

Alto Adige whites

This northern region bordering Austria is Italy's most consistent for high-quality white wines, produced from a host of mainly Germanic grapes. Ian D'Agata reports

OVER THE PAST 30 years, the best white wines of Italy have been those of Alto Adige (with only those of Friuli-Venezia Giulia giving them a run for their money). And while things have improved, with all Italian wine regions now making world-class whites from at least one grape variety, it holds true that Alto Adige remains Italy's best source for high-quality white wine, in every vintage.

Alto Adige, also called Sud Tirol, was part of Austria until the end of World War I, so Germanic grape varieties rule here. Though you'll find Riesling grown elsewhere in Italy (it accounts for just 1.2% of Alto Adige production), Sylvaner (1.3%), Kerner (1.6%) and Grüner Veltliner (0.5%) grow only in Alto Adige – specifically the Valle Isarco zone (see box, right). Gewürztraminer (10.8%) and Müller-Thurgau (4.2%) along with Moscato Giallo (1.5%), are also grown elsewhere but are most well known as Alto Adige varieties. Other commonly planted grapes are the increasingly important Sauvignon Blanc (6.9%), Chardonnay (9.9%) and Pinot Grigio (11.7%), but it's Pinot Bianco (9.6%) that has always been Alto Adige's most important everyday white table wine. It is the same grape as Pinot Blanc, but in this part of Italy the German name, Weissburgunder, is also used.

Production area

Alto Adige's wine production zone is best viewed as running along the lines of a Y-shaped area, where the city of Bolzano sits at the crossroads. The arm running diagonally to the northeast towards the small city of Bressanone, corresponds to the valley of the Isarco river, called simply Valle Isarco (Eisackthaler in German), the home of Riesling, Grüner Veltliner, Müller-Thurgau and especially Sylvaner and Kerner.

The left arm, running northwest towards Merano, is the main viticultural and winemaking area for Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. In its further northern reaches, into the Val Venosta, it is dry and surprisingly warm, producing some of Alto Adige's fullest, richest and most savoury whites – the Rieslings and Pinot Biancos are especially prized.

The area just above Bolzano (around the town of Terlano) is characterised by unusual schistous soils and produces Italy's most ageworthy whites, while along the southern arm towards Trentino stellar Gewürztraminer, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Pinot Bianco are made. When planted at higher altitudes, there are some outstanding Müller-Thurgaus from here too.

Wine lovers will delight in the fact that Alto Adige's whites are remarkably food-friendly, given their high and lively acidity and pure, unadulterated fruit flavours – only a small percentage of the region's white wines are aged in new or small-barrel oak.

Ian D'Agata is a DWWA Regional co-Chair for Italy and author of the awarded Native Wine Grapes of Italy



Map: Maggie Nelson

Alto Adige whites: know your vintages

2014 Characterised by heavy rain, but the whites are perfumed, with higher acidity and lower alcohols than usual, making for highly successful wines that have turned out much better than anticipated. Drink or hold.

2013 Very good year with a long growing season and a later than usual harvest. Hail in Lower Atesina, towards the south and the border with Trentino. Drink or hold.

2012 Good vintage of low volumes due to

cold and rainy weather during flowering and excessive summer heat. Lower alcohol levels than those of 2011. Drink or hold.

2011 Hail reduced production volumes in parts of the region but summer heat made for fast sugar production in the grapes. Wines that are best drunk young.

2010 A vintage of extraordinary white wines, but prolonged drought in the summer reduced production volumes in part of the region. Drink or hold.

Alto Adige whites: the facts

Area There are eight DOC zones, which produce 98% of the region's wines: Alto Adige 4,088ha; Valle Isarco 329ha; Lago di Caldaro 327ha; Santa Maddalena 195ha; Terlano 178ha; Colline Meranesi 101ha; Val Venosta 42ha; Colli di Bolzano 2ha

Production 60% white,

40% red; about 1% of

Italy's wine production

Sales 33% exported; 67%

sold domestically

White grapes: 20 varieties are grown, including (from highest plantings): Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay, Pinot Bianco, Sauvignon Blanc, Müller-Thurgau, Kerner, Sylvaner, Moscato Giallo, Grüner Veltliner ➤

The results

The array of high-scoring wines tells the tale – Alto Adige is a fantastic source of Italian whites. But its producers must focus on the right varieties going forward, urged our tasters. Amy Wislocki reports

KERNER, PINOT BIANCO, Müller-Thurgau, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio. Even within the list of five Outstanding wines, we have six grape varieties. And there were more in this tasting: Riesling, Sylvaner, Gewürztraminer... a varietal fruit salad.

So which were the stars, and what do the wines have in common? ‘The whites of Alto Adige have a unique, high-altitude character – a wonderful fragrance, zesty acidity and steeliness,’ commented Michael Garner. ‘They’re not cheap, but they’re produced in small quantities and often in steeply sloping vineyards that are difficult to work. That is bound to be reflected in the price – and that’s okay, if the quality is there.’

Pinot Bianco (aka Weissburgunder) and Kerner stood out for Garner. ‘The best Pinot Biancos combined the high-altitude steeliness with a weight of fully ripe, peach and blossom fruit, giving it an unctuous mouthfeel. As for Kerner, it’s a lovely semi-aromatic variety with lovely juicy, zingy acidity and a concentrated fruit focus.’

Andrea Briccarello was similarly enchanted by the Pinot Bianco. ‘In the past I thought it was a bit bland, but today it was reborn for me – there were some shining examples, full of fruit, minerality and freshness. They’re

‘Kerner and Müller-Thurgau are the jewels in the crown of Alto Adige’

Andrea Briccarello

great food wines too.’ Briccarello explained that the Alto Adige style of Pinot Bianco tends to be more mineral and citrus than the Alsatian version, which is riper, more intense, and with an off-dry character. ‘I love the Kerners and Müller-Thurgau of Alto Adige too. These are the jewels in the crown of the region – a shame we only had one example of Müller-Thurgau today.’

‘Alto Adige makes the best Müller-Thurgau in the world,’ chimed in Ian D’Agata. ‘Its strength is in aromatic varieties. Gewürztraminer for sure is famous there, but in reality it’s Müller-Thurgau, Kerner and Sylvaner that the region does best. The Müller-Thurgau vines are very, very old; and the Sylvaners are up there with those from Baden and Franken in Germany.’

