

CANTINA VALPOLICELLA NEGRAR

ALLE ORIGINI DELL'AMARONE



The estate



TODAY

Cantina Valpolicella Negrar is a co-operative located just a few kilometres from Verona, in the heart of Valpolicella classico, a landscape historically devoted to viticulture and wine making.

Since 1933, the story has been one of people dedicated to the production of quality wines, a true and sincere expression of the soil from which they originated.

This aim is made possible by the wealth of land and human resources of the Cantina, covering 700 hectares of vineyards spread across the diverse zones of Valpolicella – above all on hillsides – cultivated by our 230 members, and monitored daily by the winery's own professional team.

There are three factors in the Cantina's approach: **control of the entire production process** (from field to glass), **shared experience** between growers and our team, and our **research programme**. This allows us to innovate and to invest in projects that rediscovered local winemaking traditions, giving the wines unique local characteristics; yet expressed through a modern approach.

Our current production exceeds 7 million bottles per year, from around 9,000 tonnes of grapes on average. Our capacity is 160,000 hectolitres and our range includes the renowned local wines – Amarone, Recioto, Ripasso, Valpolicella Classico – and from other DOCs in the Veneto region, under the labels *Cantina di Negrar*, *Le Preare* and *Domini Veneti*, this last the highest expression of quality from Cantina Valpolicella Negrar as all the wines come from the best vineyard locations.

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THE PAST

Cantina Sociale Valpolicella was founded in 1933, a troubled time for the world economically and politically, as well as an unhappy period for vine growing. The Phylloxera louse had wreaked devastation on the grapevines of the region, and shortage of cereal crops had led to planting of wheat instead of the vines preferred in Valpolicella.

In those unstable times, six gentlemen who believed in the value of their own land, found themselves threatened by a group of cunning industrialists and speculators who bought up plots of land to produce so-called Valpolicella using mostly imported grapes, so they decided to act together.

These six small producers made good choices from the beginning by renting large cellars at Villa Novare and bottling the wines directly, and successes did not take long to arrive, with awards at international exhibitions in Brussels and Siena in 1935.

The major success of the era was the **birth of Amarone**, often presented as a chance discovery, but in reality an inspired idea about how to respond to the changing styles of the wines of Valpolicella and the tastes of its admirers.

After the Second World War the winery moved on a temporary basis to San Vito di Negrar and then in 1957, it merged with another local co-operative (*Cantina Produttori della Valpolicella*), moving to its current location near the town of Negrar. It was then reconstituted with 80 members, consolidating its position among the best in the new reality of the Italian wine world.

During the '60s and '70s the Cantina continued to expand its markets but in 1989 decided to focus once again on quality, launching a new range called **Domini Veneti** named to recall the Venetian origins of the vineyards. The aim was to offer restaurants wines of similar quality to those from private wineries that at the time were benchmarks. This started a journey which has proved very successful; in 2004 our Recioto Vigneti di Moron - Domini Veneti 2001 was the first Recioto ever from a cooperative winery to win the coveted top rating of "Tre Bicchieri" in the Gambero Rosso Guide.

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THE VINEYARDS

Cantina Valpolicella Negrar manages **700 hectares of vineyards**, all located in the hills of the Valpolicella Classico, north-west of Verona, overseen constantly by viticulturalist Claudio Oliboni.

The **traditional pergola** is most commonly used, with 2500/3000 per hectare and the vines have an average age of about 20 years. In new vineyards, especially on flatter sites, we've adopted various different training methods, designed to allow increased planting density.

The cultivation of the vineyard follows utmost **respect for nature**, using integrated pest management and trying to reduce the number of treatments.

The **harvest is entirely by hand**, with multiple selections, keeping the grapes from each vineyard separate to allow individual vinifications that preserve and highlight the characteristics of the grapes from different terroirs.

PRODUCTION

The winery itself is at our head office and is set up to control the complete production process, from arrival of the grapes through to vinification, maturation and bottling always paying particular attention to every fine detail. For bottling the winery has a state of the art bottling line, with a capacity of up to 7,000 bottles per hour.

