

Judging the Pizza and Prosecco Competition

Charles Scicolone (September 11, 2018)



Prosecco is the largest selling sparkling (spumante) wine in Italy. Italians drink it as an aperitif (no self-respecting Roman or Venetian goes out to dinner without having a glass of Prosecco first), with food, and to celebrate. I was invited to be one of the judge at a Prosecco & Pizza Competition

I was speaking to Rosario Procino, owner of Ribalta Pizzeria, at a wine tasting and the conversation turned to pizza in Naples and NYC. As we were talking, Megan De Angelo of Colangelo, a PR firm, came by to see Rosario and joined the conversation. She said that she was organizing a Prosecco & Pizza Competition at Ribalta and invited me to be one of the judges.

The event took place during Prosecco Week. Prosecco is the largest selling sparkling (spumante) wine in Italy. Italians drink it as an aperitif (no self-respecting Roman or Venetian goes out to dinner without having a glass of Prosecco first), with food, and to celebrate. When I am in Rome the first meal I have is at Da Giggetto in the Jewish Quarter. I always order the same dish, fried zucchini flowers stuffed with anchovies and mozzarella with a bottle of Prosecco. I think it goes great with any type of fried food, shellfish and Pizza. I am a big fan of sparkling wine with pizza.

Prosecco production takes place in the area of north east Italy lying between the Dolomites and the Adriatic sea. Since July of 2009 Prosecco can be produced in two regions; the Veneto (most of the



production) and Friulli-Venezia Giulia.

Sparkling (Spumante) Prosecco can be Brut, Extra Dry Dry or Demi Sec. Brut is dryer than Extra Dry. It is made from the Glera (formerly known as Prosecco) grape (85- 100%) with the possible addition of Verdiso, Pinot Bianco, Pinot Grigio and Chardonnay up to 15%. Most Prosecco is non-vintage.

Sparkling Prosecco is made by the Martinotti-Charmat method, meaning that the wine is given a second fermentation in a temperature controlled stainless steel tank (autoclave) rather than in the bottle.

There were four Pizzerias that competed in the challenge:

Josh Johnson and Jordan Floyd- Barboncino – 781 Franklin Ave. Brooklyn, NY. 718-483-8834

Steve Spinelli- Porta.- Jersey City, N.J. 201-544 -5199 and Asbury Park N.J. 732-726-7661

Pasquale Cozzolino – Ribalta – 48 East 12th St. NY, NY 212-777-7781

Flavio Garelli- Cacio and Vino – 80 2nd Ave. NY, NY 212-228-3269

Each pizzaiolo was given two Proseccos DOC, one Brut (to be Brut it can have up to 12g/l of residual sugar) and one Extra Dry (12 to 17% of residual sugar). They had to choose either the Brut or Extra Dry to pair with their pizza.

Both Josh Johnson and Steven Spinelli went with the La Marca Extra Dry Prosecco NV (Veneto) to pair with their pizza.

La Marca is made from the Glera grape 100%. The wine is named for the La Marca Trevigina zone in the heart of the Prosecco region. It has hints of fresh citrus, honey and grapefruit with mineral undertones.

After we tasted the Prosecco with the pizza, orange juice was poured into our glasses to create a mimosa cocktail. We tasted his pizza again with the mimosa.

The next two Pizzaioli chose Prosecco Castello di Roncade Brut Treviso DOC NV (Veneto) to go with their pizza made from 100% Glera (residual sugar 9g/l). It has hints of citrus fruit with herbal and grassy notes and a dry finish.

Each pizzaiolo made 6 pizzas- one for the judges and 5 for the guests. The pizzaioli brought all of their own ingredients- anything necessary to make the pizza. They shared a wood-burning oven. There were no restrictions on ingredients and creativity was encouraged.

After we tasted all of the pizza and tallied the votes, it was a tie between Pasquale Cozzolino from Ribalta and Flavio Garelli from Cacio and Vino. All the pizza we tasted went very well with the Prosecco but we broke the tie by giving the grand prize The pizza from Flavio because it paired better with the Prosecco. The prize was \$2,500.

I felt like a winner too. It was a great afternoon and I enjoyed tasting pizza and prosecco.

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