

For wine lovers around the world who enjoy
wine and the good life

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Sommelier India Wine Magazine is written by some of the best wine writers in the world. Our cast of writers includes wine experts, wine and food writers, professional journalists as well as emerging writers. Part of our publishing mission is to encourage wine writing in India. We consider our regular contributors our most valuable resource.



Raj Ahluwalia is a Harvard-trained Orthopaedic Surgeon, practising in Los Angeles. With diverse interests in food and wine, he is a passionate cook who travels the world seeking unique food and wine experiences, including several times a year to India and California's wine regions. Raj recently started a blog (with his sister-in-law) called *Vino Tesoro* which aims to create a platform for wine enthusiasts to discuss wine related matters. Not only is Raj passionate about wine, but he is also keen to learn about wine and is WSET Level 2 Certified.



Isabelle Beau de Lomenie was raised in Bordeaux and is the owner of vineyards in Sauternes and Graves. She has a wealth of experience in wine in many different countries. Isabelle was wine ambassador for MMI in Dubai in charge of curating wine tasting lunches and is the founder of "Isa's Kitchen", a very successful cooking "atelier". More recently, she has been deeply involved

in the wine concept of the Pullman New Delhi Aerocity, advising the Food & Beverage team on the wine selection of the hotel. Isabelle is a member of the *Sommelier India* Tasting Panel which meets every other month to taste wines to recommend to Indian consumers.



Alok Chandra A graduate of IIM Calcutta, Alok is an industry professional with 35 years' experience in the alcohol industry in India, including the UB Group and Diageo India. He's been an independent wine consultant since 2001 with a focus on four areas: knowledge (wine tasting, training, and appreciation); research (wine markets in India); marketing of wines; and projects, such as setting up vineyards and wineries, and advising about the import of wines into India. Alok writes regularly for *Sommelier India*.



Brinda Gill has a post-graduate degree in Economics (Hons) from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi and a Masters from the

Gokhale Institute, Pune. One of her major interests is discovering the wealth of India through its living heritage, rafts and people. She enjoys writing on these subjects and travelling. Brinda is the Pune correspondent for *Sommelier India*.



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She is the author of "California's Central Coast, The Ultimate Winery Guide: From Santa Barbara to Paso Robles." Her stories on the wine and food culture of California's Central Coast feature in the Napa Valley Register. She also writes a bi-weekly column, "Sip and Savor" in the Paso Robles Daily News website. Mira has chronicled the wine world of California, Oregon, France, Italy and Spain for several international publications and has also written on international cinema for *The Hollywood Reporter*.



Aditi Pai is a journalist who has worked with a leading English news magazine for

11 years covering stories ranging from terror attacks and politics to whisky and wines. A keen student of wines, she has passed WSET Level 2 and continues to study wines through her travels to wineries. At Vallonné Vineyards, a boutique winery founded and helmed by her father Shailendra Pai, she continues to watch the winemaking process, the challenges of the industry in India and is closely involved with the wine tourism activities of the winery.



Alessandra Piubello, journalist and expert wine taster from Verona, is the editor-in-chief of several magazines (including *Queen International* and *Prince*) as well as the author of several books and articles on wine and food tourism. She is the co-editor of the "Veronelli Guida Oro I Vini" wine guide and author for L'Espresso's *Ristoranti d'Italia* guide and collaborates with Italian magazines such as *Spirito di Vino*, *Arti*, *Cook inc.*, *Cucina e vini* and international ones like *Spirito diVino Asia*, *Decanter*. Alessandra is a member of prestigious associations and a constant presence at the most important wine competitions worldwide.



Kaveri Ponnappa is an author and independent writer based in Bangalore. She graduated from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi, and took a Master's Degree in Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies,

London. Her articles on food, wine, travel and heritage appear in leading publications. Her first book, "The Vanishing Kodavas", is an extensive cultural study of the Kodava people.



Margaret Rens who moved with her family to Bordeaux 15 years ago writes about French cuisine and wine pairing for several international publications including a regular column in *Sommelier India* and websites like "The Bordeaux Wine Blog". Over the years, she has collected many recipes that she is currently putting together in a book. When she is not in the kitchen, writing or renovating their 18th century chateau, Margaret assists with organizing wine and culinary tours to the Bordeaux region for The Bordeaux Wine Experience.



Jancis Robinson writes daily for her award-winning website, JancisRobinson.com, weekly for *The Financial Times*, and bi-monthly for a column that is syndicated around the world. An award-winning TV presenter, editor, author and co-author of several authoritative books on wine, her most recent book is also her shortest, "The 24-Hour Wine Expert". Each of her books is recognised as a standard reference worldwide. In 1984 Jancis was the first person outside the wine trade to pass the Master of Wine exam. In 2003, she was awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth. In a single week in April 2016, she was presented with France's Officier du Mérite

Agricole, the German VDP's highest honour and her fourth US James Beard Award.



