



The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

#210 December 2013

NV Ricci Curbastro Franciacorta Brut

RATING: 90 points
PRODUCER: Ricci Curbastro
FROM: Franciacorta,
Lombardy, Italy
VARIETY: Proprietary Blend
DRINK: 2014 - 2017
ESTIMATED COST: \$45
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#210
Dec 2013

The non-vintage Franciacorta Brut (the bottle was disgorged in July 2013) opens with thick creamy foam that settles gracefully in the glass. This is a Brut expression in the true sense of the word: Mineral dryness, lemon soda and white flower open the bouquet. Its aromatic characteristics are delivered with sharp, focused intensity. Thanks to those citrus flavors and the bright acidity, this sparkler has all the makings of an aperitivo protagonist. The blend is 60% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Bianco and 10% Pinot Nero. Drink: 2014-2017.

NV Ricci Curbastro Franciacorta Rose Brut

RATING: 91 points
PRODUCER: Ricci Curbastro
FROM: Franciacorta,
Lombardy, Italy
VARIETY: Proprietary Blend
DRINK: 2014 - 2018
ESTIMATED COST: \$53
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#210
Dec 2013

The non-vintage Franciacorta Rose Brut boasts a pale peach-pink color and a fragrant bouquet that yields freshly baked bread, wild berries, nectarine and lemon blossom. It boasts an impressive core of fruit. Drink: 2014-2018.

2009 Ricci Curbastro Franciacorta Saten Brut

RATING: 89 points
PRODUCER: Ricci Curbastro
FROM: Franciacorta,
Lombardy, Italy
VARIETY: Proprietary Blend
DRINK: 2014 - 2017
ESTIMATED COST: \$45
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com,
#210
Dec 2013

Disgorged in July 2013, the 2009 Franciacorta Saten Brut shows a light and mildly fragrant style with a luminous, crystalline appearance and persistent perlage. Yeasty notes wrap around the finish but you'll also get pretty tones of stone fruit, spice and crushed flower. Bright acidity pins down the finish. Drink: 2014-2017.

2008 Ricci Curbastro Franciacorta Extra Brut

RATING: 89 points
PRODUCER: Ricci Curbastro
FROM: Franciacorta, Lombardy, Italy
VARIETY: Proprietary Blend
DRINK: 2014 - 2017
ESTIMATED COST: \$52
SOURCE: eRobertParker.com, #210 Dec 2013

The 2008 Franciacorta Extra Brut opens to immediate aromas of orange blossom and fleshy peach. The wine shows simple lines with a soft note of sweetness that adds to the creamy richness of the perlage. Floral and feminine, this wine would make a good partner to fried appetizers or salty finger foods. The bottle was disgorged in May 2013. Drink: 2014-2017.

This historic estate suffered a huge loss this past August with the death of founder Gualberto Ricci Curbastro. He was among that tight group of visionaries who created Franciacorta. Today, his son Riccardo has embarked on many new projects to fulfill his father's legacy. Among them is a special experimental vineyard dedicated to children in the local school system curious to learn more about the growing and production of wine grapes.

Importer: Domenico Valentino Selections;
www.domenicovalentino.com

-Monica Lamer

The Franciacorta Phenomenon

Just don't call it Prosecco. Franciacorta is Italy's premier "classic method" (*metodo classico*) sparkling wine region located in the region of Lombardy in northern Italy, directly south of Lake Iseo in the province of Brescia. It aspires to the lofty heights of Champagne - both in terms of exclusivity and quality - although its producers vehemently deny most associations with the storied French region. They also dislike comparisons to Spain's Cava where (like Franciacorta and Champagne) secondary fermentation occurs in the bottle to achieve elegant effervescence. And please, don't mistake this Italian sparkler for Prosecco, where a less labor-intensive secondary fermentation occurs in large pressurized tanks instead.

Indeed, it may appear that Franciacorta producers have dedicated more effort deciding what they don't want to be and not enough on what they really are. But this is not the case.

In fact, Franciacorta is three distinct things. First, it is a delineated geographic territory (*la Franciacorta*). Second, it is its own wine (*il Franciacorta*). Lastly, it is its own winemaking technique (*il metodo Franciacorta*).

Sound familiar? The word "Champagne" is equally interchangeable and is definitely the model being followed. Only, the comparisons really do stop there. The French region boasts many times the production power with roughly 300 million bottles made annually next to Franciacorta's tiny 15 million. The Italian region counts 50 years of winemaking experience next to three centuries in France. Franciacorta only earned its DOCG recognition in 1995.

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Looking through *The Wine Advocate* database, I noticed that Franciacorta has been largely overlooked. Only two brands (Bellavista and Ca' del Bosco) have been reviewed within the last decade. I have tried to be as comprehensive as possible in this report, including all Franciacorta wines that, to my knowledge, are imported to the United States. I also found a few gems worth mentioning that are not imported. My goal is to direct readers (who would otherwise buy Champagne) to this fascinating and little-known corner of Italian wine. Brindisi!