

Veneto is one of Italy's most fascinating and diverse regions. Although well known as a tourist destination, Veneto is equally notable for the breadth of its wines. Soave, once maligned, has made a big comeback. The best Soaves are delicious and full of character. Soave's ability to age is understood by the lucky few who have tasted older bottles, but it remains one of the best-kept secrets in Italy. Among the reds Valpolicella and Amarone are compelling. Veneto's sweet wines – both white and red – can be thrilling. And then there is Prosecco. The geographic boundaries from which Prosecco is made continue to explode, a concession to huge current demand. A few beacons of true quality shine through what has become an ocean of largely undistinguished wines. At the end of the day, Prosecco is just like any other wine. The very finest examples are crafted by passionate, diligent winemakers with access to top sites. There are no shortcuts.

Veneto's most important wine is of course Amarone. Readers are likely to start seeing the 2007s hit the shelves. The 2007 Amarones are supple, open wines that will drink well pretty much upon release. Most producers describe 2007 as a warm year without the extremes of truly hot years like 2003. The harvest was about ten days earlier than normal. As was the case throughout northern Italy, the end of the summer saw evening temperatures drop, which allowed the wines to develop their bouquets. The vintage was not without its challenges. A devastating hailstorm wiped out many vineyards in Illasi, including those of Romano dal Forno.

The best 2007 Amarones are outstanding, but I miss the tannic backbone and acidity of years such as 2004 and 2006. Because Amarone is made from dried grapes, the best vintages are those where there is enough acidity to balance the overtness of the fruit. The 2007s don't have much in the way of freshness, but in exchange they will drink nicely upon release. The first 2008 Valpolicellas I have tasted are delicious wines with notable vibrancy and freshness that make me look forward to the 2008 Amarones with anticipation. Zenato is one of the historic names in Valpolicella. The estate makes a wide range of wines, but truly excels with Amarone. A recent vertical tasting of Zenato's Amarone Riserva Sergio Zenato going back to 1980 was eye-opening for many reasons, not the least of which was seeing just how well the wines age. Readers will find notes from that tasting on www.erobertparker.com

This is the perfect way to start the Father's Day Weekend! These wines are tasty!

- **Cost: \$21 Full pour (2oz pour of each wine)**
- **\$12 half pour (1 oz of each wine)**
- **When: Friday, June 15th**
- **Time: 4-7**

Toffoli Prosecco \$15 Clean, crisp, creamy mouthfeel, refreshing!

2007 Pieropan Soave Calvarino \$30

The 2007 Soave Classico Calvarino is a beautiful, mineral-driven white with tons of refined, elegant fruit framed by underlying notes of chalkiness that frame the finish with notable elegance. The 2007 Calvarino reveals stunning detail, depth and clarity that captures the full potential of Garganega. Anticipated maturity: 2009-2017. **92 Points Robert Parker** Pieropan has long been a leader in quality in Soave, but these new releases seem to take things to another level. The 2007 Soaves in particular are gems readers will not want to miss

2009 Zenato Valpolicella Classico \$15

The 2009 Valpolicella Classico Superiore is another striking wine for the money. Dark, sensual and inviting, the Valpolicella impresses for its juiciness and fabulous overall balance. Floral notes add lift and refinement and lift on the finish. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2016.

2008 Zenato Valpolicella Ripassa \$30

The 2008 Valpolicella Superiore Ripassa is a sumptuous wine loaded with dark fruit, espresso, licorice and spices. There is nothing particularly subtle in this blockbuster wine, yet all of the elements come together very nicely. A long, resonant finish rounds things out nicely. This is another absolutely delicious wine for the money. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2024.

2007 Tedeschi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico \$50

The 2007 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico is a big, big wine. Plums, mocha, chocolate, spices, new leather and flowers are some of the notes that emerge from this fleshy, large-scaled Amarone. This is a fairly obvious, fruit-driven Amarone, but it works. Firm yet well-balanced tannins frame the insistent finish. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2022. 92 Points Robert Parker

2007 Masi Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Costasera \$55

The 2007 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Costasera emerges from the glass with intricate layers of sweet, perfumed fruit. Flowers, berries and spices develop over time as this nuanced, textured Amarone takes shape. High-toned floral notes add brightness on the finish. The 2007 is one of the best Costaseras I remember tasting. The wine can be enjoyed today for its exuberant, generous fruit or cellared for at least a handful of years. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2022. **91 Points Robert Parker**

Saturday: Please welcome Anam Cara Cellars from Oregon 12-4 Join us for this free tasting!

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