

The Veneto Wine Starter Guide

A simple first guide to Prosecco, Amarone, Soave,
Valpolicella and Veneto wine travel.

WinesVeneto.com



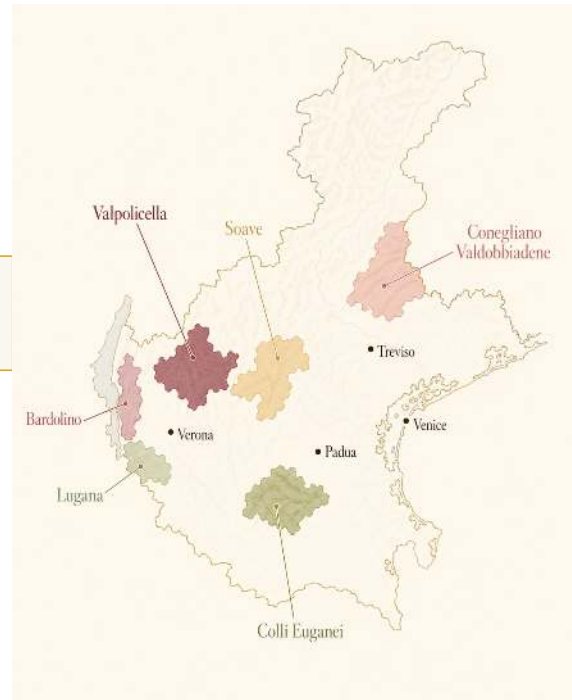
I. Veneto in one minute

Veneto sits in northeast Italy, stretching from Venice and the Adriatic toward Verona, Lake Garda, the Prosecco hills and the foothills of the Dolomites.

For wine lovers, the region matters because it produces several very different styles: sparkling wine, crisp whites, lighter reds, serious reds, lake wines and hillside wines.

Simple rule: Veneto is not only Prosecco. It is one of Italy's most diverse wine regions.

The region gives you an unusually complete first wine journey: Prosecco for freshness, Soave for mineral white wine, Valpolicella for easy reds, Ripasso for depth and Amarone for the serious special bottle.



The most useful names to know first are Conegliano Valdobbiadene for Prosecco Superiore, Valpolicella for Amarone and Ripasso, and Soave Classico for serious Garganega-based white wine.

2. The 5 wine styles to know first

Prosecco

Sparkling, fresh and easy to enjoy. Best for aperitivo, seafood, fried starters, prosciutto and celebrations that do not need expensive Champagne.

Soave Classico

Dry white wine made mainly from Garganega. Good bottles are crisp, mineral, almondy and excellent with seafood, risotto and vegetables.

Valpolicella

A lighter, fresher red wine from the hills near Verona. Best for pizza, pasta, charcuterie, roast chicken and casual dinners.

Valpolicella Ripasso

Richer than basic Valpolicella but usually less intense than Amarone. Often the smartest dinner red for mushrooms, roasts and aged cheese.

Amarone della Valpolicella

Powerful, dry red wine made using dried grapes. A special bottle for braised beef, game, aged cheese, winter dishes, gifts and cellaring.

Do not start by chasing expensive bottles. Start by understanding styles. Once the style makes sense, producer and vintage choices become much easier.



3. Prosecco DOC vs DOCG



Prosecco DOC is the broader category. It can be good, fresh, affordable and simple - the type most people see in supermarkets, restaurants and casual aperitivo settings.

Prosecco DOCG is more specific. The key name to know is Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG, the historic hillside area that usually gives a more focused sense of place.

DOCG does not automatically mean every bottle is amazing. Producer, freshness, sweetness level and balance still matter. But if you want a better first Prosecco experience, DOCG Superiore is the right place to look.

Label term	Simple meaning	Beginner note
Brut / Extra Brut	Usually drier and crisper	Good if you dislike sweet sparkling wine
Extra Dry	Softer, fruitier, not actually the driest	Often works well for aperitivo
Dry	Rounder and slightly sweeter	Can work with spicy food or fruitier moments

Simple rule: Want crisp and drier? Choose Brut or Extra Brut. Want softer and fruitier? Extra Dry can make sense.

