

# Holiday Gift Guide 2018: Some Of Prosecco's Greatest Bottles



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Food & Drink

*The what, where, when of wine, with special attention paid to Italy.*



Prosecco vending machine along the Cartizze vineyards in the Conegliano-Valdobbiadene top Prosecco-making zone SUSAN H. GORDON

Along an approximately 20-mile stretch on its run through the Veneto, the river Piave cuts through the birthplace of Prosecco's greatest wines. *Delicate, fresh, complex* are the closest overall descriptors for these quietly stunning, fiercely soils-conscious bottles: angular textures in support of floral, herbs to ginger, lemon and green apple to peach and melon aromas coaxed out by dosages from [Extra-Dry](#) to zero to the very occasional Dry for the closest you'll get to heft are the Piave's rewards for curious, attentive and discerning drinkers.

Past the river's left bank, on the historic [UNESCO-candidate hillsides](#) of Conegliano-Valdobbiadene (site-induced traits come first, but generally wines from the first's clay and limestone soils emphasize fruit notes; a vertical citrus and floral direction in those born of the latter's sandstone and clay) planted to grapevines since Roman times, in upheaved lands that face everywhere, slopes that twist wildly, sharply in order to fit onto this small piece of earth. Among the steepest are the Rive, 43 small areas each defined by their unique combination of soils, sunlight-gathering angles, when and how the winds blow through and each uniquely expressed by the wines grown on them. Its own special case, the Cartizze is this side's steeple-hilled cru, a 107-hectare set of three contiguous and especially twisty vertiginous hills in Valdobbiadene. On the right bank: the gentler-, longer-sloped Colli Asolani with varying marl-based soils give more pronounced wines, and vines have been grown here since at least medieval days. These Asolo bottles are bolder, relatively speaking, with generally higher amounts of dry extract and more in common with earthy Conegliano in the east, than the en-pointe Valdobbiadene-based wines grown in hillier land immediately across the river. The drinking decision has to do with whether you're in the mood for something veering angelic or after a drink that does at times touch earth.

Technical notes: when label-hunting these top Prosecco bottles, fully sparkling, *spumante*, wines are indicated by the word *Superiore*, and there are four main DOCGs: 1. Conegliano-Valdobbiadene (though sometimes just Valdobbiadene or Conegliano). 2. Rive accompanied by the name of one of 43 localities. 3. Cartizze (San Pietro di Barbozza, Santo Stefano e Saccol hills). 4. Asolo, in the Colli Asolani. Some bottles made in these DOCG zones will offer one of two other possible fizziness levels, thereby losing the Superiore labeling: for fewer, softer bubbles: *frizzante*. For no bubbles at all: *tranquillo*. All are generally — necessarily — hand-harvested.

Note that all *col fondo* wines — Prosecco's original, less-filteredly cloudy, home-based form, where the first, alcoholic, fermentation finishes in bottle — are *frizzante*. And while a handful of Superiore are made by the traditional — second, bubbles-making, fermentation induced in-bottle — most are made sparkling in

...autoclave tanks descended from [Federico Martinotti's original invention](#) in the late 19th century. All are based on the native Glera Tondo grape — called Prosecco until 2009 — some have other natives blended in — most notably Glera Lunga (a related but distinct variety), Perrera, Bianchetta, Verdiso — as once-turned-to international options like Chardonnay and the three Pinots are rightly disregarded by most producers now. There are sweetness levels — a matter of both style and balance — to choose from too: these delicate flavors works best from zero dosage to Brut, but Extra-dry bottles can be masterpieces of balance between soaring acidity, exuberant florals, grape-sugar's glycerine solidity.

These top bottles are also largely — and, I'd say, in complete unfairness to the producers — priced at less than \$30 stateside. Here are eight of the Prosecco area's finest, Superiore, takes.

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### 1. [Loredan Gasparini Asolo Prosecco Superiore DOCG Brut NV, \\$12](#)

Famous producers of red Capo di Stato from the Venegazzù cru of Asolo neighbor [Montello DOC](#), the [Palla family](#) takes Asolo Prosecco Superiore very seriously, too. From the hilly Giavera del Montello, at up to 300 meters high, their classic above is made only in Brut, on the low end with just 9 grams of residual sugar there for the seasoning and balance they see fitting for the Glera (100%) from the Asolani hills. There's a spontaneously fermented take and a traditional-method no less fresh take with a gentle yeasty side, but neither of them are sold stateside.