Steven Spurrier A member of SI's advisory Council, Steven is a world-renowned British wine expert and consultant editor of *Decanter* wine magazine. He is founder of the Academie du Vin and Christie's Wine Course, in addition to authoring and co-authoring several wine books. Steven has been immortalized in the movie, "The Judgement of Paris."



Rojita Tiwari is an independent writer and consultant for wine and spirits, travel and hospitality based out of Mumbai, contributing to various Indian and international websites and publications. She has travelled widely and served on the jury of the international wine and spirits competitions, Concours Mondial de Bruxelles and Catador Wine Awards, Chile this year. At present she is curating a project called "Selection of India's Finest Wines", a list which will create a platform for Indian wines to showcase their quality, consistency and position in the international wine fraternity. She is also a certified WSET professional.

DISCOVERING SOAVE

Situated in the Veneto region in the province of Verona, in northern Italy, Soave vineyards extend over 7,000 hectares with splendid Venetian villas and manor houses, overlooked by the Lessinian Mountains

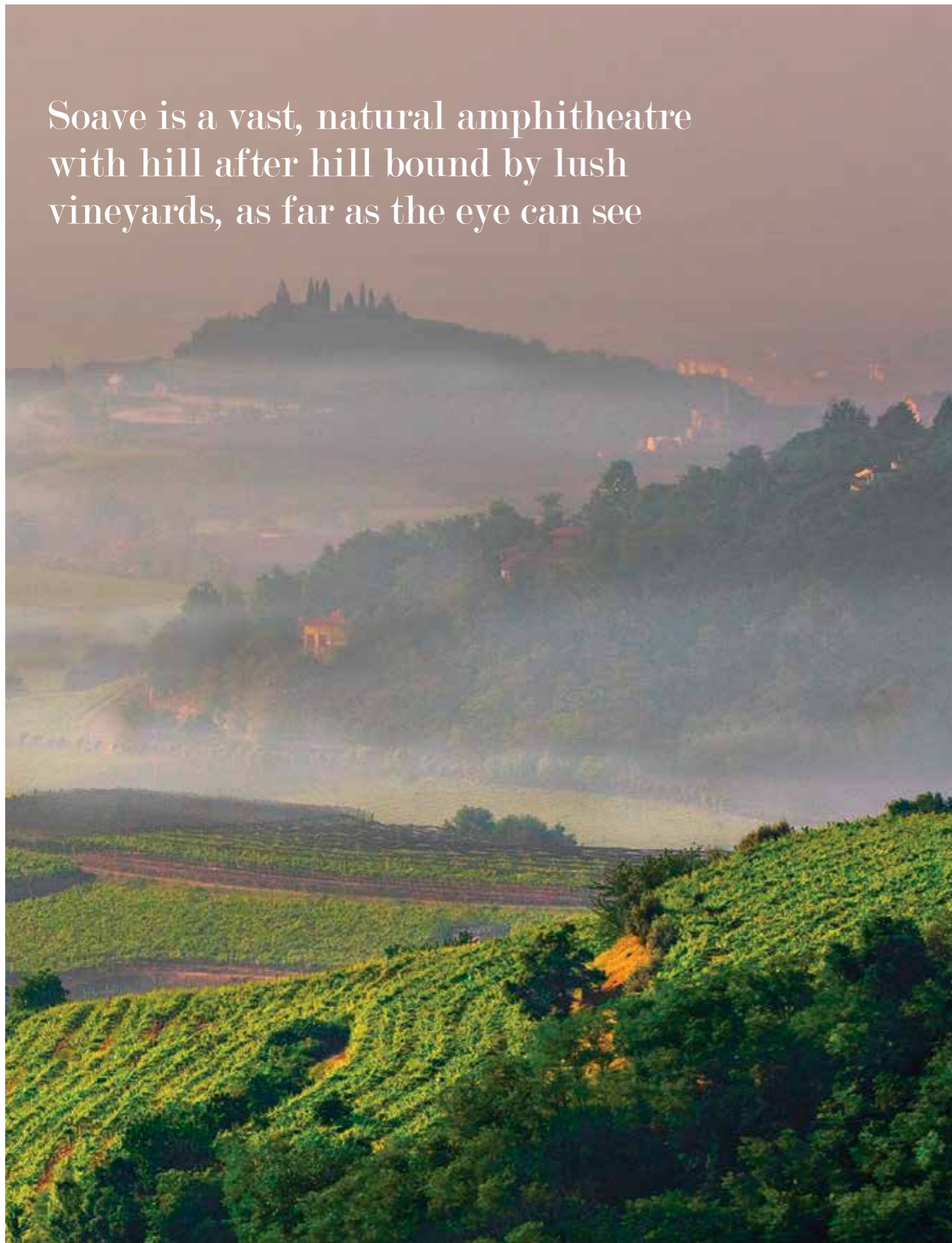
Soave. One word with many meanings, all adding up to one of Italy's oldest and best-loved whites. [Alessandra Piubello](#) is a mine of information on this versatile wine