‘The problem with these three grapes is their image,’ lamented D’Agata – ‘they’re not seen as sexy, so we

The scores

95 wines tasted

0
Exceptional

4
Outstanding

45
Highly Recommended

43
Recommended

3
Commended

0
Fair

0
Poor

0
Faulty

didn’t get any Sylvaners entered (though it only represents 1.3% of production). Instead, producers are sending in Riesling and Grüner Veltliner, which is a joke. Producers never made Riesling in the past because they didn’t want to compete with Austria and Germany, so all the vines are young. The only reason they’re doing it now is because it’s fashionable and the importers are asking for it. It’s a travesty because they are uprooting old Sylvaner and Müller vines to make room for it.

‘Today we had 10 Grüners, just one Müller Thurgau and no Sylvaners. It tells you that the producers don’t know what they’re doing and need redirection. It’s not an easy sell, but we need people to try these wonderful wines.’

Briccarello pointed out that international varieties can help open doors, and so if it helps to generate interest in the other varities, then so be it. ‘But not if they’re uprooting the other varieties!’ exclaimed D’Agata.

When scanning the shelves, look out for the 2014 vintage, which was excellent for Italian whites, and 2013, another good year, advised D’Agata. The 2010s were also fantastic, if you can find them (it was a small crop). And don’t be afraid to age these wines either: ‘The great Alto Adige Pinot Biancos, for instance, have incredible ageing potential.’

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their latest-release Alto Adige dry, still whites. A maximum of two wines per producer was permitted.

Wines without a sub-zone listed (ie: Valle Isarco) are from the large Alto Adige DOC. For more, see ‘The Facts’, p95

Alto Adige whites

Outstanding 95–97pts



Cantina Valle Isarco, Aristos Kerner, Valle Isarco 2014 *Decanter* average score: 95/100pts
Individual judges’ scores: Andrea Briccarello 95 Ian D’Agata 95 Michael Garner 95

£13.95 Hawkshead Wines, Les Caves de Pyrène, Slurp

This is one of Italy’s best cooperatives with 130 members owning 140ha of vines and producing roughly 750,000 bottles a year. The Aristos line is characterised by wines made from lower yields and select vineyards. This Kerner is made from grapes grown at 700m-800m altitude on nutrient-poor, shallow topsoils and plenty of minerals such as quartz deeper down. It spends seven months on its lees and is unoaked.

Andrea Briccarello Ripe peach and apricot aromas. Very rich, intense and beautifully aromatic on the finish. Complex and seductive with lots of tropical fruit on the palate.

Ian D’Agata Hints of Muscat grapes on the nose, which is refined. White pepper, ripe citrus and sweet spices linger on the palate nicely. Very typically Kerner, with a hint of residual sweetness.

Michael Garner Racy and zesty nose: a fragrant leafy and floral mix. Full flavours of citrus peel and tart apples with interesting underlying bitterness. Excellent length and aroma.

Drink 2016-2020 Alcohol 14.5%



Nals Margreid, Penon Pinot Bianco 2014 95 AB 95 IDA 95 MG 95

£15 Cheers, Highbury Vintners, Noel Young, Woodwinters

Another of Italy’s top 10 cooperatives, the white wines of which are among Italy’s very best. Nals Margreid is a real Pinot Bianco specialist, as shown by this 2014 Penon, blessed with sneaky concentration and very refined aromas and flavours of white peach, pineapple and green apple. Grown at high altitudes in a sun-drenched Alpine area right above the town of Magré, Penon is made from small-berried, late-harvested Pinot Bianco grapes that give especially flavourful wines. Aged in stainless steel and large, used oak barrels.

AB Defined, almost overripe notes of peaches and nectarines. The palate is dry and full of bright, pure, fleshy white stone fruits and good concentration.

IDA Perfumed jasmine and rose water aromas with nectarine and white peach fruit on nose and palate. Juicy, vibrant and very pure, this is an archetypal Pinot Bianco. Well done!

MG Broad, fresh and nutty with aromas of ripe pear and beeswax. Full and ripe juicy fruit flavours plus notes of preserved lemon and tangerine. Great balance and impressive length.

Drink 2016-2022 Alc 13.5% ➤

The tasters’ verdicts

Andrea Briccarello



Briccarello is head sommelier at London’s Galvin La Chapelle. He was previously group sommelier and wine buyer for Corrigan’s Mayfair, Bentley’s Oyster Bar & Grill and Lindsay House, as well as a sommelier at Umu. He was born and raised in Piedmont and is a regular judge at the Decanter World Wine Awards.

Briccarello’s verdict

‘I was really looking forward to this Alto

Adige tasting since it is, in my opinion, one of the best areas for the production of top-quality whites in Italy.

‘I was impressed by the selection of varieties among the 95 wines submitted: they included some of my favourites, like Kerner and Pinot Bianco, as well as Grüner Veltliner, whose minerality and elegance was a pleasant surprise. As always the more international varieties like Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay were showing well.

‘There was a lot of individuality as well as typicity in the line-up, with very few wines not showing at their best. There were styles to suit all palates – from very aromatic Gewürztraminers to bone-dry Sauvignon Blancs. In particular, I loved the flintiness of the Sauvignons and tropical fruit notes of the Kerners. The oak, when used, was well integrated and balanced, allowing the fruit and varietal character to shine.

‘As expected, the results were excellent, the highlights being Müller-Thurgau, a grape almost forgotten outside Italy, plus an outstanding performance from the versatile, food-friendly Pinot Bianco.’

Ian D’Agata



D’Agata is a DWWA Regional co-Chair for Italy, who was named Italy’s best wine journalist by the Comitato Grandi Cru d’Italia in 2012. He is the award-winning author of The Ecco Guide to the Best Wines of Italy, and The Native Wine Grapes of Italy, plus the scientific advisor to Vinitaly International and director of the Vinitaly Academy. He also lectures for New York University’s Food Sciences Master’s programme.

D’Agata’s verdict

‘Outstanding tasting no matter how you look at it: precise, pure, very focused wines across the board.

