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Italy 2018

Your guide to what's new
and exciting in Italian wine

GAVI

Profile of Piedmont's premium white on the export market

Located on the south-eastern edge of Piedmont, the Gavi wine-producing area lies close to the Ligurian Apennines bordering on the province of Genoa, a forty-minute drive from Genoa itself and one hour from Milan. In this so suitable corner for white wine production in an area famous for its reds (there are actually some interesting similarities between Barolo and Gavi: 11 municipalities, the same vein of soil - Serravalle marl - , single varietal - Cortese here, Nebbiolo there - and the same inclination for excellence), a rather peculiar encounter occurs. The wind, coming off the sea just thirty kilometres away, blows as far as the Apennine snows, caressing the villages, castles, hills, woods and vineyards, donating an impressive light to the air. Sea-snow-light, the characterising trio of these lands suspended in time, messengers of an ancient nobility.

This is borderland, an authentic and valuable region where, in order to secure safe passage through the Apennine passes, free from the tyranny of feudal lords and bandits, the Genoese expanded to the "Oltregiogo" area, as it was then called. This fertile and productive area with its abundance of water and timber, followed the Salt Road, a trade route that went from the coast towards the Po valley and then either further into Europe or towards the Via Postumia Roman road to the Adriatic. The Ligurian aristocracy built their summer estates here which, with time, went on to become wine-producing companies in the style of Bordeaux châteaux (although its vineyards are not so extensive, the largest winery, boasts 65 hectares in one plot, but the others, apart from few exceptions, are small producers). It is a hilly land, still uncontaminated, and protected by the boldness of its nature.

Visitors get lost in the beauty and taste wines along the Strada della Lomellina wine route. It's a totally overwhelming experience. The Gavi area



Gavi DOCG in figures

Four versions: 99% still, but also small amounts of sparkling, spumante and reserve.

Surface area: about 1,500 hectares.

Annual production: around 13 million bottles.

Producers: about 440 companies between producers, wine-makers and bottlers.

Turnover: around 55 million Euros.

Export: 85% of total.

extends over eleven municipalities in the province of Alessandria, with the town of Gavi as the wine-producing and cultural pole dominated by its tenth century fortress. Gavi acts as the demarcation line between the white lands (to the south) and the red lands (to the north). The white lands with their calcareous-marlish-sandy nature originating from the sea, are the oldest and feature a thin covering of earth. On the other hand side, the red lands, where the ancient fluvial terraces provide deeper and more compact soil, are clayey. The wines from the white zone are gentler, more sophisticated, and have a lower alcohol content and a longer life. Those from the red lands have more body, structure and a little more alcohol. The other municipalities involved are: Bosio, Capriata d'Orba, Carrosio, Francavilla Bisio, Novi Ligure, Parodi Ligure, Pasturana, San Cristoforo, Serravalle Scrivia and Tassarolo.

The Apennines and the sea have unquestionable influence on the local climate. Cold and snowy winters, abundant rain in the spring and autumn and a very sunny, windy and dry summer. The temperature differences between day and night are fundamental for the aromatic synthesis of the grapes. The vineyards are guyot-trained and grow at an altitude of between 180 and 350 metres.

History

Wine producing in the Gavi area dates back to ancient times as the first document dated 3rd June 972, preserved in the State Archives in Genoa, testifies. The word "Cortese" is mentioned for the first time in a letter from the farmer at Montaldeo Castle to Marquis Doria in 1659. The first large plantations specialising in Cortese grapes began in 1856 on the La Centuriona and La Toledana di Gavi estates belonging to Marquis Cambiaso. In the 1800s, important wine-producing companies ➤



"A truly inviting drink... an ideal white for both afternoon conversation and for the table."



Right: The Forte di Gavi stands sentinel over this frontier district between Piedmont and Liguria.
Above right: Gavi vineyards in Parodi Ligure

sprang up belonging to the Raggio, Serra, Sartorio and Spinola families which accompanied the rise of Cortese as a wine of international value.

The man who made the name of Gavi was Vittorio Soldati. He enhanced the properties of Cortese produced in the area around Rovereto, a small village under Gavi administration, promoting it as a slender, delicate wine with little alcohol content that was altogether flavoursome and of good character, pleasant to drink and fond to remember. Gavi was therefore one of the most well-known and successful white wines in Italy in the 1970s and '80s and went on to become an absolute must on international tables. The wine was proclaimed DOCG in 1998 (DOC in 1974) and the Consortium was established in 1993. Captained by Maurizio Montobbio, directed by Francesco Bergaglio and assisted by a team of young experts (including the technical manager, Davide Ferrarese), this dynamic Consortium has been responsible for several innovative projects, which would need a whole article just to describe them. Just to name one: the Premio Gavi La Buona Italia award, a virtuous example of promoting Italian values that goes beyond local pride to englobe a national context.