4. Amarone vs Ripasso



Amarone is bigger, richer, more powerful and usually more expensive. It is made from dried grapes, which concentrates flavor, texture, alcohol and structure. Think special dinners, gifts, cellaring and rich winter food.

Valpolicella Ripasso is usually easier, less expensive and more flexible at the table. It gives more depth than basic Valpolicella without the full intensity or price of Amarone.

Feature	Amarone	Valpolicella Ripasso
Style	Powerful, dry, concentrated red	Richer dinner red with more flexibility
Typical feel	Full-bodied, warm, serious	Medium-full to full, softer and approachable
Flavor direction	Dark cherry, dried fruit, spice, cocoa, tobacco	Cherry, dark berries, spice, dried herbs
Best occasion	Special dinner, gift, cellar bottle	Roast meats, mushrooms, winter dinners
Beginner advice	Buy for impact and occasion	Often the smarter first buy

Simple answer: Amarone is the special bottle. Ripasso is often the smarter dinner bottle.



5. Why Soave is underrated



Soave suffered for years because many people only knew cheap, basic versions. That is a shame, because good Soave Classico can be one of Veneto's best values.

The main grape is Garganega. The best wines can show citrus, pear, almond, white flowers, mineral notes, fresh acidity and a slightly savory finish.

Soave Classico is especially useful because it works with real food. It is not just a simple white wine. It can be excellent with seafood, risotto, vegetables, fresh cheeses and lighter pasta dishes.

What it tastes like

Citrus, pear, almond, white flowers, mineral notes, freshness and a clean savory finish.

What to eat with it

Seafood, lake fish, risotto, grilled vegetables, fresh cheeses and lighter pasta.

If you like crisp Italian whites but want something more interesting than generic Pinot Grigio, try Soave Classico.

6. What to drink with food

The easiest way to pair Veneto wines is to match weight with weight: fresh wines with lighter food, red food wines with casual meals, Ripasso with richer dinners and Amarone with serious dishes.

Food / occasion	Veneto wine to try
Aperitivo	Prosecco Superiore DOCG
Fried starters / prosciutto / cicchetti	Prosecco Brut, Extra Dry or Bardolino
Seafood / lake fish	Soave Classico or Lugana
Risotto / grilled vegetables	Soave Classico
Pizza / tomato pasta / charcuterie	Valpolicella or Bardolino
Roast chicken / casual red-wine dinners	Valpolicella Classico
Mushrooms / roast pork / aged cheese	Valpolicella Ripasso
Braised beef / game / rich winter dishes	Amarone della Valpolicella
Special dinner or serious gift	Amarone

Shortcut: Fresh and light food -> Prosecco, Soave or Lugana. Casual red-wine food -> Valpolicella or Bardolino. Richer dinners -> Ripasso. Big special meals -> Amarone.



7. What to buy first

Do not start by buying random expensive bottles. Build a simple first case around styles. This gives you a real first taste of Veneto without wasting money.

First sparkling wine

Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Brut or Extra Dry.

Why: it gives you a better sense of what serious Prosecco can be.

First white wine

Soave Classico.

Why: it is one of Veneto's most underrated white wines and very useful with food.

First easy red

Valpolicella Classico.

Why: lighter, fresher and easier to understand than Amarone.

First deeper red

Valpolicella Ripasso.

Why: more richness without jumping straight to Amarone.

First special bottle

Amarone della Valpolicella.

Why: the serious red wine that made Valpolicella internationally famous.

First Lake Garda wine

Lugana or Bardolino.

Why: Lugana gives you a fresh white option; Bardolino gives you a lighter red option.

