



CUSTOZA

CONSORZIO di TUTELA del
VINO CUSTOZA DOC

*The Consortium for the Protection of
Custoza DOC wine*

Press Kit



Custoza is a land of wine.

But it is also a land of splendid scenery, rich history and priceless cultural heritage. The view from the hilltops of Custoza, the small hamlet of Sommacampagna that lends its name to the DOC, is smooth and gentle, a wonderful showcase of how the hands of man and tradition have been able to interact with the environment and the primordial heritage of its hills.

Looking east you can see Verona, while the Prealps emerge up north. The luminous Lake Garda is nearby and treats the area with its temperate breezes, and on clear days it is not uncommon to see Mantua and the Apennines in the distance.

This is an extraordinary land, trodden by history, just outside of great and elegant cities but at the same time set in a tranquil, bucolic scene, rich in authenticity and love for tradition, among vineyards, ancient rural courtyards and the places of the Italian Risorgimento.

The Custoza DOC wine is a wonderful display of these places: its producers know how to express them wisely, led by passion and gratitude.

The first evidence on the domestication of vines in the current production area of the Custoza DOC are documented by the discovery of *Vitis Silvestris* grape seeds from the pile-dwelling period in the Pacengo and Peschiera area, while the first testimony of vine cultivation dates back to Roman times.

Starting from ninth century and then throughout the Middle Ages, there is abundant documentation on the cultivation of vines in the area between Pastrengo and Sommacampagna in particular.

In the twentieth century Custoza was included among the best wine areas in the western portion of the province of Verona in a 1939 study conducted by the Experimental Viticulture and Oenology Station of Conegliano, demonstrating the oenological vocation of the area.

THE CONSORZIO DI TUTELA

The Consortium for the Protection of Custoza was born in 1972 in order to safeguard and promote the heritage of this splendid vine-growing area, whose historical boundaries have not changed since 1971, the year the DOC was founded – this year it will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary.



The presidency is held by Roberta Bricolo, sided by the vice-presidents Marica Bonomo and Luca Oliosi.

The Consortium conducts its activities with a young board of directors and passionate producers, who continue the path of protection of the designation of origin, inspired by the principles of sustainability and territorial identity and giving a strong and dynamic impulse to the promotion of Custoza DOC wine, with the goal of making the great qualitative expressions of this wine known all around Italy and the world.

In virtue of the high share of representativeness of the Consortium – standing at about 90% in respect to the total of the designation - it has obtained the *erga omnes* recognition.

THE DOC: FIFTY YEARS OF CUSTOZA

The controlled designation of origin for Custoza was recognized in 1971 thanks to the demonstration by the area's producers and prominent personalities of the superiority of the wines produced here; it was the producers themselves who were committed to obtaining the DOC and then founded the Consortium the following year.

That of 2021 was an important anniversary that came in a complex year, which the producers coped with all their commitment and determination. Indeed, the 50th anniversary of the denomination was an opportunity to restart and make Custoza known and appreciated both in Italy and abroad. National and international masterclasses, in-person and digital, held with high-profile professionals who collaborated with the Consortium tasting wines and interpreting the potential of our territory, reached operators and media in Italy, England, the U.S., Canada, Europe and Japan, helping to spread its quality and uniqueness. Equal attention was given to educational-training activities dedicated to Italian sommellerie, with in-person masterclasses organized in synergy with AIS Milano and AIS Veneto, ONAV Nazionale and FIS.

Throughout 2023, there will be no lack of training opportunities aimed at producers on the subject of wine tourism, at hotel schools and tourism colleges and at hospitality and catering operators; all to promote the territory and the designation.

From December 2022, an amendment to the production regulations forbids, on the label as in any other form of communication, the use of the name 'Bianco di Custoza'. A process that began some time ago, which first saw 'Custoza' take its place alongside the original 1971 designation:

shorter, immediate and recognisable, above all because of its strong connection with Italian history, it exalts the distinct territoriality of these wines born at the gateway to Verona.

TERRITORY AND CLIMATE

The production area of Custoza DOC is named after Custoza, a historic town in the Municipality of Sommacampagna famous for being the battleground of two crucial events during the wars of the Italian Risorgimento. It is located in the south-western part of the Garda morainic amphitheatre, a strip of hills originating from glacial deposits that occurred in the Pleistocene and developed between the city of Verona and Lake Garda. The southwestern border of the production area is drawn by the river Mincio.

The designation includes nine municipalities: Sommacampagna, Villafranca di Verona, Valeggio sul Mincio, Peschiera del Garda, Castelnuovo Veronese, Sona, Bussolengo, Pastrengo, Lazise.

The morainic landscape that characterizes the production area of the Custoza DOC is marked by a dense series of elongated hills, arranged in a concentric and predominantly gentle pattern, with gradients generally between 50 and 100 meters. These hills, made up of deposits left by the glaciers that formed the nearby Lake Garda, have extremely varied and variable soils, rich in skeleton, interspersed with large gravel plains and typical deposits of smooth rocks.

