

A New Perspective on Prosecco

THE METODO CLASSICO IS TAKING ITS PLACE ALONGSIDE THE CHARMAT METHOD

by Allison Levine

We are taught that there are two primary ways to make sparkling wine: the *méthode champenoise* or traditional method and the Charmat method. Most famously, Champagne is made using the former, whereby secondary fermentation occurs in the bottle, and Prosecco is made using the latter, in which secondary fermentation happens in the tank.

The argument that the primary Prosecco grape, Glera, is too delicate to undergo the traditional method has been used to justify the convention of the Charmat method, which is less time consuming and less expensive. But while the rules of the Prosecco DOC specifically require the Charmat method, the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG has no such regulations; there, Prosecco can be produced by the *metodo classico* (to use the Italian term) as well.

One of the first producers to make a *metodo classico* Prosecco was Bellenda. Located in the northeast of the Prosecco Superiore zone, the estate has been home to the Cosmo family since the 18th century. Sergio Cosmo established a winery there in 1987 and today it is run by his sons, Umberto and Luigi Cosmo. Seeking a link to the heritage of Prosecco prior to the introduction of the Charmat method in the 1930s, Umberto began playing with secondary fermentation in bottle in 2003. After experimenting with two vintages, Bellenda released the 2005 S.C. 1931 in 2006 as the first zero-dosage Prosecco. Today, it spends 24 months on the lees, while Bellenda Sei Uno, first released with the 2010 vintage, spends 12 months on the lees.

While Prosecco made by the Charmat method is ready three months after harvest, *metodo classico* Prosecco takes more time. That said, the latter is not



Martino Tormena oversees the Mongarda estate in Conegliano Valdobbiadene.

necessarily a matter of obtaining better quality; the difference is one of stylistic expression. The Charmat method reflects the skill of the producers in yielding fresh, fruity, and flowery aromas. The *metodo classico* is more terroir-driven and offers more complex aromas, including bread crust and honey.

The family-owned Valdo winery, located in Valdobbiadene since 1926, was also among the first producers to make a *metodo classico* Prosecco. In 2004, it released Valdo Number 10, a brut wine that spends ten to 12 months *sur lie*; a second *metodo classico* wine, Valdo Tenuta Pradase, spends 24 months on the yeasts.

For Martino Tormena of Mongarda, the idea to produce a traditional-method Prosecco was born after a

heated conversation with restaurateurs who were comparing sparkling wines. He quickly made it his goal to, in his words, “speak the same language as the other sparkling wines and have a new expression of the Valdobbiadene terroir.” First produced with the 2013 harvest, his *metodo classico* wine spends 24 months on the lees.

Umberto Cosmo explains that *metodo classico* Prosecco “gives a different view of what Prosecco can be,” adding that it can have aging poten-



Umberto Cosmo runs Prosecco Superiore estate Bellenda with his brother, Luigi.

tial. In addition to Bellenda, Valdo, and Mongarda, other producers using the traditional method include Silvano Follador, Ca’ dei Zago, Renzo Rebuli, Caneva da Nani, and Bisol. Tormena believes that “the best Valdobbiadene Prosecco wines can be produced in any method while preserving their main qualities: pleasantness in drinking and elegance.” *IT*