The vines

It is only here that Cortese manages to hold on to all its energy. Anywhere else and it becomes neutral,



“Time brings out salty hints of wet rocks and oysters, earth and spices, a splendid tasting tension...”

flat and tired. In this area, however, it offers a peculiar personality, innate to this unique territory. Always used as a mono-varietal in Gavi DOCG, it is normally matured in steel (very rarely in wood). Gavi has always been faithful to itself and has never bowed to the easy ways of international varieties or using barriques, proving its constant pursuit of territorial identity. It is a vigorous vine that perfectly

adapts to water stress and is not difficult to deal with. The grapes have a thick skin and unmistakable flavour and are also good to eat. After careful selection, the Consortium opted for nine specific clones suitable for enhancing the vine.

Characteristics

Gavi has a tense, vertical, slender profile and a particular freshness reminiscent of juicy citrus fruits, Mediterranean herbs and even salt makes its occasional appearance. A truly inviting drink. To arrive at this, however, it must be Gavi at its best because this so very personal white wine, full of energy in its most intransigent and well-groomed form, runs the risk of falling into the most neutral banality in an instant, especially without the most painstaking care in the vineyard and winery. Its acidity is lively and peremptory: juicy, integral and tasty in the more inspired interpretations, seasoned with subtle, well-tuned spicing (more vegetable here, more herbal there), its energy is not density, its thickness is not strength. It is therefore an ideal white for both afternoon conversation and for the table.

The best selections are so clear, fresh and incisive that they can go from the wine bar to the table with rare nonchalance. And there is no doubt about Gavi's surprisingly long life. Time brings out salty hints of wet rocks and oysters, earth and spices, a splendid tasting tension, salty, iodized persistence, proving that this is a land of thoroughbred whites, something really special. The alcohol content, despite the recent rise in temperatures, is between 12° and 13° at the most. What makes Gavi even more attractive is its very affordable price range.

Alessandra Piubello's Top Wines

Bergaglio Nicola, Minaia, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont Italy 2016 91
£14 **Enotria & Coe**

Fresh hints of citrus fruit, hawthorn followed by sea and cliff aromas. Pulp and spirited to the palate, the length demonstrates incisiveness. Pronounced flavour and juicy drink. **Drink** 2017- 2023 **Alcohol** 12.5%

Broglia, La Meirana, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2016 88
£16 **Berkmann Winecellar**

A classic interpreted with skill and measure, conceived to give soft and elegant pleasantness. Suitable for an international public, its finesse and caressing approach makes it good to enjoy. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Alc** 13.5%

La Ghibellina, Mainin, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2016 87
£18 **Winery Classic**

Slow olfactory opening, outlining a subtle and delicate profile. The tasty contrast of the steadfast and full structure and the sharp mineral freshness of the vibrant finale is very distinct. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Alc** 12.5%

La Mesma, Etichetta Nera, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2016 89
£20 **Raeburn Fine Wines**

Transparent aromatic spectrum. Composure is the key to interpreting this wine. Calibre, measure, subtleness, rigour in the gustatory tension with a salty hint that expands well. Refreshing at the end. **Drink** 2017-2024 **Alc** 13%

La Raia, Vigna della Madonna, Gavi DOCG Riserva, Piedmont, Italy 2015 90
£23/£25 **Passione Vino UK**

Complex and articulate olfactory range, a touch of acacia honey. The gustatory structure is soft with elegant finesse. Embracing, it flows with intense profoundness, closing with a persistent finale. **Drink** 2017- 2023 **Alc** 13%

La Zerba Terrarossa, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2016 89
£15 **Winetraders**

Agile, direct and subtle in the mouth with distinctive acidity traversed by an almost salty hint. Juicy and thirst quenching, it develops an incisive taste, tense as a bow. Highly drinkable finale. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Alc** 13.5%

Lombardo Giordano, Vigne di San Martino, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2016 89
£18 **Winetraders**

Detail, intensity, definition. Peculiar style, structure brimming with rare finesse from its full and progressive development, able to nurture a persistence of surprising purity making the sip literally contagious. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Alc** 12.5%

Tenuta La Giustiniana, Montessoro, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2016 89
£23.99 **Liberty Wines Ltd**

Vertical tension in the aromas, reminiscent of Mediterranean herbs that return in an energetic and vibrant palate. The gustatory impulse is lively and continuous, urging further tasting. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Alc** 13%

Valditerra Laura, Gavi, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2016 89
£14 **N/A UK**

Integral olfactory profile with floral, citrus and mineral notes. Its expressive purity is striking throughout the gustatory timeframe: tasty energy, typical sharp freshness, balanced until its lengthy finale. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Alc** 13%

Villa Sparina, Monterotondo, Gavi DOCG, Piedmont, Italy 2015 90
£43.28 **FortyFive10**

Dense, spicy aromas, a woody hint that frames the sip without blocking, enriching it with subtleties to savour. Creamy and soft, the closure is revived by a tempting almond trace. **Drink** 2017-2024 **Alc** 13.5%