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EXPLORING ITALY

Food, Wine, People, Places



**TOP WINES AND
GREAT VALUES:
TUSCANY, VENETO**

**BIONDI-SANTI:
THE INSIDE STORY**

**SARDINIA FOR
WINE LOVERS**



**ITALIAN MENU
MATCHING
WINE & FOOD**



DIVERSITY IN THE VENETO

From Soaves to Amarones and beyond,
distinctive reds and whites abound // BY ALISON NAPJUS

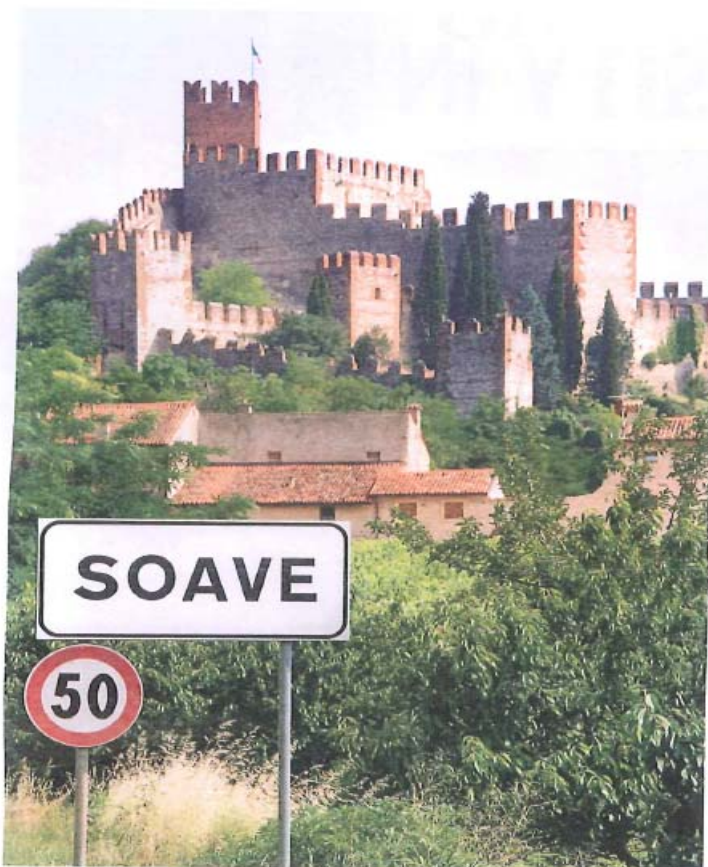


Vineyards in the Valpolicella zone provide Corvina and other red grapes for the region's powerful Amarones and reliable Valpolicella wines.

Italy is a vast collection of winemaking realms, and one of its most diverse is the northern winegrowing region known as the Veneto, stretching from the shores of Lake Garda in the west to near Venice in the east. Its best *terroirs* lie among the valleys

and rolling hills, with many of its more distinctive vineyards cultivated in the traditional pergola canopy style.

In the past year, I have blind-tasted more than 300 bottlings from the Veneto, encompassing an array of wines produced in a wide



The medieval Castello di Soave rises above the rooftops in the town of Soave, which lends its name to the aromatic white wine based on the Garganega grape that prospers in the surrounding hillside vineyards.

variety of styles. Three categories stand out for consistently high quality: among whites, the refreshing, fruit-driven Soaves; and in reds, the big, ripe Amarones and their baby brothers the Valpolicellas. All offer exciting flavors and plenty of opportunity for exploration.

SOAVE

East of the city of Verona lies the Veneto region's most highly regarded white wine production area, Soave. The Soave DOC and Soave Classico DOCG are centered around the town of Soave, with its medieval Castello di Soave.

The whites of Soave are primarily based on the indigenous Garganega grape, but many producers blend in Trebbiano di Soave to enhance aromatics. The wines are typically light- to medium-bodied, with lively acidity. In general, the best versions come from hillside vineyards. These wines are pleasant sippers on their own

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BONUS VIDEO: Dense, concentrated and ageworthy, Amarone is one of the world's great wines. Learn about its key grapes, as well as the styles of regional and single-vineyard wines, as Allison Napjus is joined by Pierangelo Tommasi. Watch it at www.winespectator.com/103112.



and also make good partners for poultry, light seafood dishes and grilled vegetables.

