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corks CREW cellars

# That's Amore!

WITH Valentine's Day celebrations in the air it's all "Roses are red and violets are blue, yada yada yada..." so what the hell are you going to drink with you know who?

Champagne is the obvious choice, of course, but there are plenty of other choices to be had.

"Where for art thou Romeo", Juliet pines... and yes, I guess it's hard to match the Italians when it comes to romance, so too when it comes to wine.

Here's a selection of great wines I came across at a recent Italian masterclass that featured 13 producers from Italy, touring around Australia showing their wares. It was a fantastic opportunity for wine lovers to better understand what these wines are really all about straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak, and hopefully we'll see more of it in the future. So, if you wanna impress your Valentine, try one of these. Now that's amore!

## 1868 Carlitze Valdobbiadene Superiore D.O.C.G. Prosecco (\$50)

Easily one of the best Prosecco's I've tasted thus far, this is an outstanding sparkling wine from the Cartizze area, high up in the Valdobbiadene region where it's much cooler. The super fresh, pungent floral/apple aromatics hit you straight away, leading to a soft palate redolent with grapefruit, blossom, and sherbet notes with an underlay of mineral/slate/earthy complexity. Zesty? Yes, but the feel is cleverly rounded, soft and inviting with a beautiful lingering finish. Fantastico!

## Is Argolas Vermentino di Sardegna 2012 (\$37)

This was probably one of the wines of the tasting, easily a benchmark when it comes to the Vermentino grape. This estate was established in 1937 and prides itself on the quality of its Vermentino, sourced from 35- to 38-year-old, very-low-yielding vines. The overriding theme here is balance, with the primary "fruit salad" richness of fruit counterweighted by the secondary savoury mineral slant. Beautifully perfumed on the nose, the palate is fine and delicate with great texture and a soft mouth-feel, and lingering intensity and fruit freshness on the finish. Delicious! Serve it up with seafood, and more seafood!

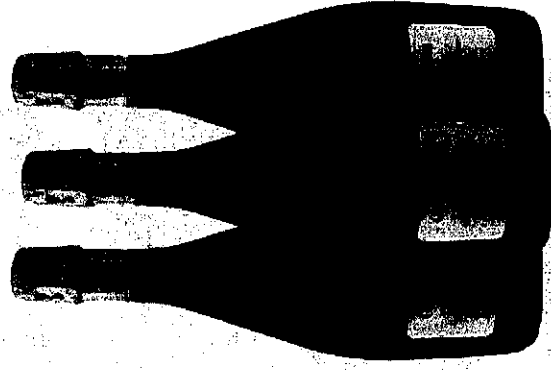
## Donnafugata 'Ben Rye' 2011 Passito di Pantelleria D.O.P. (\$63)

In case you're wondering, "Ben Rye" means "Son of the wind" and this magnificently sweet and seriously amazing dessert wine hails from the extremely windy island of Pantelleria, in the south west of Sicily. Made from the

Zibibbo grape (aka Muscat of Alexandria), and grown in volcanic soils, this excitingly complex wine is fermented in stainless steel, with a portion of dried grapes added to the fresh must, which during the maceration process releases their uniquely sweet and intense properties. The colour is dark amber/orange, and in the flavour department - think apricot, orange zest/blossom, and candied fruit balanced by bitter orange/tamainid peel and fresh acidity. Elegant and refined? Yes. Concentrated and intense? Definitely, yet not "heavy". Sum it up in one word? Extraordinary!

## Costarino Fantino Barbera D'Alba 'Vignola' 2011 (\$60)

Established in 1982, this label is a fantastic partnership of two very talented men - viticulturist Claudio Costarino and winemaker Guido Fantino, who source organic fruit from exceptional vineyard sites in the Monforte region in d'Alba (Piedmont, northwest Italy). Their winery in Brico Bastia is state of the art, and their wines command great respect the world over. With this wine, they consistently produce a red made from the stylish Barbera grape that is fresh with an enticingly perfumed amalgam of dark fruits and exotic spice, leading to a rather lush, layered palate with concentrated cherry fruit dominant, but not exaggerated within the well-knit and elegant structure of the wine. You'll need to decant this and let it open up and flesh out.



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