

Italian bubbles

Try prosecco as an alternative to sparkling wines

Giuliana Abrahamse is giving locals a taste of prosecco, the world-renowned Italian sparkling wine. "Prosecco had exploded internationally but there was nothing going on in South Africa yet," she recalls. "We saw an opportunity and decided on the Bottega brand, which we started importing in 2007."

Giuliana Abrahamse is operations and marketing director for Profumi D'Italia, the South African-based importer of Bottega (bottegasa.co.za)

Founded in the 1920s, the third-generation family business started by Aldo Bottega now employs 130 people, 90% of whom are women. It specialises in the production of still wines, prosecco, limoncino and grappa.

"Prosecco is made from the glera grape," Abrahamse explains. "And for it to be called a prosecco, it must be produced in the Denominazione di Origine Controllata [DOC] area in Italy."

It's for this reason that the Millesimato Brut, produced just outside the area, is considered a prosecco-style sparkling wine. Secondary fermentation happens in stainless steel tanks according to the Charmat method. It is then immediately bottled and best enjoyed while young and fresh.

"We call it the prosecco from the wrong side of the tracks," Abrahamse jokes. "We wanted to introduce the South African market to what prosecco tastes like, but we wanted to be competitive with the local bubbly market. This is a fruity, aromatic sparkling wine."

Going for gold

Bottega Prosecco Brut DOC was the first prosecco launched in South Africa.

"The bubbles are refined and long-lasting," Abrahamse says as she holds up a glass. "They don't disappear within two minutes of pouring. Also, prosecco isn't as dry as French champagne. It's got high sugar content but it's the style of the prosecco that's made like that."

At the top end of the range is the 'Ferrari' of prosecco: Bottega Gold Prosecco DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita, which means Denomination of Origin Controlled and Guaranteed). Grapes are handpicked to prevent them from being damaged in the process and the prosecco is packaged in a patented gold bottle.

"The company owns a hand-blown glass factory in Venice and it takes seven years for a glass master to perfect his art," Abrahamse says. "These bottles are hand-painted and baked seven times."

The gold packaging blocks out light and extends the life of what Abrahamse describes as "a more sophisticated prosecco".

Text | **Eugene Yiga** Photography | **Supplied**