Suavia, an estate owned and managed by the Tessari sisters, offers two bottlings that scored 91 points. Both are from single vineyards located around the winery in the village of Fittà, about 1,000 feet above the town of Soave. The 2009 Monte Carbonare (\$35) is bright and lacy in texture, made entirely from Garganega and fermented and aged in stainless steel, allowing the site's smoky minerality to shine.

In contrast, Suavia winemaker Valentina Tessari says the 2008 Le Rive (\$46), also 100 percent Garganega, is an experiment in oak-influenced Soave. About 30 percent of the wine is fermented in 228-liter oak *barriques* (20 percent new), resulting in a rich and layered wine with balanced acidity.

Top producer Leonildo Pieropan also made two 91-point Soaves from single vineyards. The 12-acre La Rocca, planted to Garganega, slopes up behind the Castello di Soave. Pieropan's 2009 from this vineyard (\$32) is elegant and well-knit, backed by racy acidity. The 2009 Calvarino (\$33) blends 70 percent Garganega with Trebbiano from that vineyard's 30- to 60-year-old vines, based in dark volcanic soils, and the wine shows mineral salinity and an overall finesse.

Fattori's Soave Motto Piane 2010 is also outstanding (91, \$40). Antonio Fattori makes this wine from 10 acres of vineyards at elevations of 800 to 1,000 feet. The wine is mouthwatering, with a richness and concentration achieved by drying the Garganega grapes for about 40 days prior to fermentation and then aging them in a mix of stainless steel and large oak *tonneaux*.

Soave also delivers fine values. Local cooperative Cantina di Soave produced a fresh and lightly spiced version with its 2011 Soave Re Midas (86, \$10). Dal Cero's Tenuta di Corte Giacobbe 2011 (87, \$10) is a crisp, light-bodied white perfect for a hot summer day. For just a few dollars more, two producers stand out for their consistency. Prà regularly makes a bright and juicy Soave Classico, and its 2011 (88, \$15) is no exception. And Soave Classico Vin Soave 2011 from Inama (89, \$15) is fresh, spicy and well-structured.

AMARONE DELLA VALPOLICELLA

Four reds from the Amarone della Valpolicella area share the highest ratings in this report, each scoring 94 points. These wines typify the personality of Amarone, with ripe, fruit-forward and spice-laden character, rich mouthfeel and full-bodied structure. They also feature higher levels of alcohol, typically 15 percent to 17 percent. Because of their power, they are wines for food, best paired with beef, game or wild poultry, or with aged cheeses.

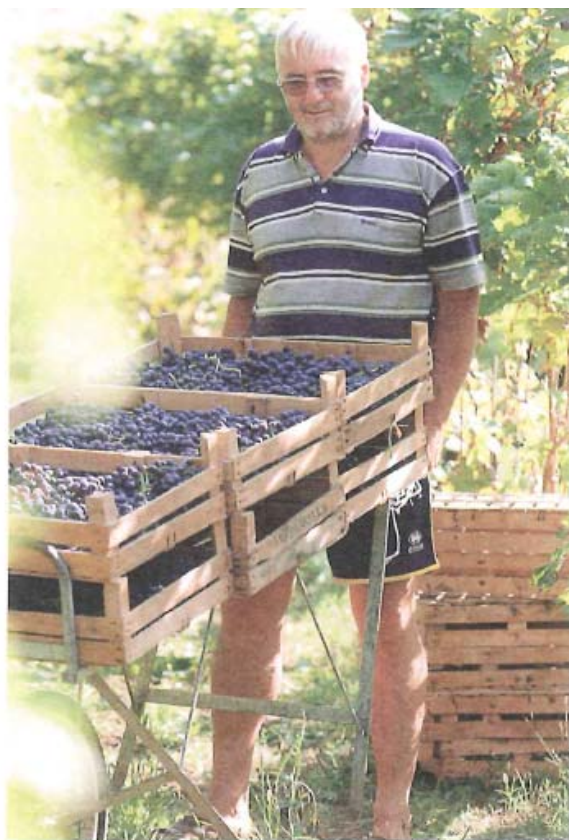
From Tommaso Bussola comes the rich and spicy Vigneto Alto TB 2006 (\$175). Made from low-yielding, 35-year-old vines, TB is a blend, like most Amarones, based on the local Corvina grape (75 percent), along with Rondinella (15 percent) and other red varieties. 2006 is one of the best vintages of the past decade, and many of the year's bottlings are still in the market.

Romano Dal Forno, a perennial leader in the area, also offers a highly rated 2006 (\$531). Aged entirely in new oak *barriques* for two years, this expressive red shows a smoky mineral undertow, lots of spice and beautiful, fine-grained tannins. Il Roverone made a well-priced 2006 (94, \$60) that shows lovely integration of flavors and impressive structure.

