

F R I E N D S O F W I N E I N T E R V I E W

L U I G I
V E R O N E L L I
by Edward Guiliano

LOMBARDY

The Oltrepò Pavese, in the southwest of Milan's region, is a sleeping giant of Italian wine, the usually anonymous source of much of the Pinot going into sparkling wines. *Spumante*, particularly the *brut* by either *champenoise* or *charmat*, has been the fastest growing sector of the Italian wine market, though the boom is showing signs of leveling off. The Oltrepò has also shown promise with Riesling and the scores of bold reds from Barbera and Bonarda grapes, as well as with the still experimental Chardonnay and Cabernet. Buyers looking for class wines at reasonable prices should have a field day combing these pretty hills.

East of Milan, in the Alpine foothills of Bergamo and Lake Garda, several have come to prominence, among them Franciacorta. The Oltrepò and Lake Iseo makes a big splash with Bianco and red, but prime is on sparkling Pinots. One of the biggest and one of the most consistent producers of *champenoise* is the model estate of Ca' del Bosco, which works only with grapes from its own vines, is probably the most admired producer of sparkling wine in Italy. Owner Maurizio Zanella and his French winemaker André Dubois are working on special cuvées processed entirely by hand using old methods no longer employed in Champagne. These will be expensive rarities to enhance the already lofty status earned by Ca' del Bosco Brut and Dosage Zero. The Cabernet Sauvignon, called Maurizio Zanella and aged in new French oak, won acclaim when it was released last year.

Pinogana is a white wine on the rise, grown in flatlands at the southern end of Lake Garda. Among a score of reliable producers, Visconti is the leader with an impressively upbeat style.

In the Valtellina, Italy's largest source of Nebbiolo, investments from neighboring Switzerland have set the wheels of

Italy's state of the art technology has greatly improved that country's wines. But for the most part the serenity of sloping and terraced Italian vineyards remains untouched. Same as it ever was.

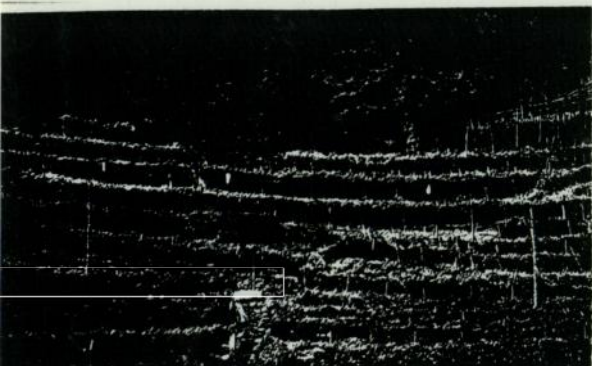


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Northern Italy

change in motion. Winemakers are seeking brighter tone and better balance in the sometimes severe Grumello, Inferno, Sassella and Valgella. A small winery achieving enviable quality is La Castellina (Fondazione Fojanini).

In Brescia, the firm of Premiovini, owned by the Ruffino branch of the Folonari family, has become a model negotiant-style operation, buying choice wines from various regions and issuing them under its own labels.