Soave is polysemous, like a Matryoshka nesting doll, with meanings, history, emotions – to be discovered one after another. Let's start. Soave is a landscape: a vast natural amphitheatre where the hand of man and the work of nature that hosts the vineyards are one and the same. Hill after hill bound by lush vineyards as far as the eye can see. Countryside, splendid Venetian villas and manor houses, observed from above by the Lessinian Mountains.

Here, in 1931, the first zone in Italy for the production of “typical and precious wine” was defined by royal decree (the area which now corresponds to the classic zone). This is the largest specialized wine-growing area in the entire Italian peninsula, maybe even in Europe, which for over 100 years has remained practically intact. It is no coincidence that it was one of the first regions in Italy to obtain recognition as a “Rural landscape of historical interest”, becoming part of the “National Register of rural landscapes of historical interest, agricultural practices and traditional know-how”. The historical value of the rural area in the classic zone of which there are 1,700 micro-portioned, hilly hectares, is unquestionable.

Coming to the next Matryoshka, Soave is the name of the wine that originates here. Its territory, within which either partially or entirely, the denomination's 12 communities lie (Soave, Monteforte d'Alpone, San Martino Buon Albergo, Mezzane di Sotto, Roncà, Montecchia di Crosara, San Giovanni Ilarione, Cazzano di Tramigna, Colognola ai Colli, Caldiero, Illasi e Lavagno and San Bonifacio), touches five valleys. Let's examine them from west to east, including the rivers since they are so important for the vines, starting with the Marcellise Valley, crossed by the Progno di Marcellise; the Mezzane Valley with its Dugale and Progno di Mezzane waterways; the Illasi Valley furrowed by the Illasi stream and the Prognolo; the Tramigna Valley with its Tramigna river and the Alpone Valley with its eponymous stream. Over 95% of the farmland belonging to the municipality of Monteforte d'Alpone is covered with vineyards. Next, come Soave, Colognola ai Colli, Montecchia di Crosara and Roncà with percentages of over 80% planted to vines. A territory with a vocation, that considers its soil as its truest great resource.

Soave is a vast, natural amphitheatre with hill after hill bound by lush vineyards, as far as the eye can see



Baskets overflowing with freshly harvested grapes. The hilly areas with basaltic, ashy soil are ideal for garganega grapes

Mainly of volcanic origin, the soil is made even more fertile by significant calcareous basaltic outcrops that differentiate the area from the other neighbouring historical zones of Bardolino and Valpolicella. One can still come across columns of basalt which, although no longer as majestic as those depicted in ancient engravings, are still proof of an eruptive submarine activity. (The origin of Mount Calvarino at Soave, a volcano that became extinct 50 million years ago, springs to mind). In most cases, the soils consist of decomposed basaltic rock substrata that, in turn, gave rise to clay loam soils, typically dark in colour, rich in mineral substances, with good drainage but also a good capacity for storing water resources throughout the year, which are released slowly at the vine roots during the growing season. The basaltic, ashy terrains of volcanic origin in the hilly areas are ideal for growing garganega grapes, a typical Soave ingredient.

In short, the zone can be divided into two macro areas: the hills to the north of Soave, characterized by a mainly calcareous-marine substratum, and the area north of Monteforte with its volcanic rocks. The flood plain lies at the foot of these two sectors and is made up of debris from the hills. The altitude ranges from 35 metres above sea level to 380 metres in the highest hills, with variable inclination.

The classic zone involves the municipality of Soave, with the villages of Castelcerino, Costeggiola and Fittà, and the Monteforte d'Alpone area with Brognoligo and Costalunga. The regulations forecast a yield of 140 quintals per hectare for DOC Soave Classico, and 100 quintals per hectare for Soave Classico Superiore DOCG. Recioto Soave DOCG, a sweet, structured wine of intense colours, forecasts a yield of 90 quintals per

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Soave wine marked by delicacy and lightness reflects its terroir, evolving in complexity over time

hectare. In the DOC Soave Colli Scaligeri area (the hilly area not included in the Classic zone) there is a yield of 140 quintals per hectare, while Soave DOC arrives at 150q per ha. The other two types, Soave Superiore DOCG and Soave Superiore Riserva DOCG, return to 100q per ha. A wine with an enthralling and kaleidoscopic personality, Soave often delivers vibrant vivacity and a flavour that is sometimes reminiscent of the salt from the sea that used to cover the area thousands of years ago. It is also incredibly long-lived. Over time, the wine evolves in complexity, developing hints of sulphur, flint, iodine and hydrocarbons.