The 2007 Pergole Vecce (\$143) is a polished version from the 50-acre Le Salette winery, produced by owner and winemaker Franco Scamperle. It is bottled only in excellent vintages, such as 2007 (just a step behind 2006 in quality), and is made from a selection of the estate's three best *crus*. While fermentation occurs in stainless steel, the wine is aged for three years in oak *barriques*, giving it density and focus as well as hints of graphite and cedar.

Among other top Amarones, look for Antica Corte's Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2007 and 2008 (each 90 points, \$47); Monte del Frà's vibrant Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Tenuta Lena di Mezzo 2007 (93, \$50) and its Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Tenuta Lena di Mezzo Scarnocchio 2006 (92, \$50). The Gino Fasoli Amarone della Valpolicella La Corte del Pozzo 2006 (92, \$50) is a dry and spicy version.

Amarones are made using the *appassimento* method: Select bunches of the local Corvina, Corvignone, Rondinella and Molinara grapes are dried in a *fruttaio*, a room designed to maintain the proper humidity and temperature levels to remove moisture from the grapes without allowing mold or fungus to spread. The drying period begins immediately after harvest and lasts until late December or January, after which the dried grape bunches are fermented into wine. The higher sugar content of the dried grapes increases the wine's overall



Winegrower Tommaso Bussola contributed a quartet of outstanding reds to this report, two each of Amarone and Valpolicella. Grapes for his top-scoring Amarone Vigneto Alto TB 2006 came from a small vineyard of 35-year-old vines.



Sisters Alessandra, Valentina and Meri Tessari (from left) of Suavia specialize in Soave wines. Among their 100 percent Garganega whites are the single vineyards Monte Carbonare, made in stainless steel, and the more experimental Le Rive, fermented partly in *barriques*.

alcohol level. This process is used for Amarone production across the board, but may also be utilized for other of the region's reds.

VALPOLICELLA

This is the Veneto's everyday drinking red, with many offering solid value. As such, Valpolicellas are wines that can be sipped on their own or paired with a wide variety of foods, especially pizza or pasta and barbecued or braised meats. They range from light-bodied and easy-drinking versions to more structured and polished styles.



Pergola-trained vines require careful pruning to keep yields in check.

PERGOLA'S PULL ON THE VENETO

The Veneto's traditional method for vine cultivation is the pergola system, which first trains vines vertically up wooden poles, and then horizontally, creating a leafy canopy—and a copious crop if not managed with an eye to quality.

Pergola-trained vines' roof of foliage requires deft pruning to keep the canopy from becoming too dense, in order to limit disease and allow enough sunlight through to the developing grapes. However, the pergola system gives the grape bunches more room for growth, and during a hot and sunny Veneto summer, the canopy's shade can be welcome.

Pergola-grown vines stand in contrast to vines trained with the more common Guyot system, which is used extensively in many of the world's top wine regions, particularly Burgundy and Bordeaux, and features one or two canes of foliage trained vertically along wire grids that run the length of each vine row. It is also gaining traction in the Veneto, as advocates for the Guyot system argue that it's a more quality-oriented approach to viticulture, secured through lower yields.

Pierangelo Tommasi, of his family's eponymous estate, says, "Until 20 years ago the region was probably 100 percent pergola. Then the new generation realized that Guyot is possible for native grapes."

Traditionalists feel that their local grapes are best adapted to pergola. At Lorenzo Begali, Tiziana Begali explains that their vineyards are entirely pergola-trained, saying simply, "Corvina likes it."

At Masi, Raffaele Boscaini, who owns the estate along with his father, Sandro, takes a topographical approach, "Pergola for steeper, hillside vineyards; Guyot for gentle slopes." —A.N.

The latter group typically includes wines that undergo the *ripasso* process, wherein fresh Valpolicella grapes are fermented immediately following harvest and then re-fermented with the grape pomace left over from Amarone production. This process usually intensifies the wine's structure and the riper side of its flavor range, as well as raising the alcohol level slightly. Of the top Valpolicellas in this year's report, Tommaso Bussola strikes again, with two 91-point reds that underwent the *ripasso* technique: the creamy Valpolicella Classico Superiore TB 2006 (\$36), and the fragrant Valpolicella Superiore Ca' del Laito Ripasso 2007 (\$24).