‘The Sauvignon Blancs, a variety Alto Adige excels at, were very good but not especially outstanding, while the Pinot Biancos and Kerners were memorable. The lone Müller-Thurgau was also a standout and it’s shame that more producers didn’t send examples of this or Sylvaner. Alto Adige’s strength is its excellence with many different varieties, not just Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc – wines that consumers can find easily from any other winemaking country. That said, I’d like to have seen more depth and complexity from the Pinot Grigios and Sauvignon Blancs in this tasting.

‘No single sub-region stood out; no surprise really, as quality throughout Alto Adige is so high that you can pick a wine from just about any viticultural area and be happy with the result.’

Michael Garner



Garner has worked in the wine industry for more than 30 years, specialising in Italian wine for more than 25. He is the co-author of Barolo: Tar and Roses, is a regular Decanter contributor on Italian wine and has taught for the Wine & Spirit Education Trust.

Garner’s verdict

‘A fascinating tasting which proved why so many pundits hold Alto Adige

in the highest esteem for white wines. The overall standard was excellent, as the scores show: over half scored 90 points and above, and the lowest score was 85 – and for only three wines.

‘Single-varietal wines from grapes grown at high altitudes can result in tremendously racy acidity, wonderful fragrance and real vitality, and while more than a third of the whites we tasted were made from either Pinot Grigio or Chardonnay, the more ‘exotic’ varieties produced the most magical wines. The two which stood out were Pinot Bianco/Weissburgunder – surely one of the most underrated white wine grapes, and seen here in its purest form – and the similarly unsung Kerner.

There was sadly no Sylvaner, another neglected variety, and just one Müller-Thurgau, even though its plantings are more than three times higher than the trendier but (here) underperforming Riesling. These lesser-known, semi-aromatic varieties show Alto Adige at its best: there’s little room for the mundane in this spectacular region.’

Outstanding (continued) 95–97pts



St Michael-Eppan, Appius 2011 95 AB 95 IDA 95 MG 95
£88–£110 Eurowines, Harrods
This large co-op (more than 370ha farmed and two million bottles produced a year) has always been linked to some of Italy’s best whites, especially those in the Sanct Valentin line. But the co-op’s top wine is Appius, a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio (only in its second vintage) that undergoes partial malolactic fermentation and is aged in a mix of barriques and tonneaux. It boasts a magical, mouth-coating creaminess and lusciously intense aromas and flavours. Expensive but delicious.

AB Very intense, sophisticated nose showing lots of layered green notes like nettles and lime, combined with jasmine and lilies. The palate is dry with plenty of honey and pineapple characters. Lots of richness and complexity. Burgundy in disguise!

IDA Very inviting nose of rich, smooth ginger and fresh mint. Tropical fruits come through on the palate and finish.

MG Broad, ripe and floral nose with toasted coconut tones and a strong note of ginger and mint. Mid-weight palate with juicy freshness, a balance and long, aromatic finish.

Drink 2016–2024 **Alc** 14%



Tiefenbrunner, Feldmarschall von Fenner Müller-Thurgau 2013 95 AB 95 95 IDA 95 MG 95
£25 Armit
Feldmarschall has always been one of Italy’s greatest, most ageworthy white wines. It’s made from grapes grown on loamy-limestone soils in the Hofstatt vineyard at 1,000m – one of the country’s highest. The cool-climate and highly mineral soils account for this wine’s laser-like acidity and extremely refined aromas and flavours that are striking in their crystalline quality. It spends seven months on its lees and ages in a mix of concrete vats, large, old oak barrels and stainless steel tanks.

AB Very tropical notes – peaks of mango and pineapple. Very exotic palate packed with ripe fruits and balancing acidity.

IDA Intense lime, nutmeg and herbs combine with apple on the nose and palate. Juicy, penetrating and long with concentration and depth.

MG Intense floral-toned and oaky nose. Mint and leafy notes lie over peach and blossom aromas. Bright and lifted fruit flavours of green tea, mint and coriander. Great length and juicy freshness to finish.

Drink 2016–2022 **Alc** 13%

Highly Recommended 90–94pts



Markus Prackwieser Gump, Praesulis Weissburgunder 2014 94 AB 92 IDA 94 MG 95
N/A UK www.gumphof.it
Broad and fresh notes of pear and toasted hazelnut. Flowers, hints of passion fruit and grassy notes on the mid-palate. Long and lovely, precise and pure with concentration and poise. **Drink** 2016–2021 **Alc** 13.5%



Georg Mumelter, Griesbauerhof Weissburgunder 2014 92 AB 93 IDA 91 MG 92
N/A UK www.griesbauerhof.it
Broad and fresh with saline notes and toasty aromas of hazelnut, pear and citrus blossom. Intense, structured palate with great freshness and elegance. Finishes with hints of apple jelly and quince. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



Falkenstein, Weissburgunder, Val Venosta 2014 93 AB 93 IDA 92 MG 93
POA Dolce Vita Wines
Full and concentrated pear and tangerine zest aromas with blossom notes. Round and ripe juicy flavours backed up by lovely acidity. This is a serious wine that needs time in bottle to show all it’s got. **Drink** 2017–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



Meran Burggräfler, Weissburgunder, Tyrol 2014 92 AB 95 IDA 92 MG 90
POA Alliance
Complex nose of sweet spices, ginger and ripe melon. Rich and creamy palate with very good acid lift and spicy cut, allowing it to dance on the palate. Beautifully balanced with length and structure. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14%



Erste & Neue, Puntay Sauvignon 2013 92 AB 93 IDA 93 MG 90
£22.50 New Generation Wines
Big, ripe, grassy aromas with notes of baked apple and ginger. Palate is rich and opulent with lots of citrus notes like lime and confit lemon zest. Finishes long and with a hint of juniper. Refined with impeccable balance. **Drink** 2016–2021 **Alc** 14.5%



Peter Zemmer, Pinot Grigio 2014 92 AB 93 IDA 92 MG 90
N/A UK www.peterzemmer.com
Fresh nose of pear and candied citrus peel with white peach and sweet spices. On the palate the wine shows lots of minerality, sapidity and great freshness. Very complex and rich style. **Drink** 2016–2025 **Alc** 13.5% ➤