The mixture of clay and gravel guarantees drainage and avoids water stagnation; the predominantly calcareous composition of the soil gives the grapes all their typical mineral component and characterizes the wines with unmistakable sapidity.

The climate of the Custoza doc area is characterized by hot but not sultry summers and relatively cold winters, tempered by the proximity to Lake Garda, which creates a microclimate favorable not only to the cultivation of the vine, but also to the growth of the olive tree and the cypress, both typical presences in the environmental profile of the area.

The unique microclimate is responsible for many of the unmistakable peculiarities of Custoza wine. The temperature variations allow a complete ripening of the grapes, bringing the acidity values to constant levels, an essential feature for the typical freshness and delicious aromas of Custoza DOC.

The average temperatures in the winter are 4/5 degrees centigrade above those of the neighbouring flats of the Po valley and the average annual temperature range is reduced to only 21.5 degrees centigrade, with an average annual temperature of about 15 degrees centigrade.

The rainfall is mostly distributed in the seasons of autumn and spring.

ZONING

Wine is the result of the interaction between the environment, grape variety and human expertise. The exploration and scientific study of the nature and morphology of the land, as well as the effects of the climate, is a prerequisite in the production of great wines; that's why the Consortium has promoted the zoning of the Custoza region, carried out by the group headed by Professor Attilio Scienza of the University of Milan. The research shows that the Custoza region can be differentiated into three distinct districts, classified according to the origin of the soils: the morainic amphitheatres connected to the glacial apparatus of Alto Adige, the pre-Wurmian and Wurm alluvial plain (fourth glaciation of the Pleistocene, 110 to 12,000 years ago) and the alluvial plain dating back to the following period (11,000 years ago on).

The soils of Custoza are predominantly calcareous, clay-calcareous, gravel-calcareous and gravel-sandy, but the individual districts present some differences. The morainic amphitheatres connected to the Alto Adige glacial apparatus are the most ancient and are characterized by very different soils, from undifferentiated to well differentiated, with sandy loam substrate textures. They are also characterized by a peculiar morphology, alternating natural and anthropogenic terraces.

The second district, the pre-Wurmian alluvial plain, has a limited extension of deep, red soils, with gravel and pebble deposits.

The more recent soils are those of the pleni-tardiglacial Wurm alluvial plain, are characterized by a great uniformity of mainly gravelled and sandy soils.

VITICULTURE

The vineyard and the environment are the producers' greatest asset.

This is why, since the 1980s, viticulture in the Custoza production area has undergone a radical conversion both in terms of cultivation methods and agronomic practices, which have been able to enhance the peculiarities of the typical Custoza vines.

For over thirty years, the Consortium has been promoting the adoption of integrated pest management techniques that favour organic and environmentally sustainable cultivation methods. With a view to producing a Custoza that is sustainable for both the environment and people, mechanical methods of weed control have been preferred, gradually abandoning chemical weed killers. All this is done to protect the land, a recognised intrinsic value of the denomination.

The gradual increase in technical skills and the experience acquired over time have enabled winegrowers to identify and implement the most suitable processes for obtaining high quality grapes and to know how to seize the ideal moment for harvesting, thus enhancing those typical elements that derive from the interaction between vines, hilly soils and microclimate.

Less productive biotypes with small berries, rich in sugars and aromas, resistant to disease, that can be harvested perfectly ripe and thus able to impart noble substances and good longevity to the future Custoza - and especially to the future 'Superiore' - are increasingly sought after.

THE WINE

Just as in the vineyard, great care is also taken in the cellar, where the grapes express through the wines all their splendid potential for fragrance and structure.

The *savoir faire* of the producers allows the Custoza blend to enhance the distinctive characters of the native grape varieties that make it up, resulting in a wine with a delicate, floral and fruity bouquet with slightly aromatic hints. The result is therefore a Custoza marked by a strong territorial connotation, easily recognizable by its freshness and its drinkability and flavor.

Custoza DOC also has considerable longevity potential and lends itself to good aging: with time, in fact, the mineral characters typical of the morainic soils that distinguish the production area emerge.

Procedural and DOC guidelines

Custoza DOC can only be produced from grapes from vineyards on the hills and foothills of the municipalities of Sommacampagna, Villafranca di Verona, Valeggio sul Mincio, Peschiera del Garda, Lazise, Castelnuovo del Garda, Pastrengo, Bussolengo and Sona.

The uniqueness of Custoza lies in the harmonic combination of different grape varieties.

According to the guidelines, Custoza DOC is obtained from at least 70% of the three symbolic local grapes: Garganega, first mentioned in 1495 by De Crescenzi, Trebbianello (a local biotype of Friulian Tocai, present in Veneto and Friuli as early as the eighteenth century and corresponding to the French Sauvignonasse) and Bianca Fernanda (a local clone of Cortese) along with Trebbiano, historically grown in our hills.