Dal Forno hits the mark with his 2006 Valpolicella Superiore (91, \$102). This aromatic and supple red is truly a baby Amarone, made entirely from grapes dried for about 30 days, and then fermented into wine. Showing the ageability of the best Valpolicellas, the 2002 Valpolicella Classico Superiore from Giuseppe Quintarelli (91, \$80) is elegant, still very fresh and finely balanced. Finally, Monte Faustino offers good value with the 2008 Valpolicella Classico Superiore La Traversagna Ripasso (91, \$38), a silky red with a pure beam of black cherry and blackberry fruit.

The 2008 Valpolicella Classico Superiore Seccal Ripasso (90, \$22) from Nicolis is another well-priced example of a red from the *ripasso* technique, in a more traditional flavor profile. Among wines made in Valpolicella's fresher style, the Brigaldara 2009 (87, \$13) is minerally, while Latium's 2009 (88, \$14) is well-balanced and lightly spiced.

OTHER WINES

Beyond Soave, Amarone and Valpolicella, the Veneto produces an array of whites and reds, often from little-known areas or grapes, with many issuing from the all-encompassing Veneto IGT, which allows for wines produced in a variety of styles and that use a variety of grape types. This flexibility allows producers to explore, with some very good results. But some vintners take advantage of the IGT's less-than-rigorous regulations; to avoid mediocre wines from overcropped vineyards it pays to be choosy.

One producer who shows well with bottlings made from international varieties in the Veneto IGT is Inama. Winemaker Stefano Inama's Veneto Oratorio di San Lorenzo 2009 (90, \$65) is an elegant red made from Carmenère, and the winery's Sauvignon Veneto Vulcaia Fumé 2009 (91, \$30) is a rich and smoky white, the result of fermentation in 25 percent new oak.

Among Veneto's smaller appellations, I enjoyed Dal Maso's Tai Rosso Colli Berici Colpizzarda 2007 (88, \$35), a spicy, light-bodied red made from the Tai Rosso grape that was reminiscent of a good Fleurie *cru* Beaujolais, as well as Zenato's Lugana San Benedetto 2011 (88, \$15), a fresh and delicate white.

Although smaller in size and lesser in reputation than the Italian wine regions of Piedmont or Tuscany, the Veneto is one of the country's largest producers in terms of overall volume. This puts the onus on the region's producers to keep the quality bar high, a challenge that they are meeting with a solid grounding in tradition but also an open mind to modern and non-local techniques. The result is a winning combination for wine drinkers, partnering quality with a wealth of wines and styles.

Senior tasting coordinator Alison Napjus has been with Wine Spectator since 2000.

Alison Napjus' Recommended Wines From Veneto

Nearly 325 wines were reviewed for this report. A free alphabetical list is available at www.winespectator.com/103112. WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

TOP WINES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
TOMMASO BUSSOLA Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Vigneto Alto TB 2006 Rich and spicy, with chocolate-covered cherry, kirsch and sweet smoke flavors that show deeper notes of creamy espresso, ground spice, roast almond and molasses. A vibrant, harmonious wine.	94	\$175
ROMANO DAL FORNO Amarone della Valpolicella 2006 Polished and expressive, this shows a smoky baseline of graphite-laced minerality, with flavors of date, kirsch, ground anise and clove that show a touch of cocoa powder.	94	\$531
IL ROVERONE Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2006 There's lovely integration and balance to this dark chocolate-tinged Amarone, which shows notes of date, sun-dried cherry, ground spices and leather, with a sweet, smoky minerality.	94	\$60
LE SALETTE Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Pergole Vecce 2007 Offers good density, with firm, polished tannins and ripe fruit notes of blackberry, black cherry, dark chocolate shavings, date and espresso.	94	\$143
BRIGALDARA Recioto della Valpolicella Classico 2008 Refined and silky, with a creamy note of chocolate-covered cherry and juicy acidity. A balsamic hint adds a pleasant tang.	92	\$80 375ml
TOMMASO BUSSOLA Valpolicella Classico Superiore TB 2005 Smoky and aromatic, with creamy layers of prune, sun-dried cherry, balsamic, dried mint and dark chocolate. Rich and balanced.	91	\$36
TOMMASO BUSSOLA Valpolicella Superiore Ca' del Laito Ripasso 2007 A sweet, smoky note runs alongside the black cherry, balsamic, soft raisin and espresso flavors, with tangy acidity.	91	\$24
FATTORI Soave Motto Piane 2010 Rich and dry, showing peach compote, crystallized pineapple, honey-suckle and kumquat notes, with fleur de sel and beeswax hints.	91	\$40
GINI Sauvignon Veneto Maciete Fumé 2010 There's real cut to this racy white, with a direct beam of lemon zest, gooseberry, pineapple and thyme. Sleek and lip-smacking.	91	\$30
MONTE FAUSTINO Valpolicella Classico Superiore La Traversagna Ripasso 2008 Elegant, with polished tannins and a pure beam of black cherry and blackberry fruit riding the silky texture.	91	\$38
LEONILDO PIEROPAN Soave Classico Calvarino 2009 There's a fine, mineral salinity to this, with finely woven flavors of yellow apple, melon, almond cream and lemon curd.	91	\$33
LEONILDO PIEROPAN Soave Classico La Rocca 2009 Elegant, with lightly honeyed flavors of ripe Gala apple, cantaloupe, almond pastry, ground ginger and citrus zest.	91	\$32
GIUSEPPE QUINTARELLI Valpolicella Classico Superiore 2002 Elegant, balanced and fresh, offering a core of mineral and spice, with notes of date, dried fruits, cocoa powder and almond.	91	\$80
SUAVIA Soave Classico Le Rive 2008 Smoke and vanilla overtones accent poached pear, kumquat, fresh hay, star anise and guava flavors in this well-meshed white.	91	\$46
SUAVIA Soave Classico Monte Carbonare 2009 Bright and lacy in texture, this well-balanced white shows baked peach and pineapple, fragrant herb and smoky mineral flavors.	91	\$35

