you'd be like, Oh, good tip. Thank you.

Olivia

Exactly. No worries. And the last thing I'd say about Franciacorta is there's a few different other kinds that you can get. So not talking about sugar, just the varieties of Franciacorta. You can get the rose. So if you like Rose, go for that. My favorite is the Saten, which is extra creamy. It's made just using white grapes. It's been on the lees or the yeast for longer. There's the Millesimati that I mentioned before. Again, that stays on the lees for longer, so creamy, creamy, creamy. Or there is the creme de la creme, the Riserva. So that spends the longest amount of time aging on the lees.

Katy

And what grapes do they use for Franciacorta?

Olivia

The grapes that they use for Franciacorta are Chardonnay, absolutely. Pino Nero, occasionally. So I mentioned that the Saten only uses white grapes, so it wouldn't use Pino Nero there. And they use a little bit of Pino Bianco. But interestingly, they are experimenting with some indigenous grapes, native to the area that they're trying to bring back. And one of them is called Erbamat. So you might see that in some wines too.

Katy

And I think that's really important as well. So just heading back to Prosecco for a bit, they use different grapes for Prosecco, don't they? Which ones do they use up there?

Andrea

The main grape that they use for Prosecco, the one that is mostly used is Glera. And it's important to use that because that's the grave that is directly associated with the production of Prosecco.

Olivia

Yep.

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Katy

So again, it comes down to the method and the region and all of those things. And it's really interesting. I don't pretend to know anything about wine, really, but I do find the whole process of how just passionate people are about their local area and understanding not only the terrain just at a macro level, but at a micro, micro, micro level. So they will know that the grapes from one side of the hill are going to produce a different effect to ones on the other side of the hill because of the wind, as you said, Andrea, and also the soil composition. Just the attention to detail on that, I just find absolutely incredible. It's just a commitment to understanding the land and what's being produced from it.

Andrea

Yes

Olivia

Yeah exactly. Absolutely.

Katy

Okay. Now, what other sparklings have you got for us?

Andrea

Well, being from Piedmont, I have to advocate for Asti Spumante/Moscato d'Asti.

Katy

Of course.

Andrea

Asti Spumante is produced using the Martinotti method, of course, being from Asti, the grape is 100 % Moscato Bianco. The wine is, of course, a white sparkling with fine and persistent bubbles, hints of fruits and flowers such as peach and wisteria. A refreshing sweet taste but well balanced with the desert. Moscato d'Asti instead has many characteristics in common with Asti Spumante but differs in other ways. So it is with wine and you can maybe think about it as a wine cousin of Asti Spumante. They are both made using the Martinotti method, it's produced in the area around Asti, and it arrives entirely from the Moscato Bianco grape. You will find aromas of agrums and aromatic plants, although in the mouth is well balanced with a mixture of sweetness and acidity. Although similar, these two wines have some differences. For example, Asti Spumante, as the name says, is a Spumante, and Moscato d'Asti, on the other hand, is a Vino Frizzante. Furthermore, Moscato generally has more sugar, while Asti Spumante is more sparkling.

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Katy

I think a lot of people know Moscato. That's another one. Unfortunately, some of these wines haven't had the best reputation outside of Italy, which is a real shame. And we'll talk about one in particular that's had a really terrible reputation. But I think what people need to understand is that some producers perhaps saw an opportunity to maybe make quite a bit of money, and they started mass-producing a lot of these wines to take advantage of international interest. And unfortunately, it did have a big impact on some of the reputations of these wines, which is completely unfair because you're not going to be drinking a muscato as your pre dinner drink. This is not what you do. And if you're Italian, you would, like Andrea, you would be looking for a really beautiful wine that would match to your food. So we've got it all wrong. We got these mass produced wines that ended up being very cheap as well. And so people thought, Oh, we'll give that. And it's very sad actually, because this is not what Italian wine is about. And this is why I wanted you to come on here to explain just how broad the industry is, but also just how important it is to local people and also to the culture just generally.

Katy

What are we eating with our Asti Spumante?

Andrea

Well, Asti Spumante, of course, goes perfectly with good desserts. If you have cakes or if you have some panettone, during Christmas period, it goes perfectly. Everything related to pastries, you definitely can go with a spumante or also with a Moscato. So that's your go to food, of course. I wouldn't have it, for example, for an aperitivo. As we said before, for the Prosecco, it's not the right wine.