The production regulations also allow the possibility of using other varieties up to a total of 30%, such as Malvasia, Riesling (Riesling italico and/or Riesling Renano), Pinot Bianco, Chardonnay and Incrocio Manzoni 6.013.

The uniquely vast array of grapes used in the Custoza region is a result of the cultural history of these lands. The municipalities of the designation used to be known for livestock breeding and trade; the merchants who stopped here often used grafted vines originating from their places of origin as barter goods. It is precisely these exchanges that are responsible for the genetic peculiarity and heterogeneity of Custoza.

The peculiarity of the Custoza DOC blend is its strength: the different varieties complement each other, especially in difficult years, and enrich the wine with complexity, as well as allowing a more varied and multifaceted expression of the personality of the producers.

The Custoza production is around 130 quintals/ha for the Custoza DOC and 120 quintals/ha for the Superiore. The wines included in the DOC are Custoza, Custoza Riserva, Custoza Superiore, Custoza Spumante and Custoza Passito.

Custoza DOC shows a straw-yellow colour, sometimes with green or golden reflections. On the nose the scents are delicately fruity (white and crunchy yellow fruit) and floral, slightly aromatic, with very subtle hints of meadow herbs and, sometimes, of saffron; in evolved Custozas the spicy scents and ripe fruity notes increase. The mouth is savory, delicately soft, with consistent body, pleasantly almondy in the end, recalling the olfactory notes.

THE RICHNESS OF THE TERRITORY

An area to experience all year round

The Custoza DOC production area is located in a splendid territory that combines natural beauty with a rich heritage of history, culture and tradition.

A fortunate combination between hills and a climate mitigated by the proximity of Lake Garda, the Custoza wine territory is also characterised by the beauty of its natural views. It is the ideal place for long solitary walks, or for a bike ride, between the rows of those vines that eventually find their truest expression in the cellar. Splendid itineraries are easily accessible by foot, bicycle (or e-bike) and horseback, leading to the discovery of the Lands of Custoza and its appellation, the path of Tamburino Sardo (a character from the Italian Risorgimento whose heroic story, narrated by De Amicis in the book *Cuore*, is strongly linked to these places) or the historic sites of the Risorgimento battles of 1848 and 1866, including the evocative Ossuary of Custoza.

The Lands of Custoza are the protagonists of the Consorzio's latest institutional video, curated by young videomaker Matteo Archondis. Through the images that flow through vineyards and nature trails, crossing those woods, streams and hills that during Risorgimento served as a backdrop to



the history of Italy, the director conveys a true emotional guide to these lands, made up of colours, flavours and landscapes.

There is no shortage of nature itineraries in the vicinity either: the Custoza area is a stone's throw from numerous splendid natural parks such as the Mincio Park and Parco Giardino Sigurtà.

The Custoza area is also perfect for families, as they can combine a food and wine visit for the grown-ups with exciting experiences for children in the many amusement parks in the area, including not only Gardaland and CanevaWorld, but also the Jungle Adventure Park for the more adventurous, or Natura Viva Fauna Park for animal lovers.

The consortium's wineries, increasingly run by enthusiastic young people, are now all open to wine tourism and Rural Tourism: in addition to traditional tastings, with which they involve guests in discovering the wines of the area, they also offer picnics, vineyard tastings, yoga lessons, art sessions and sensory experiences.

Custoza is also ideally located for those who love to visit wonderful cities: just a few kilometres away is Verona, the city of love, art and history, and Mantua, a place of unique charm, as well as the lakeside towns of Lake Garda - Lazise with its small port, Peschiera with its Rocca and many others.

Along the Mincio River, the medieval village of Borghetto sul Mincio and its Visconti bridge are not to be missed.

The gastronomic delights are no less impressive: famous - and a perfect match for Custoza DOC - is the *tortellino di Valeggio sul Mincio*, a delicious speciality nicknamed *Nodo d'Amore* (Love Knot), from the town of the same name that hosts, once a year, the *Festa del Nodo d'Amore*, an evocative open-air dinner on the Visconti Bridge, and *Tortellini e Dintorni*, a suggestive town festival entirely dedicated to discovering the Valeggio area and the Garda hinterland.

Gastronomy enthusiasts must also sample other local specialities, including - to name but a few - the typical *broccoletto di Custoza*, a Slow Food presidium, to which the restaurants of Custoza dedicate exclusive dinners in winter, as well as *Garda extra virgin olive oil PDO*, the *sfogliatine* (puff pastries) di Villafranca, *Sona-style veal cheeks braised in Custoza*, *Santa Lucia ai Monti* grilled chicken, *tastasàl* rice and the many delicious local cheeses.

THE NUMBERS OF CUSTOZA

Registered hectares of vineyards: 1400
Production (average bottles per year): 11.000.000
Number of wineries: 72
Number of bottling companies: 110
Number of winegrowers: 480