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Terlan, Vorberg Pinot Bianco Riserva 2013 92 AB 94 IDA 92 MG 90

£25.50 Astrum Wine Cellars
Archetypal Pinot Bianco aromas and flavours of apple and pear, with hints of white flowers and minerals. Honey notes on the palate followed by grapefruit acidity and lemon zest on the finish. A knockout example! **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14%



Baron Widmann, Gewürztraminer 2013 91 AB 93 IDA 88 MG 92

N/A UK www.baron-widmann.it
Fragrant nose of lemon peel and dried mango. Decent concentration of candied lemon fruit flavours and ripe rose perfume. Lots of passion fruit and roses on palate with a long and elegant finish. **Drink** 2016–2018 **Alc** 15%



Cantina Tramin, Unterebner Pinot Grigio 2014 91 AB 91 IDA 90 MG 91

POA Hallgarten Druitt
Exotic notes of mango and lychee with subtle hints of roses and passion fruit. Big, ripe and full with juicy fruit flavours backed up by buttery oak; a luxurious style. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Cantina Valle Isarco, Aristos Pinot Grigio, Valle Isarco 2014 91 AB 92 IDA 92 MG 90

N/A UK www.cantinavalleisarco.it
Pure, penetrating pear jelly, apple compote and sweet spices on nose and palate. Thick rich and creamy but with lovely floral lift and buoyant acidity keep it light and lively. Herbal notes to finish. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 14%



Girilan, Plattenriegl Pinot Bianco 2014 91 AB 91 IDA 91 MG 90

£11.81 Enoteca Hukin, Vinum Terra
Enticing nose of apple, pear and bay leaf, then a juicy, suave palate with mouthfilling texture and pretty, lingering saffron and nectarine flavours. Sneaky concentration and great balance and length. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%



J Hofstätter, Kolbenhof Gewürztraminer 2014 91 AB 93 IDA 91 MG 90

£26.99 Berkmann, Selfridges
Broad floral and fruit perfume. Creamy texture of tropical fruit flavours with plenty of peppery lift. Well balanced and sophisticated with a blossom finish. **Drink** 2016–2018 **Alc** 14%



Kaltern, Carned Kerner 2014 91 AB 89 IDA 92 MG 91

£15 Ellis of Richmond
Fresh, fragrant, green and leafy with piercing, floral notes. Lively and zingy citrus peel flavours with fresh acidity and impressive length, finishing with hints of chamomile. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Kellerei Bozen-Cantina Bolzano, Chardonnay Riserva 2012 91 AB 93 IDA 89 MG 90

POA Mondial Wine
Ripe, buttery and oaky melon aromas with green, herbal notes. Very crisp and dry on the palate showing lots of fresh-cut nectarines and pears. Highly savoury with herbal nuances and perfect acidity. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



Köfererhof, Gewürztraminer, Valle Isarco 2014 91 AB 92 IDA 90 MG 90

N/A UK www.marcdegrazia.com
Very perfumed, elegant nose, followed by a well-balanced palate that exhibits lots of ripe tropical fruits, especially pineapple. Full and unctuous with fully mature fruit flavours and good length. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14%



Köfererhof, Kerner, Valle Isarco 2014 91 AB 93 IDA 91 MG 90

N/A UK www.marcdegrazia.com
Nutty and leafy aromas with impressive floral freshness. Rich and tactile on the palate – very satisfying and true to the variety. Plenty of personality and charm with hints of spices and zingy citrus on the finish. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 14%



Kurtatsch Cortaccia, Hofstatt Pinot Bianco 2014 91 AB 93 IDA 91 MG 90

£15.80 Mille Gusti
Quite fresh and full with notes of hay and dried flowers over baked apple aromas. A lovely, perfumed Pinot Bianco that lingers long on the aftertaste. Very spicy, mineral and almost saline. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Kurtatsch Cortaccia, Kofl Sauvignon 2014 91 AB 93 IDA 90 MG 90

£18.30 Mille Gusti
Vibrant and exciting aromas of wild fruits, lilies and ripe melon followed by tangerine and chamomile. Fine, focused, juicy green fruit flavours with good balancing acidity. Lively finish with impressive length. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Meran Burggräfler, Mervin Sauvignon 2014 91 AB 90 IDA 91 MG 93

POA Alliance
Juicy and suave with real depth to the orchard and white stone fruit aromas and flavours. Balanced acidity with plenty of power on the finish. Well-integrated oak with good length. This really grows on you, sip after sip. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



Stroblhof, Strahler Weissburgunder 2014 91 AB 91 IDA 91 MG 90

£18.70 Sardinia Wine
Loads of melon, nectarine and white flower aromas, leading to suave flavours of stone fruit, beeswax and quince. Intense and fresh palate supported by well-balanced acidity. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Terlan, Nova Domus Riserva, Terlano 2013 91 AB 93 IDA 90 MG 90

£35.50 Astrum Wine Cellars
Pear blossom and russet apple aromas plus notes of honeysuckle and cardamom. Very intense, almost overripe melon, pineapple, and nectarine fruit. Has lovely balance with a tannic bite on the suave finish. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14.5%



Weingut Niklas, Weissburgunder 2014 91 AB 93 IDA 89 MG 90

N/A UK www.niklaserhof.it
Broad and nutty with notes of beeswax and conference pear. Great freshness and acidity on the palate: plenty of freshly cut nectarine and melon and lots of complexity and intensity on the finish. Improves with aeration. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13%



Abbazia di Novacella, Praepositus Grüner Veltliner, Valle Isarco 2013 90 AB 90 IDA 89 MG 90

N/A UK www.abbazianovacella.it
Hints of tropical fruit, and complex mineral and citrus notes. An intense and full-bodied Grüner with whiffs of pepper and lemon confit. Full of energy and could easily improve with time. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13%



Castel Sallegg, Pratum Terlaner Weissburgunder 2013 90 AB 91 IDA 89 MG 89

N/A UK www.castelsallegg.it
Mineral nose with white stone fruits shining through. Flavours of pear, baked apple and cardamom plus buttery lemon fruit and a flash of vanilla making for a complex and fresh finish. **Drink** 2016–2018 **Alc** 13.5%