Olivia

Yeah, it's a bit sweet.

Andrea

Yes.

Katy

Liv, the other day you posted a lovely dessert that I saw, which was a custard, I think, with those baby strawberries on top, the wild strawberries. I think that would go very nicely with the Asti.

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Olivia

Great suggestion. Or maybe I'll have to go on all of that again to enjoy a Muscato.

Katy

Yes. That looks so good. I wonder where that was. It might be one of our favorite restaurants in Rome.

Olivia

Exactly.

Katy

It did look a little bit familiar. Okay, all right. So we've had our pre-dinner drinks with our Franciacorta and our Prosecco, and then we've had our dessert wine. Something in the middle, maybe?

Olivia

Yes, a little something, something, something red, maybe, that has a bad reputation, unfortunately. Lambrusco, so from the Emilia Romania region. Mainly in Emilia, because it's produced around Modena. And it's a really delicious wine. It's a red sparkling. It's the most famous red sparkling in Italy, but unfortunately, hasn't always had the best reputation. It's produced in a few different ways. Andrea was explaining before about the Martinotti Charmat method. The higher quality ones, though, are generally produced using either the method or classical method, so similar to Franciacorta champagne, or another way known as the Ancestral method, which is essentially the fermentation happens just one fermentation and in the bottle. So they seal the bottle before the fermentation is finished. And so that's the higher quality wine to produce that way, rather than in the stainless steel vats.

Olivia

Lambrusco is made with the Lambrusco grape. There are tons of different varieties of Lambrusco grapes, but the most well-known are Salamino, Grasparossa, Sorbara, Marani, and Maestri. They've all got slightly different characteristics, but something that is similar across them all. They've got the beautiful ruby red color, the bubbles, and some of them more bubbles than others. They've got they've got red berries, currants, blueberry aromas

Olivia

I love lambrusco. I think it's a delicious wine.

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Katy

Well, this was my discovery last year, wasn't it? The year before that, it was the year of Pecorino, and now I'm on the Lambrusco. But my mind was blown. I had no idea. Again, like Lambrusco in Australia, and I'm sure in the United States, has not the greatest reputation. And I found out why that isn't. Again, this mass production is part of the problem, but also people not understanding how to drink it or what to drink it with. My understanding is this one, it's not hanging around for very long. You need to drink it pretty quickly. I think it's within 6 to 12 months, right?

Olivia

Yeah, exactly. So maybe by the time it was getting to the US.

Katy

Yeah. So if you're sending it on a boat, like a whole few pallets on a boat. Exactly. Not ideal. Yeah. Australia would have been just terrible.

Andrea

You have to enjoy it in Italy.

Katy

Exactly. And that's half the fun, right? That's why we're going there to try all these different wines. And it does this, it's really fresh and it really cuts through. A lot of the food in that region is very rich and delicious. And there's a lot of cured meats like prosciutto. And it's very rich and it's dense in rich flavors. The parmigiano reggiano, it just goes perfectly with that because you've got the creaminess of the cheese and the bit of the sharpness of the cheese as well. And then you've got this bubbly wine and I'm thinking of my next aperitivo party now.

Olivia

Oh, exactly. I do have a few tips. People want to find the really good Lambrusco and not be disappointed.

Katy

Great. Hit us up.

Olivia

Right. Number one, the highest quality, as I was saying, you want to go for the method of Classico method, ideally. Look out for the cork of the bottle of Lambrusco that you're buying. You want it to look like a champagne cork. But instead of having the wire cage that's normally around the cork of a champagne bottle, it's actually attached with a metal clamp. So that

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way you know that the wine is being produced using the Methodo Ancestral or the classico method. Look for number one, the cork.

Olivia

Number two, look for Lambrusco di Sorbara DOC. So this is generally regarded as producing the best Lambrusco wines in Emilia. So that's another one. And then again, if you don't want sweet Lambrusco, make sure that you're buying Secco. Secco is dry. If you do want sweet, on the other hand, go for the Dolce.

Katy

Dolce, Dolce. So did you have leave some recommendations on some wineries to go to if you're in the Modena or Bologna region around there.

