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Grapesmart.net

July 8, 2011



Exploring Italy: Soave

This summer, I'm all about the Italians.

I recently wrote a post about Gavi, that you may or may not have seen on Palate Press. In it, I asked readers to think about moving away from their more familiar Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs, to explore that *other* Old World wine-producing country (the one that isn't known for Riesling and beer).

Now is a particularly good time to do it, too, especially if you're ready to experiment with a wine called *Soave*. The 2009s are here, and it was one of the best vintages they've had in a long time.



Soave, in the Veneto region of Italy

Pra-bably one of the best Soaves on the market

Soave is a town in the Veneto region of Italy, in the province of Verona. The wine is named for the region, but it's made of 70% – 100% Garganega grapes. When the wine is a blend, the remainder is often Trebbiano di Soave for the good ones, and Chardonnay and/or Trebbiano Toscano for the not-as-good ones. Traditionally, the wine is fermented in steel tanks, although it isn't unheard of to use a bit of oak. Usually the wines are then aged for about two years before release ("Riserva"), although wines with less aging are also available.

The wine is known for its soft, fresh, waxy/floral/honey flavors, but due to overproduction and industrialization in the past decade or so, Soave developed a new reputation as jug wine plonk. The pendulum has since

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swung back the other way, however, and there are now a host of dedicated producers who are focused on bringing high quality, quaffable Soaves back to the market (helped, in part, by the [Soave Consortium](#)). In fact, volume and value of Soave were up by 20% in 2010 over 2009, and Mario Batali's New York eatery, Eataly, hosted "Soave Month" the entire month of May 2011. So clearly the situation is well on its way to being righted.

The Soave Consortium recently sent me a few bottles of Soave: 2009 Re Midas Cantina di Soave and 2009 *Fattori Runcaris Soave Classico* (both about \$12). Knowing these were value-priced bottles, I decided to taste them against two pricier wines to see how they'd stand-up. For those wines, I chose 2009 Gini Soave Classico (\$15) and 2007 Pra Staforte Soave Classico (\$20).

2009 *Fattori Runcaris Soave Classico*: Even before my nose came near the glass, I could smell big fruit carried on a hot tradewind from the land of Alcoholia. Apple, apple and more apple with a bit of dried honey. Surprisingly, it wasn't as hot on the palate as I expected; there was great acid and some tropical notes – especially pineapple – skimming around the edges. My second favorite of the group. (100% Garganega)

Whether you hunt down one of these or try another of the other delicious choices on the market (look for the 2009s – for serious), Soave is a super choice for summer sipping.

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