Castelfeder, Burgum Novum Chardonnay Riserva 2012 90 AB 90 IDA 90 MG 90

£23.95–£29.50 (2011) Hennings Wine, The Wine Circle
Fresh, fragrant citrus peel and pineapple aromas with buttery oak. The palate is full of floral and and honey notes and is well balanced and elegant in style with a zingy, acidic lift. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 14%



Colterenzio, Thurner Pinot Bianco 2014 90 AB 90 IDA 91 MG 90

£14 Great Western Wine, Hawkshead Wines, Noel Young, Slurp, Whalley Wine Shop
Crisp apple and pear aromas with floral and white stone fruit notes. Fresh and balanced palate with juicy and nutty flavours and fragrant lemony notes. Zippy acidity with great intensity of fruit – absolutely delicious. **Drink** 2016–2018 **Alc** 13%



Colterenzio, Lafóa Sauvignon 2014 90 AB 90 IDA 90 MG 90

£28–£29 Carruthers & Kent, Great Western Wine, Hailsham Cellars, Hawkshead Wines, Slurp
Nutty and complex nose of white stone fruit and minerals. Very juicy and bright gingery plum and apricot flavours. Good supportive use of oak, with some development on the finish. **Drink** 2016–2019 **Alc** 13.5%



Falkenstein, Riesling, Val Venosta 2013 90 AB 93 IDA 89 MG 88

£16.95 (2011) Dolce Vita Wines, Miles Better Wines
Waxy and full nose of good breadth and freshness. The lime and pineapple palate has laser-like acidity. Classic textbook Riesling with plenty of minerality and great sapidity. **Drink** 2016–2018 **Alc** 13%



Franz Gojer, Weissburgunder, Karneid 2014 90 AB 92 IDA 89 MG 88

N/A UK www.gojer.it
Plenty of character on the nose, showing intense melon and guava notes. Very ripe, exotic fruit flavours plus fresh, minty pear and apple fruit. Long, with balsamic oak nuances on the finish. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14%



Franz Haas, Pinot Grigio 2014 90 AB 90 IDA 91 MG 89

£14.95–£15.99 Drinkmonger, Field & Fawcett, Fortnum & Mason, Lockett Bros, Slurp, The Wine Reserve
Ripe apple, pear, almond paste, lime peel and minerals on the tactile palate and enticing nose. This has a spicy nuanced finish of decent length; shows great typicity. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5% ➤

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Ignaz Niedrist, Weissburgunder, Terlano 2014 90 AB 89 IDA 87 MG 93
£19.50 Astrum Wine Cellars
Slightly subdued at first, then richer and brighter with saline and herbal elements dominating the fruit aromas and flavours. Finishes with zingy and zesty acidity and perfumed ripe fruit flavours. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



Josef Weger, Maso delle Rose Traminer Aromatico 2013 90 AB 93 IDA 89 MG 88
N/A UK www.wegerhof.it
Broad and fresh nose with notes of honey, lychee and mint. Full ripe and round with mature flavours of juicy fruits and ginger; off-dry with an elegant, tropical finish. **Drink** 2016–2018 **Alc** 14%



Kaltern, Castel Giovanelli Sauvignon 2014 90 AB 90 IDA 90 MG 90
£10.65 Ellis of Richmond
Fresh, with lemon and lime notes nicely lifted by fresh floral notes and cooling mineral elements. Oak is used skilfully and is well integrated, leading to a long and very complex finish; a precise Sauvignon Blanc. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Kornell, Eich Weissburgunder 2014 90 AB 89 IDA 90 MG 90
N/A UK www.kornell.it
Ripe, with faint notes of preserved lemon and quince; shy but quite pretty. Full blossomy and peachy fruit flavours; really juicy. Balanced and long with a complex aftertaste. **Drink** 2016–2018 **Alc** 12.5%



Kornell, Oberberg Sauvignon Blanc 2014 90 AB 90 IDA 90 MG 90
N/A UK www.kornell.it
Fresh and broad with blossom fragrance, elderflower and gooseberry notes. Balanced palate with candied fruit flavours balanced by high acidity. Plenty of life and zest with developing fragrance to finish. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Muri-Gries, Abtei Muri 2014 90 AB 90 IDA 90 MG 91
N/A UK www.muri-gries.com
More weight than most with hints of cinnamon and nutmeg at the back. Ripe and full with juicy ripe fruit flavours tinged with saffron and citrus peel. Good length and concentration. Quite sophisticated. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13%



Pacherhof, Grüner Veltliner, Valle Isarco 2014 90 AB 92 IDA 88 MG 89
£14.20 Le Langhe
Fragrant, green and leafy with intense gooseberry and nettle aromas. Palate is fresh vibrant with plenty of Chinese pear acidity and guava with white flowers and citrus finish. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Peter Sölva, De Silva Sauvignon 2014 90 AB 89 IDA 90 MG 92
N/A UK www.soelva.com
Big, dense and ripe, but with lovely lemony lift providing clarity and cut to the stone fruit and nectarine aromas and flavours. Sneaky concentration, and very precise with gooseberry fruit to finish. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



St Pauls Cantina, Passion Sauvignon 2014 90 AB 91 IDA 89 MG 90
N/A UK www.kellereistpauls.com
Very intense tropical notes on the nose with nectarine and ripe yellow plum. Ripe, round and balanced with carefully handled oak. Modern with lots of mango acidity on the finish. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14%



Tenutae Lageder, Löwengang Chardonnay 2012 90 AB 90 IDA 90 MG 89
£27.95 Bibendum PLB, Hawkshead, Slurp
Intense acacia honey and butterscotch notes. Full with fair intensity of ripe fruit flavours underpinned by crisp acidity, butterscotch and vanilla aromas to finish. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%



Thurnhof, Sauvignon 800 2014 90 AB 91 IDA 89 MG 89
N/A UK www.thurnhof.com
Harmonious nose showing intense ripe white fruits like melon and Chinese pear. The palate is crisp with plenty of greengage and grassy notes; well balanced and elegant. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13%



Tiefenbrunner, Linticlarus Chardonnay 2012 90 AB 92 IDA 89 MG 88
N/A UK www.tiefenbrunner.com
Elegant nose showing lots of dry flowers, cooked apples, and spices like cinnamon and nutmeg. Big, full and ripe style with toasty-toned yellow melon flavours; well balanced with lots of character. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 14%

Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



Viticoltori Alto Adige, San Pietro, Kristall Pinot Grigio 2014 90 AB 92 IDA 90 MG 88
N/A UK info@viticoltorialtoadige.com
Elegant nose with floral perfume shining through. Deep, rich and easygoing palate has full, ripe and round saline notes, simple but balanced fruit flavours and a long, savoury finish. **Drink** 2016–2019 **Alc** 13%



Weingut Niklas, Klaser Weissburgunder Riserva 2013 90 AB 90 IDA 91 MG 89
N/A UK www.niklaserhof.it
Fresh and long with very pure penetrating quince, apple and pear notes. Full ripe and juicy with zesty acidity and salinity on the long, generous finish. A vibrant and well-balanced wine. **Drink** 2016–2021 **Alc** 13.5%



Wilhelm Walch, Marat Pinot Grigio 2014 90 AB 90 IDA 90 MG 90
£14.50 Vini Italiani
Simple, savoury aromas and flavours of apple and herbs. Full-flavoured palate with notes of fresh bread, herb butter and citrus peel. Balanced with good aromatic development. **Drink** 2016–2019 **Alc** 13%

Recommended 86–89pts

Wine	Score	AB	IDA	MG	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Andrian, Movado Gewürztraminer 2014	89	92	87	88	Very elegant nose with perfect varietal aromas. Big, ripe and fleshy palate with juicy soft fruit flavours and a wild berry finish.	15%	2016–2018	£24	Astrum Wine Cellars
Cantina Tramin, Nussbaumer Gewürztraminer 2014	89	91	87	88	Broad and fragrant rose-toned nose. On the palate the wine is dry with nectarine notes and a tropical fruit cocktail finish. Well balanced and elegant.	14%	2016–2018	£24.95	Drinkmonger, Hallgarten Druitt
Castel Sallegg, Lotterbrunnen Gewürztraminer 2014	89	89	88	89	Fresh, precise and more refined style of Gewürztraminer with intriguing savoury nuances of cured meats. Well balanced and elegant.	14%	2016–2019	N/A UK	www.castelsallegg.it
Franz Gojer, Kerner, Karneid 2014	89	86	88	93	Heady, fragrant mint and gooseberry aromas. Lively palate with zippy acidity and pure, precise freshness of flavour. Lightly aromatic tangerine peel finish.	14.5%	2016–2018	N/A UK	www.gojer.it
Garliger, Grüner Veltliner, Valle Isarco 2013	89	89	88	90	Aromatic, almost off-dry style showing plenty of exotic fruit notes and ripe white peaches and nectarines. Full-flavoured and juicy with a hint of ginger.	13%	2016–2018	N/A UK	www.garliger.it
Georg Mumelter, Griesbauerhof Pinot Grigio 2014	89	88	89	89	Broad, ripe and fleshy notes of saffron and citrus. Flavours of candied peel and buttery lemons. Has plenty of minerality and a spicy finish.	13%	2016–2019	N/A UK	www.griesbauerhof.it
Girilan, Flora Sauvignon 2014	89	89	89	89	Oak aromas plus candied peel and quince. Slowly opens on the palate to reveal a showy, rich wine with herbal nuances and white peach flavours.	14%	2016–2020	N/A UK	www.girilan.it
Ignaz Niedrist, Sauvignon, Terlano 2013	89	92	89	86	Yuzu and tangerine on the nose with hints of dried flowers. A mouth-coating texture, and some tannins evident on the long, high-acid finish.	14%	2016–2020	£22.50	Astrum Wine Cellars
Kellerei Bozen–Cantina Bolzano, Kleinsteiner Gewürztraminer 2014	89	88	90	90	Fresh and floral-toned aromas of freesia and lemon sherbet. Light on its feet with ripe and balanced fruit flavours and a perfumed finish.	15%	2016–2020	£19.14 (2009)	Mondial Wine
Klaus Lentsch, Goldmuskateller 2014	89	90	88	88	Flowery and elegant nose of roses and lychees. Well balanced with rich, fleshy white stone fruits and an elegant, zippy finish.	12.5%	2016–2018	POA	FortyFive10
Markus Prackwieser Gump, Praesulus Sauvignon Blanc 2014	89	92	91	85	Rich, dense and ripe aromas and flavours of gooseberry, sage and rosemary. Very crisp and open on the palate with a nettle and asparagus finish.	14%	2016–2022	N/A UK	www.gumphof.it
Nals Margreid, Punggl Pinot Grigio 2014	89	88	90	89	Delicately herbal at first, then increasingly fruity with saline nuances to the yellow apple, pear and quince flavours. Juicy and fresh with good texture.	13.5%	2016–2020	£18	Woodwinters
Schreckbichl Colterenzio, Gewürztraminer 2014	89	89	90	88	Soft rose and lychee perfume – heady and aromatic. On the palate it shows white peaches and soft nectarine flesh; light and lively with perfumed finish.	13.5%	2016–2020	£16.33–£18	Eclectic Tastes, Exel Wines, Made in Sicily
St Michael-Eppan, Schulthausen Pinot Bianco 2013	89	89	90	87	Perfumed nose of tropical fruits, peach and rose water. Full ripe pear and custard cream flavours, with hints of saffron and dried flowers.	13.5%	2016–2020	£18.95	Eurowines, Harrods
St Pauls Cantina, Passion Weissburgunder Riserva 2013	89	89	90	88	Oak-dominated aromas and flavours slowly allow hints of apple and pear to emerge with aeration. Rich and forward roasted pineapple notes.	14%	2016–2020	N/A UK	www.kellereistpauls.com
Alois Lageder, Porer Pinot Grigio 2014	88	89	88	86	Vibrant apple and pear aromas followed by a similarly bright and elegant palate. Good minerality and zip on the finish.	12.5%	2016–2018	£17.50	Bibendum PLB, Exel Wines
Baron Di Pauli, Exilissi Gewürztraminer 2011	88	88	88	89	Very rich and intense aromas of candied peel and clove oil. Full, ripe and oily texture in the mouth with good length and a citrus peel lift to finish.	15.5%	2016–2018	N/A UK	www.barondipauli.com
Elena Walch, Gewürztraminer 2013	88	92	87	85	A mineral example of Gewürztraminer. Dry and crisp palate with plenty of ripe flowers and fruit. Shows great elegance and sophistication.	14.5%	2016–2018	£15.25–£21.95	Bancroft, Gerrard Seel, Harrods
Erste & Neue, Salt Chardonnay 2014	88	89	90	86	Full, fresh nose of melon and toasty oak. The palate is round and ripe, rich and suave, with juicy sweetness but then turns a touch austere on the finish.	13.5%	2016–2020	£16	New Generation Wines
J Hofstätter, Cereseto Sauvignon 2014	88	90	89	86	Gooseberry, sage and candied citrus peel nose. Guava and mango flavours with undertones of grass and nettles. Sneaky concentration and good length.	12.5%	2016–2018	POA	Berkmann Wine Cellars