TOP VALUES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
ROBERTO ANSELMINI Veneto White San Vincenzo 2010 Smoke and straw notes mix with tropical mango and pineapple fruit and an exotic hint of jasmine in this exuberant white.	90	\$13
NICOLIS Valpolicella Classico Superiore Seccal Ripasso 2008 A tarry, traditional style, offering a sweet, earthy base note integrated with black cherry and black currant fruit.	90	\$22
RECCHIA Valpolicella Classico Superiore Ripasso Le Murale 2008 Elegant and integrated, with layered flavors of crème de cassis, black cherry, black licorice, smoky mineral and tobacco.	90	\$18
INAMA Soave Classico Vin Soave 2011 This smoky white shows a base of minerality to its grapefruit, melon and blanched almond flavors, with good density.	89	\$15
TOMMASI Valpolicella Classico Superiore Vigneto Rafaèl 2010 Medium-bodied and aromatic, with floral and spice accents to flavors of black cherry, fresh plum, red licorice and pomegranate.	89	\$17
CA' RUGATE Soave Classico San Michele 2011 A creamy version, offering a smoky base note to cantaloupe, poached pear and spice flavors, with passion fruit and almond hints.	88	\$16
GINI Soave Classico 2011 Well-cut and juicy, this creamy white shows good focus to the flavors of lemon cream, orange zest, almond and fresh quince.	88	\$18
MASI Valpolicella Classico Bonacosta 2010 Smoke, dried herb and light tar mix with dried cherry and cranberry, grilled plum and black licorice flavors in this finely balanced red.	88	\$15
LEONILDO PIEROPAN Soave 2010 This well-cut white offers a subtle layer of smoky minerality to flavors of green melon, star fruit, lime zest and light spice.	88	\$17
PRÀ Soave Classico 2011 Plump and juicy, with bright acidity adding zip to the flavors of Gala apple, cantaloupe, grapefruit zest and blanched almond.	88	\$15
TAMELLINI Soave 2011 Dry and creamy, showing a lovely aromatic mineral note, with flavors of green melon, blood orange and pickled ginger.	88	\$14
ZENATO Lugana San Benedetto 2011 Delicate acidity meshes with subtle notes of white peach, star fruit and stone in this fresh, elegant white.	88	\$15
PAÒNI Pinot Bianco Colli Euganei 2011 Bright and light-bodied, with notes of guava, green melon and almond that show hints of grapefruit zest and peach.	87	\$11
ZENI Valpolicella 2010 Fresh and well-balanced, offering flavors of ripe black cherry, red currant, plum and fresh earth, with good focus.	87	\$12
BOLLA Soave Classico 2011 Fresh and creamy in texture, with apple, tangerine and smoke flavors.	85	\$10
BRIGALDARA Valpolicella 2010 Spicy, with cherry, plum and dried cranberry flavors and crisp acidity.	85	\$12
TENUTA POLVARO Lison-Pramaggiore 2010 A bright, tangy white, with pineapple, guava and tangerine notes.	85	\$12
TENUTA POLVARO Veneto Nero 2010 A balanced red, with black raspberry, strawberry and fig fruit flavors.	85	\$12

New Releases: Italy

Light-weight, with an orange peel finish. Drink now through 2018. 160 cases made.—B.S.