### 2. [Bele Casel Asolo Prosecco Superiore DOCG Extra-Brut NV, \\$15](#)

From steep Monfumo, widely considered the best vineyard site in the Asolo DOCG area and once nearly completely planted with native variety and Prosecco wine component Bianchetta Trevigiana, this is Prosecco's sharp focused side

...showcased: all apple, pear, pith, acidity like just-ripe lemon juice, supported by a touch of residual sugar (4 grams) that also lends a pretty roundness. [Bele Casel's col fondo style](#) comes from the same site, same grapes, via 30 months on lees in-bottle, and it's ageable for around five years.

### 3. [Marchiori Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Brut 2016, \\$19](#)

A member of their Progetto 5 Varietà lineup (which comes in Extra-Dry and Col Fondo, too) to showcase Prosecco wine's traditional grape varieties, this one's made of five of them: Glera both Tonda and Lunga, Bianchetta, Verdiso, Perera. Super-steep slopes, decades-old vines growing at up to 400 meters above sea level on sharply angled terraced slopes in Farra di Soligo, the center of the Conegliano-Valdobbiadene area, for tense wild herbs, grapefruit, green pear. [Marchiori](#) makes a col fondo version too.

### 4. [Sorelle Bronca "Particella 68" Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Extra-Dry NV, \\$22](#)

A classic. It's made — by [sisters Antonella and Ersiliana \(and her daughter Elisa\) Bronca](#) — mostly of Glera Tondo, propagated selezione massale, with Bianchetta and Perera, all from a single parcel — 68 — in their Colbertaldo vineyard on the left bank of the Piave, near the lauded Cartizze sites, in Valdobbiadene's steep-hilled Vidor. Nectarine and lemon, fruit and blossoms, concentrated, from vines around half-a-century old.

### 5. [La Tordera "Otreval" Valdobbiadene Rive di Guia Prosecco Superiore DOCG Brut 2016, \\$30](#)

Rive-indicated Prosecco is harder to track down in the US than it should be, but here's a delicious example of one that makes it in. Crafted specifically to achieve balance without residual sugar, [La Tordera's](#) Otreval is made of Glera Tondo with a little Verdiso, grown in Rive di Guia's layered limestone soils for an aromatic, gently fruitier Prosecco Superiore.

### 6. [BiancaVigna Valdobbiadene Rive di Soligo Prosecco Superiore DOCG Dosaggio](#)

...Zero 2017, \$19 (based on case price)

Since their launch in 2005, [BiancaVigna](#) has remained among Prosecco's most thoughtful and representative producers. Their Rive di Soligo, Glera Tondo with a pinch of Verdiso and Perera, is a treat worth picking up in Italy, or via international shipping: in the centrally located San Gallo a Soligo, 380 meters above sea level, a site sloped 70%. For quicker satisfaction, here's where to [buy their Conegliano-Valdobbiadene DOCG bottling](#), Brut, all Glera and like their Rive, *millesimato*, or vintage.

#### 7. [Silvano Follador Valdobbiadene DOCG Prosecco Superiore di Cartizze Brut-Nature 2016](#), \$27

From one of the top understanders of Prosecco land and wine, this one's mostly Glera Tondo with Bianchetta, Verdiso, Perera in small supporting roles, all grown on the Cartizze's Santo Stefano hill, fermented spontaneously, then made sparkling via the traditional method in around 3,000 bottles. For a taste of what [Silvano Follador](#) can do via the zone's far more usual Martinotti way: the fresh, just as inspiring [Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG 2017](#).

#### 8. [Andreola "Col de Forno" Valdobbiadene Rive di Refrontolo Prosecco Superiore DOCG Brut NV](#), \$23

A relatively weightier Prosecco, all Glera Tondo grown in clay over limestone 200 meters above sea level for stony rose-like floral with the tell-tale citrus notes. [Andreola](#) also offers a chance to taste four different Rive through one mindset, there's their Mas de Fer (Rive di Soligo, 450 meters up), Primo (Rive di Col San Martino), Vigne dei Piai (Rive di Rolle), too,

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