Recommended (continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	AB	IDA	MG	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Josef Weger, Maso delle Rose Sauvignon 2014	88	86	90	89	Floral aromas with hints of green fig and yellow melon. Decent palate weight of medium ripe fruit flavours and balanced acidity, but the finish is a tad short.	13.5%	2016-2018	N/A UK	www.wegerhof.it
Larcherhof, Pinot Grigio 2014	88	89	91	84	Enticing baked pear and banana cream pie nose. Creamy and rich palate too, with complex flinty, smoky notes and ripe peach and apple flavours.	13.5%	2016-2022	N/A UK	www.weingut-larcherhof.eu
Manincor, Lieben Aich, Terlano 2013	88	90	87	87	Very intense, almost overripe melon fruit on the nose and palate, plus a touch of smokiness. Atypical, but with plenty of fruit character shining through.	13.5%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.manincor.com
Maso Thaler, Chardonnay 2014	88	91	88	84	Very citrusy with layers of white melon and grapefruit flavours. Zingy, fresh lime acidity and a crisp finish. This really makes you salivate.	13%	2016-2025	N/A UK	www.masothaler.it
Maso Thaler, Sauvignon 2014	88	91	87	85	Very mineral and flinty nose, almost Pouilly-Fumé in style. Lots of lime and grapefruit notes and very dry and crisp on the mouthwatering palate.	13%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.masothaler.it
Pacherhof, Riesling, Valle Isarco 2014	88	88	88	87	White pepper and minerals – a typical Alto Adige Riesling nose. Light floral lift to the fleshy green fruit and minty flavours.	13%	2016-2017	£15.60	Le Langhe
Rottensteiner, Cancenai Gewürztraminer 2014	88	86	91	86	Aromatic, soft and juicy palate. Full, rich and fleshy with ripe yellow fruit flavours and dried flowers to finish.	14.5%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.rottensteiner-weine.com
Stroblhof, Nico Sauvignon 2014	88	89	88	88	Fresh but a little subdued in its herbal and stone fruit aroma and taste profile. Good concentration of yellow plum and greengage tinged with saffron.	14%	2016-2019	£18.70	Sardinia Wine
Thurnhof, Goldmuskateller 2014	88	88	89	86	Lemon thyme and green grape aromas followed by candied tropical fruit flavours – very bright and fresh with building complexity.	13%	2016-2017	N/A UK	www.thurnhof.com
Viticoltori Alto Adige, San Pietro Pinot Bianco 2014	88	87	90	88	Delicate pear and stone fruit aromas plus dried flowers and a slightly honeyed note. Full apricot flavours with decent acidity though a touch short.	13%	2016-2018	N/A UK	info@viticoltorialtoadige.com
Weinberghof Bellutti, Plon Gewürztraminer 2014	88	89	87	87	Elegant and aromatic nose with notes of rose and passion fruit coming through on the palate. Soft and fleshy, elegant and poised.	14%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.weinberg-hof.it
Weinberghof Bellutti, Drau Pinot Grigio 2014	88	86	88	89	Broad, fresh and nutty: citrus peel and crushed mustard seeds. Very dry and mineral with good sapidity and freshness, though a touch tight and lean.	13%	2016-2018	N/A UK	www.weinberg-hof.it
Andrian, Andrius Sauvignon Blanc 2014	87	90	86	86	Ripe white peach and nectarine aromas and hints of white flowers. The palate is well presented and elegant with lots of texture and intense stone fruits.	13.5%	2016-2018	£24	Astrum Wine Cellars
Elena Walch, Beyond the Clouds 2013	87	87	87	88	Aromatic and exotic – verging on Moscato. Juicy, ripe fruit flavours are highlighted by fragrant and floral lift.	14.5%	2016-2020	£37.95-£49.95	Bancroft, Gerrard Seel, Harrods
Klaus Lentsch, Eichberg Grüner Veltliner, Valle Isarco 2014	87	89	87	86	Notes of Turkish Delight, sweet spices and quince jelly. The palate is bone-dry and zesty with good texture and body; lean and crisp on the finish.	13.5%	2016-2018	POA	FortyFive 10
Manincor, Sophie Chardonnay, Terlano 2013	87	90	90	82	Citrus peel followed by ripe pineapple on the nose. Ripe and intense palate with plenty of cooked fruits and butterscotch notes.	13.5%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.manincor.com
Peter Dipoli, Voglar Sauvignon 2012	87	89	87	86	Apple, pear and candied quince along with hints of almond paste on the slightly oily palate. Big ripe and full with juicy fresh fruit flavours.	13%	2016-2016	£16	A&B Vintners
Peter Zemmer, Selection R Chardonnay 2013	87	90	88	83	Full, ripe and oaky nose with notes of melon and dried flowers. Lovely tropical fruit and banana flavours linger nicely, but so does the oak.	13.5%	2016-2020	N/A UK	www.peterzemmer.com
Brunnenhoff Mazzon, Gewürztraminer 2014	86	88	84	85	Very rich and intense ripe white fruit notes. Lots of intensity and structure on the palate with plenty of body and notable acidity.	15%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.brunnenhof-mazzon.it
Franz Haas, Lepus Pinot Bianco 2014	86	83	88	87	Herbs, minerals and beeswax but also lemon apple and pear on nose and palate. Less fruity and more herbal than most Pinot Biancos.	13%	2016-2018	£18.99	Liberty Wines
Josephus Mayr, Platt & Pignat Chardonnay 2014	86	83	88	88	Fresh and fragrant aromas of blossom and fresh fruit. Perfumed lemon and orchard fruit on a light-bodied palate with crisp acidity and good length.	14%	2016-2018	N/A UK	www.mayr-unterganzner.it
Josephus Mayr, Platt & Pignat+ Sauvignon 2014	86	83	88	88	Dense, shy nose then a fresh palate with noteworthy salinity and a peppery bite. Hides its 14% alcohol well, but could use a bit more fruit.	14%	2016-2018	N/A UK	www.mayr-unterganzner.it
Wilhelm Walch, Krain Sauvignon 2014	86	85	87	86	Very intense tropical aromas of pineapple and ripe apples. Oak is evident on the palate with ripe and juicy fruit flavours too.	13%	2016-2018	£15.50	Vini Italiani

