

## PROSECCO 'MORE EXPENSIVE TO CULTIVATE THAN CHAMPAGNE'



**Prosecco producer** Bottega SpA has claimed that there should not be a price gap between the tank method Italian sparkling wine and Champagne. Speaking at this year's Vinitaly,

company MD Sandro Bottega said the winery's goal was to "premiumise Prosecco", prompting him to ask why prices for the wine were "so much lower than those for Champagne?"

According to the company's analysis, Prosecco is actually "one of the rarest sparkling major wines in the world", Bottega said.

While this may sound odd, given that Prosecco DOC produces around 616 million bottles per annum and Prosecco D.O.C.G. about 90m bottles, Bottega suggested that, if you look at the size of the production zone, Prosecco comes from a smaller area (if you separate the DOC and D.O.C.G.). He said: "Eight thousand hectares are cultivated for Prosecco Superiore, and 28,000ha for Prosecco DOC, whereas 34,000ha are cultivated in Champagne and 32,000ha for Cava.

"It is much more expensive to cultivate in Prosecco than in Champagne, because the hills are very steep," he added.

Regarding the quality of the fruit, Bottega said: "The major parameters of alcohol, sugar, dry extract, acidity, etc, are the same between grapes from Prosecco and Champagne."

As for once the wine is made, Bottega argued that "the cost of materials – the bottle, the cork – is the same".

## SICILY EN PRIMEUR 2024: 'BRIGHTNESS AND RESILIENCE'



**The excitement** among Sicilian producers is palpable in spite of 2023 having been a particularly challenging vintage.

After the extreme drought that marked 2022, heavy rainfall during springtime was the main problem producers had to face in the 2023 growing season. This led to peronospora (downy mildew) outbreaks and caused a 31% decrease in total volumes.

But Sicily is large and heterogeneous, and local variations were even more notable in this vintage than in the past. For example, southeastern Sicily recorded only 33 rainy days during the growing season, compared to 67 days in Etna.

A hot spell at the end of July saved the harvest by boosting the ripening process. Temperatures in August were just above average, while September and October were the hottest on

record (although diurnal swings ensured the retention of good acidity, especially in cooler or higher-altitude areas).

The white wines from 2023 that have already hit the market are especially expressive and approachable, with ripe acidity, lifted aromatics, and above-average concentration due to the intense sunshine in September and October, as well as lower yields than usual.

Red grapes suffered the most, with Nerello Mascalese on Etna recording declines in yields in excess of 90%. Many wineries on the volcano simply decided not to produce any red wine from this vintage.

Nero d'Avola is equally susceptible to rot, and in wetter areas it also registered significant drops in production. Vittoria and Noto, in the southeast of the island, are an exception because of their drier and warmer climate.

The new releases from Sicily speak of a shift towards a lighter, brighter style, with almost no trace of the big, creamy blockbusters of the late 1990s. The rising success of medium-bodied Etna wines has spearheaded a change in the perception of Sicilian wine, and caused a stylistic shift in most winegrowing areas on the island.