Olivia

Indeed. So just an hour away from Bologna is a lovely winery called Cantina Della Volta. Yeah, family-run. They offer four different kinds of tours. Again, easy to book online in English. That's a really lovely winery. Otherwise, if you're going to be near Modena, I'd recommend Chiarli. That's set in a 19th century Villa surrounded by the vineyards. You can do a tour and you can even pair their tours there with some of the region's famous cured meats, which sounds like my kind of day.

Katy

Yeah, I could easily spend a day doing that. That would be so much fun. And with Lambrusco as well, again, it is more of that aperitivo-style wine, isn't it? It's not something that you're going to be drinking with your Pasta Ragu or your Bolognaise. You're probably going to keep that for your aperitivo, which I like. And for Australians, instead of listening, in Australia, we have this tradition of sparkling shiraz, which I'm actually not really a fan of - it's a bit heavy for me. But I do really love the Lambrusco because it's much lighter. So you can definitely try that. I think it's a good one.

Olivia

Yes. Agree.

Katy

Wow. I mean, who knew there were so many sparkling wines in Italy? Is there any more?

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Olivia

Well, this is just really like a tiny smidge. I mean, this sparkling rose wine, which we've mentioned within the world of Franciacorta and the world of Prosecco. Did you mention that Prosecco Rose?

Andrea

There is a new trend in Prosecco for Prosecco Rose. In fact, there is a Prosecco Rose DOC, which is a rather new DOC, and it's trending a lot. So if you like Prosecco, but also Rose wines, that definitely is your go to wine.

Olivia

Yeah. And I know all of Australia and probably the US, it's definitely in the US as well, this trend of Pet Nat, which you haven't heard of, is essentially the same as the method I was just describing about the ancestral method of producing sparkling wine. So the one fermentation that happens in the bottle. And so that's the trend in Italy, too. So you can find lots of natural wines that are naturally sparkling all throughout the region. So there's a really great one in Umbria that I love called Cinino, which is like a dialect word. It's like a rose Pet Natn. And then again, there's so many other method of classical wines that we haven't had time to mention them all, there's Alta Langa in Piemonte, the Trentodoc. We could be here for years, Katie.

Andrea

This was just a brief introduction to the world of sparkling wines.

Katy

Yeah. Well, they're the main ones. And I guess you'll probably find those ones, if people aren't going to those areas, which that's, I mean, the ultimate is to go and really explore the areas where these wines are made. But not everyone has that opportunity. And most people, when they're going to their first trip to Italy, they might be interested in wine and learning a little bit more. Where we know we're going to Rome, Florence and Venice, where can we try these wines? We have some good wine bars to try?

Olivia

We would definitely recommend in Rome, Roscioli Rimesa as number one, and doing their wine and food paired dinner. That's just a really good one because you get to try about six different wines from all over the country, and they have a Sommelier explaining each wine as you drink it. So that's a really good... If you're into learning a bit more about wine, that would be my first choice.

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Andrea

Also in Rome, if you happen to be in the Testaccio neighborhood, we recommend Volpetti and Da Corrado at the market. Beautiful selection of wines. The people there, it's very happy to explain all the different wines and help you choose the one you prefer.

Olivia

And then in Florence, I really like Volpi e l'Uva. That's a really nice wine bar with, again, a selection from all over Italy. Otherwise, there's Il Santo Bevitore, which is connected to their restaurant. So you could pop in, have a glass of wine, and then wander over into the restaurant when you're ready to start eating, that would be nice.

Andrea

And in Venice, there is Vino Vero, which is also very good and we definitely recommend it.

Olivia

Just don't ask for spritz there because they absolutely don't serve spritz.

Andrea

They won't give it to you.

Katy

It's like, yeah. I think what we need to understand with the spritz is even though it's super refreshing, like we mentioned at the start, we're not using the best Prosecco. We're using spritz Prosecco. So it's not really a wine. I mean, it's fine on its own, but it's not for the enjoyment of the wine. It's for the enjoyment of the mix.

Olivia

Exactly.

Andrea

True.