89 Poggio al Tesoro Vermentino Toscana Solosole 2011 \$20 A bright, focused white featuring apple, peach, lemon and mineral flavors. Intense yet sleek, with a long finish. Drink now. 5,000 cases made.—B.S.

88 Bibi Graetz Toscana Casamatta White 2011 \$73 Apple, peach and grapefruit notes mingle in this rich, fresh and balanced white. Vermentino, Trebbiano and Muscat. Drink now. 5,000 cases imported.—B.S.

ITALY

Veneto / Amarone della Valpolicella

94 Romano Dal Forno Amarone della Valpolicella 2006 \$531 Polished and expressive, this shows a smoky baseline of graphite-laced minerality, with fine-grained tannins and mouthwatering acidity focusing the flavors of date, kirsch, ground anise and clove, with a touch of cocoa powder. Drink now through 2022. 1,000 cases imported.—A.N.

93 Lorenzo Begali Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Monte Ca' Bianca 2006 \$78 The focus is on the grilled herb and freshly ground spice flavors here, along with notes of black cherry coulis, macerated plum and date. Elegant, while still ripe and silky, with supple tannins and juicy acidity. Drink now through 2026. 200 cases made.—A.N.

93 Masi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Serègo Alghieri Vaio Armaron 2006 \$75 Traditional in style, with good focus and definition, this offers flavors of dried cherry and cranberry, spice box, leather and a hint of bresaola. It's supple in texture, with a firm, lasting finish of dried herb. Drink now through 2026. 500 cases imported.—A.N.

93 Monte Faustino Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2007 \$75 There's lovely balance to the fine-grained tannins, juicy acidity and layers of ripe black cherry, black currant, dried thyme, toasted almond and graphite. Silky and expressive, with a long, super-spicy finish. Drink now through 2025. 2,000 cases made.—A.N.



PAOLO FORNASER
Owner & Winemaker

92 Buglioni Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2007 \$65 Well-knit and creamy, with pronounced flavors of black currant and anise mixing with grilled plum, dried herb, gundrop and floral notes. Features lightly chewy tannins and a hint of cocoa powder on the finish. Drink now through 2024. Tasted twice, with consistent notes. 500 cases imported.—A.N.

91 Brigaldara Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2008 \$62 Accessible and well-balanced, this spice-driven red offers flavors of dried cherry, smoked almond, prune and dried herb. A push of graphite-tinged minerality shows on the finish. Drink now through 2023. 9,000 cases made.—A.N.

90 Lorenzo Begali Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2007 \$61 Elegant, this open-knit red offers supple tannins and a pure beam of ripe black cherry, black raspberry and pomegranate fruit. Accents of smoke, graphite and anise push through on the finish. Drink now through 2022. 500 cases made.—A.N.

ITALY

Veneto / Soave

90 Gini Soave Classico Contrada Salvarenza Vecchie Vigne 2009 \$33 Creamy and rich, yet set in an elegant frame. This offers layered notes of lemon

cream, honeycomb, verbena and blood orange, backed by well-focused, refreshing acidity. A mineral note pushes through on the finish. Drink now through 2015. 1,000 cases made.—A.N.

89 Gini Soave Classico La Frosca 2010 \$26 Pineapple, guava, tangerine and spice flavors are enlivened by bright acidity in this plump and juicy white, while a hint of aromatic minerality lingers on the creamy finish. Drink now through 2014. 2,000 cases made.—A.N.

89 Inama Soave Classico Vin Soave 2011 \$75 Smoky, with a base of minerality and flavors of grapefruit, melon and blanched almond as well as a persistent thread of ground cardamom and ginger. Features good density and a fresh finish. Drink now through 2015. 18,500 cases imported.—A.N.

88 Fattori Soave Danieli 2011 \$17 Dry and tangy, offering a spicy base of cardamom, ginger and clove, with notes of pear, star fruit and stony mineral. Moderate finish. Drink now through 2014. 7,000 cases made.—A.N.

88 Gini Soave Classico 2011 \$18 Well-cut and juicy, this creamy white shows good focus to flavors of lemon cream, orange zest, almond and fresh quince. Crisp finish. Drink now. 5,800 cases made.—A.N.