Commended 83–85pts

Wine	Score	AB	IDA	MG	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Abbazia di Novacella, Praepositus Riesling, Valle Isarco 2013	85	83	85	86	Rich and broad aromas then a fresh and full-bodied palate of green fruit flavours and bracing acidity.	13%	2016-2018	N/A UK	www.abbazianovacella.it
Rottensteiner, Carnol Weissburgunder 2014	85	83	87	86	Almond paste and apple compote notes on the ripe, creamy nose and palate. Full and round in a rather oxidative style.	13%	2016-2017	N/A UK	www.rottensteiner-weine.com
Schreckbichl Colterenzio, Cornell Formigar Chardonnay 2013	85	89	82	85	Classic, old-fashioned style: vanilla and roasted coconut aromas followed by caramel, butterscotch and honey flavours. Full and ripe with some length.	14%	2016-2020	£26.17-£30	AG Wines, Eclectic Tastes, Exel Wines, Made in Sicily

My top three
Andrea Briccarello

■ **Tiefenbrunner, Feldmarschall von Fenner Müller-Thurgau 2013** The only Müller-Thurgau, but outstanding in every sense. Grown at over 1,000m altitude, it shows impressive tropical fruits and lots of flowers and mineral notes. Beautifully balanced richness and elegance. **95/100 Drink** 2016-2022

■ **Terlan, Vorberg Pinot Bianco Riserva 2013** This single-vineyard co-op wine really showed the great strength and potential of this grape. Rich and intense, this has all the hallmarks of a top Pinot Bianco. Incredible length and huge ageing potential. **94 Drink** 2016-2020

■ **Cantina Valle Isarco, Aristos Kerner, Valle Isarco 2014** With a production of nearly 800,000 bottles, this co-op makes some of the most stunning Kerners – a cross of Rieling and red Schiava – and embraces what Alto Adige does best. Aristos is a selection the best grapes; it’s outstanding on his own but at its best with food. **95 Drink** 2016-2020

My top three
Ian D’Agata

■ **Tiefenbrunner, Feldmarschall von Fenner Müller-Thurgau 2013** One of Italy’s 15 best whites, this proves Müller-Thurgau can be world class. Laser-like focus, crisp and precise, with green apple, coriander, nutmeg and hazelnut aromas and flavours and a complex stony overlay. Great wine. **95/100 Drink** 2016-2022

■ **Köfererhof, Kerner, Valle Isarco 2014** Owner Günther Kershbaumer is so talented he can’t seem to make a bad wine. This Kerner is an archetype of what the crossing can offer in the right hands: lemongrass, bubble gum, lemon verbena and nutmeg abound. **91 Drink** 2016-2022

■ **Cantina Tramin, Unterebner Pinot Grigio 2014** One of Italy’s top three oaked Pinot Grigios, and a world-class example of just how good this maligned variety can be. Forget all the neutral stuff you’ve had in the past and revel in the nuances this offers. **90 Drink** 2016-2020

NB: the tasters’ top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines’ identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors

Expert summary: Ian D’Agata

An excellent report card for Italy’s white-wine heartland, but with advice to forget passing trends and focus on unique old-vine varieties with strong ties to the region



Ian D’Agata is a Decanter World Wine Awards Regional co-Chair for Italy and award winning author of *The Native Wine Grapes of Italy*

GREAT RESULTS FOR Alto Adige, Italy’s leading source of quality whites. However, deeper analysis illustrates both the strengths and potentially serious weaknessess of this beautiful alpine region’s wine production.

Alto Adige is home to high-quality Pinot Bianco: six of our top 11 wines were made with it. The tasting also confirmed Alto Adige’s Pinot Grigios as some of the best in Italy; none scored less than 88 points. Gewürztraminer remains an Alto Adige speciality, always drier and more floral in style; only one wine failed to score 88 or more.

Though only three Sauvignon Blancs scored less than 88 points, wines made with this grape impressed us less than anticipated. Not unexpectedly, however, the Chardonnays did not show well; by world standards Italy’s are generally poor. Yes, the top examples were among the Highly Recommendeds, but no other variety had as many wines below 88 points. In a world of generally very good to outstanding Chardonnays, Alto Adige producers need to realise that the last thing wine lovers need or want is more average wine.

Furthermore, far too many growers and producers are listening to misguided advice from importers and other ‘experts’, and are uprooting beautiful old (but unfashionable) Müller-Thurgau and Sylvaner vines to

plant trendier Riesling and Grüner Veltliner. Aside from the fact that Alto Adige has no strong links to either of these varieties, Grüner (from very young vines) isn’t especially good and, with few exceptions from Val Venosta, the Rieslings are only marginally better. By contrast, Müller-Thurgau and Sylvaner make world-class wines in the Valle Isarco zone, so it makes no sense to uproot these old vines. Far better for Alto Adige to establish itself as a source of unique varieties. In general, the Grüners and Rieslings in this tasting scored low, while I have no doubt that many Sylvaner (especially) and Müller-Thurgau wines would have scored above 90 points easily had we had more of these wines submitted.

My sincere hope is that Alto Adige’s producers will learn to resist the call to uproot vines that can yield something special; otherwise, when the Riesling and Grüner craze dies out – as fads inevitably do – they might find themselves left in the lurch. **🍷**

‘Far better for Alto Adige to establish itself as a source of unique varieties’