

For wine lovers around the world who enjoy
wine and the good life

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Alto Adige 2019 Summit

Michèle Shah reports on the unique wines produced in an equally unique geographical location



Eduard Bernhart, director of the Consortium of Alto Adige Wine

@AlexFilz



The majestic range of Dolomite mountains, a UNESCO site, situated in northeastern Italy, is the backdrop to the extraordinary region of Alto Adige/South Tyrol, which is home to some of Europe's highest mountain peaks, rising to a majestic 3,000 metres, featuring breath-taking, vertical walls, sheer cliffs and a high density of narrow, deep and long valleys. Glaciers, secluded valleys, and sunny vineyards are situated close together, only a few miles from each other. The scenic variety of Alto Adige and its geological conditions offer fertile ground for bio-diversity. That is precisely the source of the mineral-rich cuvée that is a characteristic identity found in Alto Adige's multitude of varieties.

At the Alto Adige 2019 Wine Summit the theme of “contrasts” ran like a leitmotif through the event. Eduard Bernhart, director of the Consortium of Alto Adige Wine, emphasized that the Alto Adige Wine Summit has become an important programme for the internationalisation of the region's wine industry.

“It is our desire to place Alto Adige wine in a larger context,” explained Bernhart. “The 130 international guests invited to attend the summit will have the opportunity to experience at first hand the contrasts that characterise the local wine production. In that way, they can better understand and appreciate the quality of our wines.”

According to Bernhart, these contrasts result not only from the varying elevations, with vineyards between 200 and 1,330 metres above sea level, but also from the geological composition of the soils as well as the temperature ranges between day and night, which impart to the wines their aromatic profile and freshness. He went on to add that today, Alto Adige wine stands strongly and confidently in a local, national, and international context because “the extraordinarily high number of awards for Alto Adige wines shows that the province, although a small

Snowcapped peaks of the majestic Dolomite mountains that form the backdrop to the region of Alto Adige situated in northeastern Italy



Above: Carlo Ferretti, specialist in agriculture. Left: Martin Foradori, vice president of Consortium of Alto Adige

wine region, is today held in esteem throughout the world". Bernhart closed by pointing out, "A significant portion of Alto Adige wines is now being exported."

Martin Foradori, Vice President of the Consorzio of Alto Adige and owner of the Hofstatter estate in Tramin - the home of the Traminer vine, elaborated on the components that make up the character of a wine. "First, it is necessary to ask, what is it that makes up the

character of a land? With regard to winegrowing, we call it terroir, which is a complex interweaving of geographic, geological, climatic, and even cultural and social factors. Every little variation counts. Climate, location, soils, and people form an unmistakable totality. And in Alto Adige, the terroir forms the basis for the potential of the great wines that are grown here: these are unique wines at the intersection of Alpine and Mediterranean vegetation and culture."

Despite this positive picture, experts Georg Niedrist, senior researcher at the Institute for Alpine Environment in Bolzano and geologist Carlo Ferretti, specialist in the agricultural sector, with a solid track record of studies on the grape varieties of the Alto Adige, expressed concern regarding the constant temperature rise and the presence of so-called "extreme" weather events.

"The scorching heat and periods of drought, hailstorms, water bombs and late frosts, although statistically still quite rare, are events that have enormous destructive potential, and are therefore just as relevant as the constant rise in temperatures. Although in South Tyrol these extreme events do not yet mark a real surge,

Alto Adige Facts and Figures

5,500 hectares
(13,600 acres) of
grape-growing area of
which 5,400 hectares
(13,300 acres) are DOC
classified

