

Soave Classico Cantina del Castello 2006

Cantina del Castello is a magnificent building that dates to the thirteenth century, where the cellars have secret underground passageways linking them directly to the castle of Soave. The vineyards are on volcanic hillsides in the center of the Classico zone. Because the yields in the poor, well-drained soil are small, the wines produced here have unusual concentration and elegance. This is stainless-steel fermented Garganega with Trebbiano di Soave, possessing a fruity bouquet, pleasantly medium-full body, and the typical almondy finish of the best Veneto wines.

Regional History

The ancients believed Venetians were directly descended from the survivors of the Fall of Troy. Like the Trojans they were tremendous artisans, and their agricultural ability was particularly admired. More likely they came from the vast Diaspora of peoples out of the Carpathian Mountains around 1500 BC. It was homage to these people that prompted the Romans to name the Tenth Imperial Region after them: the Veneti. Pliny, Virgil, Suetonius and Martial all refer to Reticum and Acinaticum, the direct ancestors of modern Veronese wine. Directly east of the city of Verona you find Soave, a series of gentler hills of maritime origin. The wines here are softer and redolent of straw and nuts, with an undercurrent of clamshell-like minerality.

Veneto touches the Adriatic Sea at Venice and runs north through the Dolomites to the Austrian border. Its southern and western limits are the large alluvial plain formed by the Garda basin and the valley north of the Po River. This tremendous variety of landscape has provided Veneto with an equally varied cuisine: seafood from both Lake Garda and the Adriatic; game, mushrooms and mountain herbs from the Dolomites; the Po Valley provides the best vegetables of Northeastern Italy as well as its two staples: corn and rice. Polenta was introduced in the 17th century and was prepared in much the same way as other grain flours that preceded it. It can be plain, grilled or fried; paired with meats, game and fish. Rice, introduced by the Venetian traders as early as 1400, is the inspiration for as many as forty different risottos. Rice is also prepared with fish and vegetables. One of the fonder pairings of rice and vegetables is, *Risi e Bisi*, or rice and fresh young peas.



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Valpolicella Classico Superiore Vigneti Di Ravazzol Agricola Ca' La Bionda 2004

The Ravazzol vineyard is a recognized quality Cru of long standing, located in the steep hills of Valpolicella's Marano Valley. The vineyard's rich, calcareous soil imparts great complexity and clarity to low yields of the region's traditional blend of Corvina, Rondinella, and Molinara grapes. Fermentation takes place in stainless-steel vats, and it is left to mature in large oak *botte*. Deep ruby with a medium body, the wine has clean flavors and aromas of red cherry and spice.

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