Katy

Do you know what I heard about the other day? I heard about a Lambrusco Spritz. That's one for the list for sure. I actually heard about that from Michelle from the Intrepid Guide. Very interesting. There's some great tips. And I think all those places that Liv in Andrea mentioned, they're used to having visitors from abroad, so they used to be able to explain the wines in English. I think what's really great is that you can do that. But if you really want to have a

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great exploration of wines is to actually go out into the countryside and meet some of these winemakers. It's absolutely astounding. All their stories are so different. Their passion has come from different places like family, the connection to the land. It's a really beautiful way to explore Italian culture and something that I'm really passionate about and live to. That's why it's an important part of our Untold Italy tours is to go and meet these people and understand at a very deep and intimate level about how they feel about their wine, how important it is to their family and community. And as Andrea mentioned at the start, they've been making these wines in Italy for 4,000 years. I think we probably have a little bit to learn.

Olivia

Yeah, exactly.

Katy

All right. I know it's getting hot there in Rome, and so it's probably perfect weather for some of these wines, actually. Just have a set up a big dinner. No, sorry. Andrea likes a big dinner, but if you weren't feeling too hungry, you could have aperitivo with some of these wines and a beautiful board plate of salumi and cheese. I think that would be lovely.

Olivia

Delicious. That's us for the summer.

Andrea

Yes.

Katy

Perfect. Okay, fabulous. Now, thanks for putting a big dose of sparkling in my day. Liv and Andrea, I have to say this virtual exploration of Italian sparkling wine is almost as good as it is in person. Now, if our listeners are keen to know a little more about Italian wine, how can they follow what you're doing with Italian Wine Tales?

Olivia

Thanks, Katie. You can find us online. The website is italianwinetales.com. We've got Instagram, so that's @italianwinetales, or a new Facebook group, ItalianWineLovers. Otherwise, you can connect with me on Livguini, or see me on an Untold Italy tour.

Katy

Amazing. And Andrea will be there with his wonderful Italian accent and his passion for his homeland up in Piemonte, which is it's really great to have them both in Rome, I have to say.

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But it's also I felt so privileged to go and see your hometown, Torino, when I was last there. I can definitely see in that city in particular, there's just a totally different culture about food and wine and totally encourage everyone to go up there. They take their aperitivo very seriously, as do I. If you like to try a lot of different things, this is a place to go because antipasti and...

Andrea

Appetizers are a big thing there, so look out for them when you order. They also enjoy good wine. As you can imagine, you can try a beautiful vermouth if you like that kind of wine. That's where it was invented. You'll have a good time, I'm sure.

Katy

You will. Well, we'll have to do the fortified wines at another time. Will you come back and tell us about white wine soon?

Andrea

Yes.

Olivia

Why not?

Katy

Yeah, good idea. So I think we'll talk about white wine, the general famous ones, and then we might go delving into some of the regions and see what we can find. Grazie mille. Thank you for coming on Untold Italy today. Liv and Andrea.

Olivia

Grazie mille, Katy.

Andrea

Thank you for having us.

Olivia

Thank you.

Andrea

Ciao.

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Katy
Ok everyone, are you ready to put those memories of bad spumante behind you and try some amazing Italian sparkling wine? Let me tell you, some of these drops really give french champagne a run for its money.

Personally, I cant think of a more delicious way to spend a summer afternoon than with a glass of Prosecco and a lovely antipasto plate but as you heard I'm recently converted and slightly obsessed with Lambrusco these days. And you'll always find me raising a glass on those very special occasions with Franciacorta - a very sophisticated sparkling wine

Now some of those Italian names were a bit tricky weren't they? But the good news is that we create very detailed show notes with all the Italian names spelt correctly for each and every episode of this podcast. So your first point of call if you have any questions are those show notes as it is all there for you to read as well as the places and wines we mentioned. You'll find this week's notes at untolditaly.com/179.

Thanks to all our wonderful listeners for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. I hope you enjoyed today's show. If you did then it would be amazing if you gave us a rating or review in your favorite podcast app. If you're using Apple podcasts then you need to go to the show page for Untold Italy - not the episode page - and scroll down until you see "ratings and reviews" You can leave your 5-star review and message there.

On next week's episode, we're going to talk about how to access special experiences in Italy. Some people like to call them authentic but I have some views on that which I'm going to share with you.

But until then it's "ciao for now".

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