740,000 hectares
7,400 sq km (2,857 sq
miles) of total area

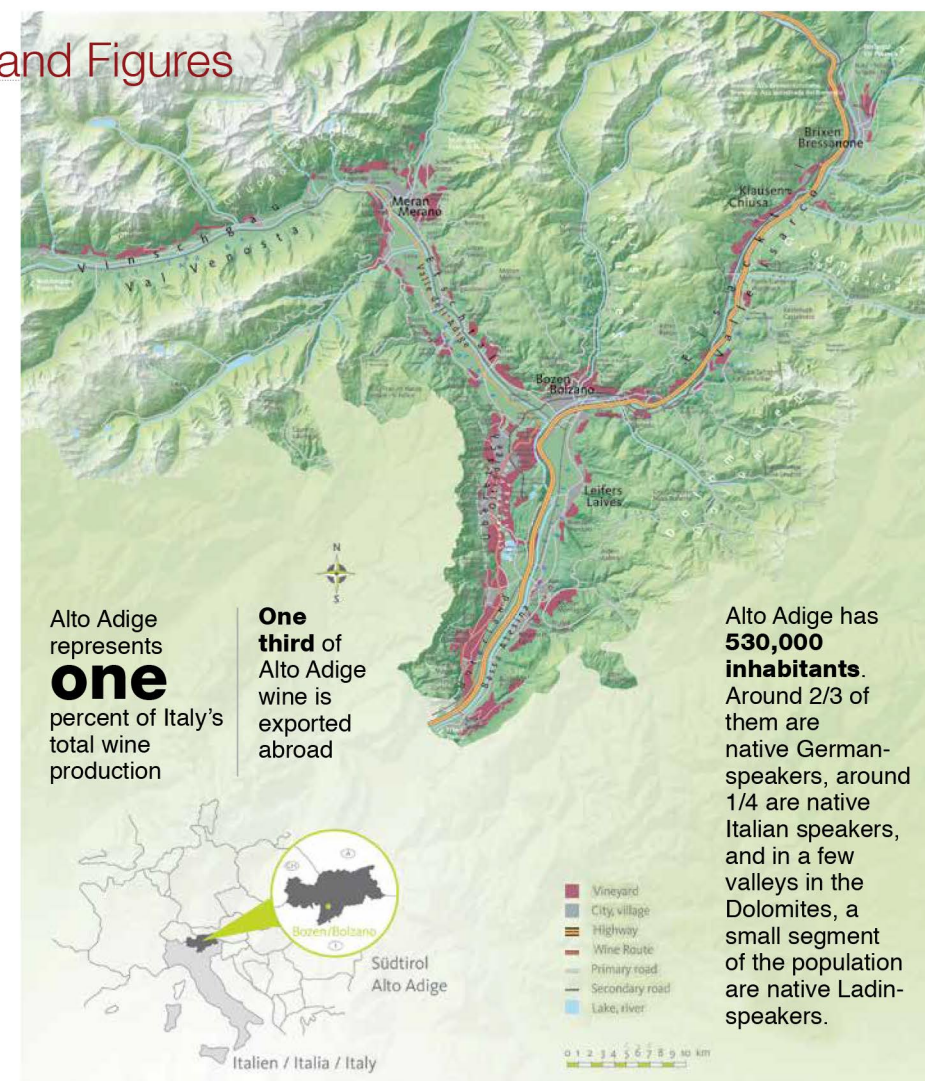
Only 14% of the total area
is at an elevation of 1,000
metres (3,300 feet) or less

98% of the total vineyard
area is DOC classified



33,000,000 litres
of wine are produced
on average every
year, equivalent to
44,000,000 bottles

62% of the
quantity produced
is white wine,
38% is red wine



international research indicates that they are increasing both in frequency and in intensity," lamented Ferretti.

The province's climate lies along the meteorological divide of central and southern Europe. The Alps protect the area from cold air masses from the north, filled with precipitation, while warm, moist air currents from Lake Garda and the Mediterranean find their way to Alto Adige. Mild, sunny days, warm soils, sufficient precipitation, cool nights, and strong winds bring fruity freshness into Alto Adige wines. At elevations of up to 1,000 metres, demanding varieties such as Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, and Pinot Noir are characterised by a particular finesse, and in the valley areas the late ripening varieties such as Lagrein, Merlot, and Cabernet reach ideal maturity.

A perfect example of this was experienced by

an international panel of wine critics and experts at the Cortaccia Rosso event, an international comparison held during the Summit, featuring a series of mixed flights of red wines, made up of top scoring Bordeaux Grand Crus; Bolgheri wines such as Sassicaia and other top Tuscan international blends. These were intermingled with international Bordeaux-style blends from Cortaccia producers, including Cantina Cortaccia; Baron Widmann estate; Tiefenbrunner estate and Peter Dipoli estate. The aim was to show that these local Alto Adige estates from the area of Cortaccia could make as good as, or better, Bordeaux blends when judged in a blind tasting. The results did in fact show similar or better scores for the Cortaccia blends, proving the fact that the full potential of Alto Adige is still not recognized. With such positive results, however, Alto Adige wine producers can afford to be optimistic about the future. ♦