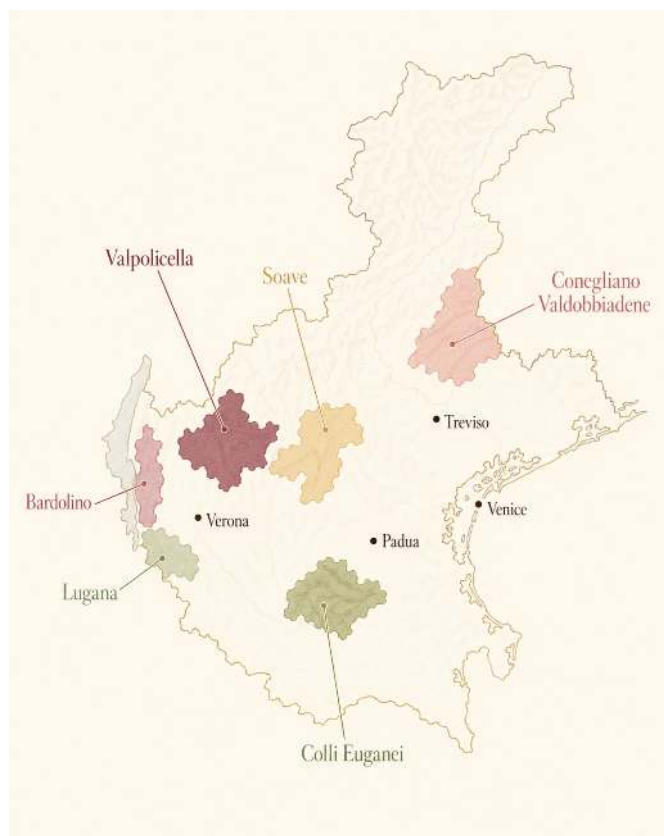
Pick one sparkling wine, one white wine, one easy red, one deeper red and one special bottle. That is the cleanest first Veneto wine journey.



8. Best wine areas to visit

Verona and Valpolicella	Best for Amarone, Ripasso, Valpolicella Classico, cellar visits and serious red wine. Probably the most important route for red-wine lovers in Veneto.
Conegliano Valdobbiadene	Best for Prosecco Superiore DOCG, hillside vineyards, scenic drives and sparkling wine tastings. This is the Prosecco area to visit if you want more than generic sparkling wine.
Soave	Best for white wine, medieval town atmosphere, Garganega and volcanic hillside wines. Beautiful, easy to understand and still underrated.
Lake Garda: Bardolino and Lugana	Best for easy wine travel, lake views, lighter reds and fresh whites. Good when you want wine without making the whole trip too serious.
Colli Euganei	Best for volcanic hills and less obvious Veneto wines. A good area for curious drinkers who already know the famous names.

Wine travel in Veneto works best when you understand the geography: Verona for Valpolicella, Conegliano Valdobbiadene for Prosecco, Soave for white wine, and Lake Garda for relaxed lake-area wines.



Map of key Veneto wine areas covered in this guide.

9. Simple Veneto wine cheat sheet

Wine	Style	Best for	Beginner note
Prosecco DOC	Sparkling white	Parties, aperitivo	Easy and affordable
Prosecco Superiore DOCG	Sparkling white	Better aperitivo, gifts	More specific hillside origin
Soave Classico	Dry white	Seafood, risotto	Underrated and food-friendly
Lugana	Dry white	Lake fish, summer food	Fresh white from Lake Garda area
Valpolicella	Red	Pizza, pasta, casual dinners	Lighter and fresher
Valpolicella Ripasso	Red	Roast meats, mushrooms	Richer but still practical
Amarone	Red	Special dinners, aged cheese	Powerful and serious
Bardolino	Red	Casual meals, charcuterie	Light and easygoing
Colli Euganei	Mixed styles	Curious drinkers	Less obvious Veneto choice

The simplest rule: If you want freshness, start with Prosecco or Soave. If you want red wine for food, start with Valpolicella or Ripasso. If you want a serious bottle for a special dinner, look at Amarone.



10. Useful links back to WinesVeneto.com

Use these pages to continue exploring Veneto wine. The links are clickable in the PDF.

Veneto Wine Regions - <https://winesveneto.com/regions.html>

Prosecco Guide - <https://winesveneto.com/prosecco.html>

Amarone and Valpolicella Guide - <https://winesveneto.com/amarone-valpolicella.html>

Soave Classico Guide - <https://winesveneto.com/soave.html>

Veneto Wine Tours - <https://winesveneto.com/tours.html>

Featured Veneto Wine Styles - <https://winesveneto.com/featured-wines.html>

Veneto Wine Blog - <https://winesveneto.com/blog.html>

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Official sources and further reading

For official regional details, consult the relevant producer consortia and appellation resources, including the Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore consortium, the Valpolicella consortium, the Soave consortium, the Lugana consortium and the Bardolino consortium.

Explore the full Veneto wine guide at WinesVeneto.com