There is storage capacity for around 160,000 hl and the whole facility is equipped with the latest technology included automated pneumatic presses for gentle pressing and various methods of vinification such as traditional, rotary and pistons systems for cap management. All fermentations

are carried out in stainless steel.

For maturation, the period varies with the style of wine – one year for Ripasso and two for Amarone – using stainless steel tanks and oak casks, mainly large. The storage capacity in barrel is around 13,000 hl though this will increase with completion of our new underground cellar, designed for ageing wine in tank and casks.

RESEARCH

Technical innovation has long been considered by Cantina Valpolicella Negrar to be a valuable tool for improving the quality of their production; on one hand allowing true expression of the values of the area, while on the other hand moving with changing consumer tastes. Thus, from the beginning the Cantina has always used the most advanced technical equipment.

In the same vein, for some years the winery has also decided to focus on research, through its own laboratory and in partnership with the Faculty of Viticulture and Oenology at University of Verona, along with the CRA of Conegliano and the viticultural research centre at St. Floriano. The research is not an end in itself but has the aim of increasing our understanding of the still largely undiscovered potential of Valpolicella and identifying ways to use these results in our wine production. Ongoing projects involve in-depth studies of the area and rediscovery of old traditional grape varieties and winemaking techniques, combining the long experience and work of our winegrower members with the acquired knowledge of our viticulturalist and technical team.

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Project for the reintroduction traditional varieties

This ongoing project began several years ago and aims to rescue long forgotten, often nameless, vines in plots of land inherited from a previous generation of viticulture. The research is made possible because of the large and diverse heritage of the area where Cantina Valpolicella Negrar is based, managed by its own growers following the daily routines of viticulture. Thanks to this synergy between experience in the field and professionalism, the Cantina benefits from a shared knowledge that increases day by day, and allows the scientific and technical identification of the hidden potential of Valpolicella's wines. The project for restoration of old varieties is just one example: a vine showing particularly interesting differences is selected and monitored, then analyzed at the winery to try and uncover its identity. The result is sometimes a genuine discovery, as in the case of *Spigamonti*, a grape variety found by a wine grower in his locality, and since 2013 included in the national register of red wine grapes. The long-term goal of this project is the identification of rare and forgotten traditional varieties, which bring with them unique and unparalleled values from the land, and to include them among the local grape varieties permitted under the recently updated DOCG regulations.

Selecting the areas of production

This project, undertaken by the Cantina over several years, involves in the first instance, analysis of fresh grapes produced from several selected vineyards, over the course of three consecutive years. During this period we evaluate and compare various parameters, measured all the way from the vineyard through to vinification (we do micro-vinifications in collaboration with the Viticultural Research Centre in Verona). At the end of the three year period, **our techni-**

cal director, Daniele Accordini, together with the staff in our laboratory, classify the vineyards into 3 quality categories, identifying as *cru* those most suited to the production of grapes for "appassimento" and production of Amarone. The following year the grapes from these vineyards will be kept aside and vinified separately.

Project Verjago

The winemaking project with the Valpolicella DOC Classico Superiore Verjago was developed in 2004. The objective was to give value back to the image of Valpolicella, sandwiched as it was between Amarone and Valpolicella Ripasso. To do this, we thought of a **super-Valpolicella**, a wine made from grapes carefully selected from the best hillside sites, harvested into crates of no more than 10 kg and left to dry for just 40 days until November. This gentle drying and shrivelling of the berries, and the use of large barrels for maturation, enhances the characteristics typical of Valpolicella, yet preserves the original aromas and flavours of the fruit.

Project Amarone Espressioni

This project, begun a few years ago, leads to the understanding of how different terroirs contribute to the character of Amarone. It monitors grapes destined for drying or *appassimento*, obtained from vineyards in 5 different sub-regions of Valpolicella Classico (Villa in the municipality of Negrar, San Rocco in the municipality of Marano V.la, Mazzurega in Fumane, Monte in municipality of Sant'Ambrogio di V.la and Castelrotto within the hamlet of San Pietro in Cariano). The objective of this study is to show the 5 different expressions of the most representative wine of Valpolicella, a reflection of the varied microcosms that this area expresses so distinctively.