

Cartizze: Prosecco's Peculiar Grand Cru

Bryce Wiatrak | 11 Apr 2019

At the pinnacle of Prosecco's quality pyramid, Superiore di Cartizze, as it is officially titled, is a menzione within the larger Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco DOCG—not its own separate appellation but a sub-category of wines from this top site. Curiously, it has received few of the same benefits as the lower rungs during the recent boom and largely remains neglected by the dialogue. Instead, Superiore di Cartizze offers a peculiar poster child for top Italian bubbles—and one whose fame remains predominately local, despite the vineyard's acclaim and the land's high price. While refining everything that is loved about Prosecco into a platonic ideal, Superiore di Cartizze also dodges many of the attributes so commonly assumed of the world's greatest wines. This article examines the intricacies of Cartizze's fabled slopes and the idiosyncrasies of the wines born from them...



The steepest parcels of Cartizze Alto (Photo credit: Bryce Wiatrak)

...Although Cartizze's positioning provides a paradigmatic environment for the best Proseccos, its local reverence and especially its unmatched real estate value can appear confusing, as neither necessarily translates into widespread market recognition. Most Prosecco producers will contend that Cartizze is "big in Italy," with domestic sales scarfing up the majority of its stock. Indeed, many of Prosecco's biggest names bottle their Cartizze in such small quantities that only a handful of cases will see the export market, and several, such as Nino Franco and Adami, refrain from shipping their Cartizze wines to the United States. And admittedly, supply is limited, with approximately 1.5 million bottles in 2016. That's just over 1.6% of the year's production within Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco DOCG, itself already a sliver of the larger Prosecco industry.



...Considering the vastness of the world of wine—an industry that encompasses as disparate entities as Eiswein and Uruguayan Tannat, Manzanilla and Pinotage—it's easy to imagine how "fineness" or "greatness" might not merit a universal definition. Cartizze does not offer the same things as Chambertin, Cerequio, or Clos du Mesnil. It's not a wine for which to seek out your birth vintage, nor one that might earn you a small fortune on the secondary market. But Cartizze and Krug do share something in common. If a tête de cuvée emblemizes the best Champagne has to offer by dialing up its component parts—grand cru grapes, leesiness, lengthy bottle age—then Cartizze does the same thing, just with Prosecco. If Prosecco is sweet, Cartizze is sweeter. If Prosecco is fruity, Cartizze is fruitier. Not only is Cartizze harvested from the best Glera vines Italy offers, in a way, it's the most Prosecco-y Prosecco a person can enjoy.