88 Prà Soave Classico 2011 \$15 Plump and juicy, with bright acidity adding zip to flavors of Gala apple, cantaloupe, grapefruit zest and blanched almond. Clean finish. Drink now through 2015. 15,000 cases made.—A.N.

88 Tamellini Soave 2011 \$14 Dry and creamy, with a lovely aromatic mineral note and flavors of green melon, blood orange and pickled ginger. Mouthwatering. Drink now through 2015. 15,000 cases made.—A.N.

85 Bolla Soave Classico 2011 \$10 Fresh and creamy in texture, this offers a hint of zesty minerality and flavors of apple, tangerine and smoke. Drink now. 42,000 cases made.—A.N.

ITALY

Veneto / Valpolicella

91 Monte Faustino Valpolicella Classico Superiore La Traversagna Ripasso 2008 \$38 Elegant, with polished tannins and a pure beam of black cherry and blackberry fruit riding the silky texture, mixing with floral, gundrop and ground spice notes. Drink now through 2020. 1,200 cases made.—A.N.

91 Giuseppe Quintarelli Valpolicella Classico Superiore 2002 \$75 Elegant overall, finely balanced and fresh, this features a core of mineral and spice, with notes of date, dried cherry and strawberry, cocoa powder and almond. Drink now through 2020.—A.N.

90 Tommaso Bussola Valpolicella Superiore Ca' del Laito Ripasso 2008 \$24 This structured red features a sanguine note to accent the ripe cherry, blackberry and pomegranate fruit, joined by subtle spice box and smoke flavors. Balanced, with a crisp finish. Drink now through 2018. 2,000 cases made.—A.N.

90 Prà Valpolicella Superiore Morandina Ripasso 2010 \$36 Very smoky and minerally, with flavors of black cherry, macerated plum, black licorice and iron wrapped around a core of ground spice. Balanced, offering lightly chewy tannins on the finish. Drink now through 2018. 600 cases made.—A.N.

89 Tommasi Valpolicella Classico Superiore Vigneto Rafaèl 2010 \$77 A medium-bodied and aromatic red, showing floral and spice accents to the flavors of black cherry, fresh plum, red licorice and pomegranate, followed by a fresh finish. Drink now through 2017. 12,000 cases made.—A.N.

88 Masi Valpolicella Classico Bonacosta 2010 \$75 Smoke, dried herb and light tar notes mix with flavors of dried cherry, dried cranberry, grilled plum and black licorice in this well-cut, finely balanced red, with a fresh, spice-driven finish. Drink now through 2017. 6,500 cases imported.—A.N.

87 Zeni Valpolicella 2010 \$12 A fresh and well-balanced version, as flavors of ripe black cherry, red currant, plum and fresh earth mix with ground anise and white pepper notes. Medium-bodied, with good focus through to the clean, aromatic finish. Drink now. 13,000 cases made.—A.N.

ITALY

Veneto / Dessert

91 Monte Faustino Recioto della Valpolicella Classico 2006 \$40/500ml This rich, layered dessert wine is silky, offering flavors of black cherry puree, black licorice, cinnamon, clove, toasted almond, fragrant herbs and treacle, all backed by juicy, balancing acidity. Drink now through 2017. 650 cases made.—A.N.

91 Monte Faustino Veneto Passito Bure Alto 2005 \$40/500ml This spicy white is just off-dry and well cut. It offers a range of butterscotch, ground clove and nutmeg, hazelnut and peach confiture flavors. The lasting finish shows more spice and nut notes. Drink now through 2020. 375 cases made.—A.N.

90 Gini Recioto di Soave Classico Col Foscarin 2007 \$33 Backed by racy acidity, this well-meshed dessert wine offers flavors of dried peach, candied grapefruit zest, chamomile and beeswax. The spice- and smoke-tinged finish lasts. Drink now through 2017. 200 cases made.—A.N.

90 Tamellini Recioto di Soave Vigna Marogne de Costiola 2007 \$35/500ml Offers lots of ripe peach and apricot flavors, with melt-in-your-mouth notes of candied orange zest, lychee and crystallized honey. Spicy finish. Drink now through 2015. 500 cases made.—A.N.

89 La Cappuccina Recioto di Soave Arzimo 2007 \$32/500ml Rich and mouthwatering, with a pure note of baked apricot leading to flavors of pastry, candied almond, dried herb and spice. Hints of smoke and toffee mark the finish. Drink now through 2015. 150 cases imported.—A.N.

