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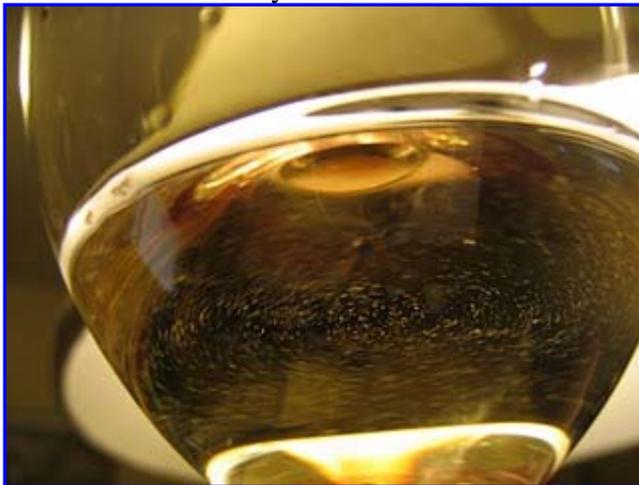
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Is Moscato the New Prosecco?

Posted by Fredric Koepfel under [Dessert wines](#) , [Italy](#) , [Muscat/moscato](#) , [Sparkling Wine](#)
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Ummmm Probably not.

Not that I don't enjoy a glass of Moscato, especially from the wine's home-base around the city of Asti in Piedmont. When I



was in that

region last year, blogging for the Barbera 2010 conference, visits to wineries and estates often began with a glass of clean, crisp, slightly sweet Moscato d'Asti that went surprisingly well with the bountiful spreads of meats, cheeses and breads typically laid out for us. Moscato d'Asti is lightly sparkling, what the Italians call *frizzante*, as opposed to *spumante*, full sparkling, so it can be quite refreshing without being blatantly effervescent or filling. Moscato d'Asti also works well as a dessert wine, actually is mostly assumed to be a dessert wine, especially when served with simple confections like uncomplicated fruit tarts. Its low alcohol content — 5.5 percent — makes it easy to quaff. Moscato d'Asti is made from the *moscato bianco* grape, the Italian name for *muscat blanc a petits grains*, the best of the numerous muscat varieties. The hallmarks of Moscato d'Asti are its delicacy, its musky, floral aromas and a sensation of sweetness more implied than acted upon; crisp acidity is essential for balance, though it must not ruffle the wine's innate softness.

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Now, a great deal of Prosecco is fairly sweet, though it need not be, and a remarkable quantity of the



wines are bland and innocuous, which they also need not be. The official expansion of Prosecco's approved growing area in the Veneto will not bolster quality. Nonetheless, Prosecco is among the fastest growing segments in the imported wine market in the United States, and at the best it can be a fine and thoroughly enjoyable sparkling wine. (Prosecco is the name of the grape and the product.) Prosecco can be a still wine, though that manifestation is rare, and it can be both frizzante or spumante, with the latter type outnumbering the former three to one. My point is that as delightful and subtle as Moscato d'Asti can be — and I mean the best examples, not the vapid, sappy-sweet ones — it has limited utility in the diurnal round. Prosecco, on the other hand, especially those few models produced from superior zones in a dry, mineral style, can be not only versatile but engaging and elegant.

Many winemaking areas in Italy produce some version of a moscato wine, and you find it increasingly throughout the world; one of my favorite non-Italian versions, a true delight, is produced by Innocent Bystander in Australia's Yarra Valley; here's a link to a recent [review](#). I have tasted a number of Italian Moscatos lately; I'll mention the most gratifying. Those made outside Piedmont may have slightly more alcohol than 5.5 percent.

Image of Moscato in glass from spiritofwine.blogspot.com.

First, three genuine Moscato d'Asti wines:

The Coppo Moncalvina Moscato d'Asti 2010 is a real classic. Apple, pear and melon on the nose, slightly spiced and honeyed, a little foxy, with almond and almond blossom, orange zest and orange blossom; very refined, very delicate, a softly sweet entry that quickly goes dry on the palate with lip-smacking acidity and a scintillating limestone element; despite the crisp acidity, though, a lovely

cushiony texture that supports flavors of peach and pear with mild effervescence. Quite charming. 5 percent alcohol. Very Good +. About \$17.

Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners, Napa, Ca.



The Cascinetta Vietti Moscato d'Asti 2009 seems to offer more bubbles than Moscato d'Asti wines typically do. Pale straw-gold color; apple, peach and pear, almond and almond blossom, musk-rose; shimmering acidity tingles the tongue; sweet as biting into a ripe peach but tempered by acid and a very dry limestone-drenched finish that runs under the lushness of stone-fruit flavors; delicately married to an intriguing hint of earthiness. Lovely. 5.5 percent alcohol. Very Good+. About \$16. Imported by Dalla Terra Winery Direct, Napa, Ca.

A tad simpler than the preceding examples, the Saracco Moscato d'Asti 2010 is still quite tasty and tempting. Pale straw-gold color; a gentle froth of bubbles; melon bubble gum, peach, orange blossom, almond; seductively lush with a talc-like texture cut by keen acidity and limestone-like minerality. A nice quaff. 6 percent alcohol. Very Good. About \$15.

Dalla Terra Winery Direct, Napa Ca.

The bubbles on the Seven Daughters Moscato n.v., Veneto I.G.T., offer barely a prickle; this is true subtlety, though a mildly pleasant sensation on the tongue; green apple, peach and pear, quite fresh and appealing, a little spicy; a burst of sweetness at the beginning but zippy acidity and a flush of damp limestone turn it pretty darned dry from mid-palate back; a bracing bit of bitterness on the finish. 7 percent alcohol. Very Good. About \$15.

Terlato Wines International, Lake Bluff, Il.



The Cantine Maschio Cadoro Moscato n.v, Puglia, is a fascinating product, first because it derives from Apulia, down in the southeast, and second because of its heightened effervescence — it'd spumante rather than frizzante — and third because it is more substantial than delicate; call it a super-Moscato, perhaps. Amid this host of bubbles is a welter of apple and melon, peach and pear, all slightly spicy and honeyed and a little woodland wildness; a sweet entry moderated by swingeing acidity and a prominent limestone, shale element wrapped around lush stone fruit flavors, all devolving to a touch of apple peel/almond skin bitterness on the finish. Intriguing and delicious. 7.5 percent alcohol. Very Good+. About \$15.

Moscato D Asti

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