

Decanter

Piedmont Dolcetto: Panel tasting results

These early-drinking Piedmont reds place the focus on fruit, with little or no oak used, yet they can be great for food-matching, too. More than a third of the wines tasted here scored 90pts or higher.



Susan Hulme MW
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Susan Hulme MW, Vincenzo Arnese and Sara Bachiorri tasted 95 wines with 1 Outstanding and 35 Highly recommended.

Piedmont Dolcetto: Panel tasting scores

95 wines tasted

Exceptional 0

Outstanding 1

Highly recommended 35

Recommended 57

Commended 2

Fair 0

Poor 0

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their currently available vintages of Piedmont Dolcetto red wines, with no price restrictions, from DOCs Dolcetto d'Alba, Dolcetto d'Asti, Dolcetto d'Acqui, Dolcetto di Ovada, or DOCGs Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba/Diano d'Alba, Dolcetto di Ovada Superiore or Dogliani

Dolcetto is the third-most important red grape variety in **Piedmont**, after **Nebbiolo** and **Barbera**. Although most closely associated with Piedmont, it is also grown in Lombardy, Liguria and the island of Sardinia, though often under other names (Ormeasco, Nibiò etc). It's an early-ripening variety – two to three weeks before Nebbiolo – and produces deeply coloured, dry red wines with plenty of gentle tannins and lowish acidity, which emphasise the sweetness of fruit and perhaps explains the meaning of its name: 'little sweet one'.

Scroll down to see tasting notes and scores from the Dolcetto panel tasting

Dolcetto wines are well suited to modern tastes: typically they are unoaked, medium-bodied, soft, round and fruity, with flavours and aromas of blackberry, black cherry and black pepper or spice notes. This drinkability makes Dolcetto a much-loved variety among the Piemontesi, whereas the Nebbiolo wines of **Barolo** and **Barbaresco** are considered more serious and demanding with much higher levels of tannins and acidity.

In Piedmont, the DOCGs where Dolcetto is the sole or principal variety include Dolcetto Diano d'Alba, Dolcetto Diano d'Alba Superiore, Dolcetto di Ovada Superiore, Dogliani and Dogliani Superiore, along with the DOCs Dolcetto d'Alba – which usually produces the most wine – Dolcetto d'Alba Superiore, Dolcetto di Ovada, Dolcetto d'Asti, Dolcetto d'Acqui and Langhe Dolcetto. All of these denominations, with the exception of the small-production Dolcetto d'Asti, were represented in this panel tasting, and all 95 wines were 100% Dolcetto.

Dogliani is one of the most historically significant areas for Dolcetto; indeed, some people claim that the variety originated from the hills in this area, and it was promoted to a DOCG in 2005. The judges were therefore expecting great things from the Dogliani wines in this panel tasting, but while the Dogliani wines did quite well, the Dogliani Superiore wines tasted were disappointing: three of the five entered scored 86 points or below; the wines either already looked too evolved at three or four years old, or there was too much oak for the level of fruit. In fact, the panel typically rewarded wines that were unoaked, or where the oak was very subtle. Sara Bachiorti commented that she 'loved the young Dolcetto that didn't try to be something else; naked, pure, crunchy and honest'. Vincenzo Arnese added that Dolcetto 'is the kind of wine that to perform well doesn't need. . . oak and can express typicity very well'.

Overall, there were few poor wines. 'It was a very consistent tasting with good base quality of wines,' noted Arnese. Almost all the wines tasted – 93 out of 95 – achieved a 'Bronze medal' level (86-89pts, Recommended) or higher, with 35 achieving the equivalent of a 'Silver' (90-94pts, Highly recommended) and one 'Gold'. Indeed, 26 of the 57 Recommended wines scored 89pts, which is on the verge of being a Highly recommended/Silver.

See all the Dolcetto wines from the panel tasting

Bachiorti noted after the tasting that 'Dolcetto is certainly an underrated grape variety that can give great pleasure and joy.' Dolcetto is without doubt very well suited to today's taste for lively, fresh wines. Most are best drunk young, either on their own or with food. This tasting confirmed that Dolcetto can offer plenty of enjoyment and value for money, if you choose wisely.

Dolcetto panel tasting scores

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Vite Colte, Roccabella, Dolcetto d'Alba, Piedmont, 2022

- PANEL TASTING

91

Tasted by: Susan Hulme MW, Vincenzo Arnese, Sara Bachiorri
(at Decanter tasting suite, London, 02 Nov 2023)

Drinking Window: 2024 - 2028

Bright cherry aromas with lovely pure plum fruit on the palate. Smooth mouthfeel, good acidity, with intensity and ripeness. Clean finish.



Producer
Vite Colte

Brand
Roccabella

Vintage
2022

Wine Type
Still

Colour
Red

Country
Italy

Region
Piedmont

Appellation
Dolcetto d'Alba

Sweetness
Dry

Closure
Cork

Alcohol
14.00%

Body
Medium

Grapes
100% Dolcetto