89 Maculan Veneto Madero 2010 \$30/375ml Sweet and aromatic, with a nice tang of balancing acidity. Floral and spice notes accent the raspberry coulis, hoisin, candied plum and loose tea leaf flavors. Dried herb hints mark the fragrant finish. Marzemina and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2015. 830 cases made.—A.N.

ITALY

Veneto / Other

91 La Cappuccina Veneto Carmenos 2005 \$32/500ml This rich and spicy wine is just off-dry and loaded with flavors of toasted almond, strawberry jam, prune, candied black currant and molasses. Shows lovely balance, ending with a lingering finish that's lightly tannic. Carmenère and Oseleta. Drink now through 2020. 50 cases imported.—A.N.

91 Gini Sauvignon Veneto Maciete Fumé 2010 \$30 There's real cut to this racy white, which displays a direct beam of lemon zest, gooseberry, pineapple and rhyme notes. Sleek and lip-smacking, with a zesty finish. Drink now through 2020. 400 cases made.—A.N.

90 Inama Sauvignon Veneto Vulcaia Fumé 2010 \$37 This rich, creamy white shows a smoky base note, vibrant acidity and layered flavors of lemon meringue, hazelnut, dried apricot and pastry cream. Fine length and

texture, with a lasting finish. Drink now through 2017. 50 cases imported.—A.N.

90 Inama Veneto Oratorio di San Lorenzo 2009 \$65 Full of juicy flavors of black cherry, black licorice and macerated plum, this features pencil shavings, smoke, cracked pepper and espresso accents. Expressive without being exuberant. Elegant, with a moderate finish. Carmenère. Drink now through 2017. 50 cases imported.—A.N.

90 Maculan Veneto Crosara 2009 \$110 This elegant, aromatic style delivers hints of graphite, cedar and ground spice accenting rich flavors of blackberry pie, violet, black currant candy and a subtle touch of bresaola. Supple and well-knit, with a lasting finish. Merlot. Drink now through 2022. 290 cases made.—A.N.

89 Allegrini Corvina Veronese La Poja 2008 \$87 Elegant, with refined texture and tannins, this offers a delicate mesh of ripe black cherry, ground anise and white pepper, date and light graphite flavors, followed by a subtle finish. Corvina. Drink now through 2017. 1,100 cases made.—A.N.

89 Allegrini Veronese Palazzo della Torre 2009 \$22 Flavors of blackberry, candied black currant and kirsch mix with hints of pomegranate, violet and balsamic in this open-knit, creamy red. Medium-bodied, with a lightly juicy finish. Drink now through 2017. 18,300 cases made.—A.N.

88 Fattori Veneto White Roncha 2011 \$19 This creamy white blends rich hints of almond cream, pastry and vanilla with notes of orchard blossom, lemon zest and white peach. The clean-cut finish shows a touch of fleur de sel. Garganega, Durella, Pinot Grigio and Trebbiano di Soave. Drink now. 500 cases made.—A.N.

88 Inama Carmenère Veneto Più 2010 \$20 This open-knit red reveals a core of smoke and ground spice notes, leading to flavors of black currant, grilled plum, cedar and leather. Medium-bodied, with fine-grained tannins. Drink now through 2017. 1,000 cases imported.—A.N.

NEW ZEALAND

Sauvignon Blanc

90 Cloudy Bay Te Koko Marlborough 2009 \$50 Apple and pear flavors are supple and slightly honeyed, with plenty of spicy details, a medium body and soft acidity. A sense of elegance persists on the finish. Sauvignon Blanc. Drink now. 400 cases imported.—M.W.

89 Kono Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2011 \$71 See Best Values, page 108.

88 Glazebrook Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough Regional Reserve 2011 \$75 Toasty aromatics give way to broad notes of peach, nectarine and cantaloupe. Medium-bodied and refreshing, with pretty floral highlights that kick in on the finish. Drink now. 1,500 cases imported.—M.W.

88 Mohua Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2011 \$13 Ripe peach and apricot flavors are round and smooth, with just the right touch of acidity and a terrific fleshy texture. Drink now. 30,000 cases made.—M.W.

87 Sauvignon Republic Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2011 \$70 Bright and vivid, with lip-smacking tangerine, melon and lemon flavors. Fresh, grassy notes come in on the finish. Drink now. 30,000 cases made.—M.W.

85 Monkey Bay Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2011 \$71 Yellow apple, melon and apricot flavors are balanced and softly juicy, with modest intensity. Drink now. 180,000 cases imported.—M.W.