

Corkscrew: wine reviews

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Prosecco is still on the rise here in Australia, but dark clouds loom for its Aussie producers.

The sparkling wine has made a name for itself in the King Valley region of Victoria, with the food and wine trail through the high country there known as Prosecco Road. Australian Prosecco is valued at \$60 million — there has been a spike in popularity in recent years — with 50 per cent hailing from the King Valley.

Sauvignon Blanc was all the rage in Australia 10-15 years ago. To a lesser extent, it still is, but the next big wave appears to be Prosecco, which has captured the imagination of Australians as well as wine lovers in the UK and US, where sales have skyrocketed in the past four years.

Prosecco has caught the eye of the European Union. In particular, producers of the variety in Valdobbiadene in the Friuli region of northern Italy, where they have been increasing production — and planting extended vineyard areas — in both volumes and value. Big time.



In 2009, the Italians renamed the grape from Prosecco to Glera, locking in the name Prosecco as a European geographical indicator (GI) instead of using Prosecco as a grape name. On behalf of the Italian winemakers, the European Commission then attempted to register Prosecco as a GI. In Australia, we have 65 GIs.

In ongoing discussions regarding the Australia-EU Free Trade Agreement, there are only a few matters outstanding — the name Prosecco is one of them. The Italians have made it well known they want formal recognition of Prosecco GI as part of the agreement, virtually stopping Australian winemakers from using the word. Remember, we're not talking Champagne here, which is named after an actual region in northern France and is made using Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. If the Europeans get their way, we could be forced to use the word Glera. How boring and sad for Aussie producers if this comes to fruition, especially those in the King Valley region.

International wine writers around the world say there is no such wine region as Prosecco; it is a grape variety that dates back to the 18th century. Glera is the original name of this grape, from when it was brought from Slovenia to the village of Prosecco. Only time will tell if the Australian government buckles and the Italians get their way.

I have two Proseccos to tempt you with here: the Corte Carista Prosecco DOC (no mention of Glera on this label). The nose is nicely perfumed, with white pear and white peach dominating. The wine displays a vibrant lemon-green colour with a wild bead spiralling into position while dancing around the glass. The palate shows those same fruit flavours found on the nose and combined with mouth-watering fruit acidity, which is not tart, it makes you sit up and take notice. The finish is dry with lots going on. A delightful wine and one of the best

Proseccos I have drunk in years. (rrp \$9.99, from ALDI only)

The second one is the 2018 Pizzini Prosecco from King Valley. Light straw in colour with a vibrant green-lemon hue in the glass, the wine displays a vibrant bead which bubbles along throughout. The nose offers plenty of citrus notes with a yeasty twist. The fruit on the palate displays a creamy, yet refreshing, mouth-feel with lemon and lime taking the lead. It further takes on a nice texture with yeasty flavours showing through. The finish is dry with soft, fruity acidity. (rrp \$21.50)

The 2016 Morambro Creek Padthaway Cabernet Sauvignon displays a dark purple colour with crimson hues around the edge of the glass. Blackcurrants, black olives and hints of green capsicum come to the fore on the nose. The palate is awash with an overflow of wild berries, plum and stewed rhubarb flavours with nicely integrated French oak adding depth, weight, body and structure. The tannins are nicely balanced and do not overpower the essential fruit flavours. This full-bodied wine leaves an enviable impression on the palate with a rich, complex fruit-driven finish. (rrp \$35)

The 2015 Castle Rock Shiraz comes from the Porongurup region of Western Australia. Castle Rock Estate was established in 1983 on 12 hectares of land owned and run by the Diletti family. This Shiraz displays a fading pink hue around the rim with a vibrant purple colour on the eye. The nose offers slight minty black cherry and black olive notes. The palate is awash with raspberry, blackberry and red currant fruits with nicely integrated French oak and minimal tannins adding body and texture. The finish is dry with layers of fruit dominating this medium-bodied wine. Highly recommended. (rrp \$30)

Although Berton Vineyard has its headquarters in the Riverina region of NSW, it takes some of its grapes from selected parcels of land in other wine-growing regions, most notably Eden Valley in South Australia. The 2018 Berton Vineyard High Eden Sauvignon Blanc displays a light straw yellow colour with green tinges around the rim of the glass. The nose offers hints of freshly cut grass, blackcurrant bud, gooseberry and grapefruit flavours in abundance. These same flavours found on the nose cascade onto the palate, which shows vibrancy and lashings of acidity with a clean, crisp and dry acid finish. (rrp \$22)

Coming from the same region is the 2018 Berton Vineyard High Eden White Rock Chardonnay, a sophisticated and alluring wine that displays a green straw colour on the eye. On the nose, mango, mandarin and honeydew melon flavours abound. The palate shows ripe varietal fruit flavours with hints of green apple, apricot and a whiff of vanilla taking hold along with French oak sitting nicely in the background. It has a dry, crisp acid finish. (rrp \$22)

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