To return to our Matryoshka metaphor, Soave is also the name of a medieval town that lies at the foot of the Lessinian Mountains on the banks of the Tramigna river, dominated by its Castle. The name probably derives from the Swabians (Suaves), a population of Germanic origin who came down to Italy with the Lombard king Alboin in the 6th century. But Soave is also an adjective that we can use to describe the characteristics of this wine with its gracefulness, delicacy and lightness. Soave: an endless discovery and a name that evokes countless meanings.

A bit of history

In Roman times, the Soave territory was already a *pagus* or canton, a term defining a country area with demarcated borders, known for its strategic position and the quality of its farm produce. Numerous documents mention this wine that has been appreciated since ancient times. Even Cassiodorus, one of the

barbarian Theodoric's senators, spoke of the "beautiful whiteness and transparent purity, so white that one would think it came from lilies". Praise for Soave also came from Pliny the Elder, Martialis, Saint Zeno as well as from renowned scholars, famous writers, like Dante, Goethe, D'Annunzio, journalists and wine experts. Importantly, an excellent, avant-garde production chain was already in existence in 1228: the Ezzelinian Statute confirmed a series of stringent agronomic and contractual decisions that are still imprinted in the farming civilization.

Soave's international fame began to develop in the 1900s when the big Veronese wineries (refer to Bolla), exported it worldwide, affirming it as

a symbol of Italian wine, especially in the United States. It was the only Italian white wine appreciated overseas and its great success led to over-production, which left it anonymous, empty and verifiably neutral. But some producers (most significantly, Pieropan) have always kept the name high among Italy's great whites, and they have been joined for some years now by a *nouvelle vague* (new wave) of small to medium-sized companies, causing a kind of re-birth.

These companies are managed by young oenologists who graduated from the best schools and have absorbed a technological know-how that was already part of the land's heritage. For example, the first Vaslin soft presses in Italy were experimented with here, as were stainless steel vats with cooling by run-off and innovative systems for controlling the temperature and bottling. The Soave Consortium, dedicated to maintaining quality, can be credited with important and far-sighted initiatives over the years. Among them are territorial zoning, the identification of crus, landscape surveys, the demonstration of Soave's longevity with expert wine tastings and the establishment of the Volcanic Wines association, generated in the wake of Vulcania, an annual event in Soave sponsored by the Consortium, which features only white wines made on volcanic soils.

The grapes

The queen of Soave is the garganega grape, grown in 90% of the territory. The most reliable scholars maintain that the origin of garganega was due to cross-fertilization between rhaetic grapes (coming from those fossilized Ampelidee - the 40 million year old ancestors of European vines - that can be seen in the nearby Bolca Museum) and vines from the Mediterranean basin. It is a vigorous variety that yields rarely loosely clustered bunches of considerable size (they can be over 25 centimetres long and weigh more than 500g). The grapes, which mature in the sunny days at the end of September, have quite a thin but tough skin. Their coppery, almost rust, colouring is a typical feature of pergola-grown vineyards at the beginning of autumn. The regulations state that Soave must have a minimum of 70% garganega grapes, though many producers do not blend it at all.

The other native grape that accompanies garganega is trebbiano di soave, probably the ancient turbiana grape that has been spoken of since the 16th century at least. It is not an easy vine, being much less productive than garganega and more delicate in terms of bunch compactness and the fragility of the skins. The fruit matures earlier than garganega, and has a particular organoleptic profile, with its scent of roses, pleasant taste and subtle and fresh aromatic trace. Besides trebbiano, the regulations also permit the use of chardonnay (again at 30%, in which a maximum of 5% other non-aromatic white grapes may be included).

The most common growing system is on pergolas but guyots - a system of vine training - are also used, especially on the plains. Recent studies show that if the leafy roof is well managed and if there is a free passage between the wings so that the light and the hill breeze can come in, then

A wine with an enthralling and kaleidoscopic personality, Soave often delivers vibrant vivacity and a flavour that is sometimes reminiscent of the salt from the sea



Left: Garganega grapes are most commonly grown on pergolas mainly over 30 years of age but there are some pergolas that are more than a 100 years old. Below: The grapes in large, loose clusters have a coppery colour, a typical feature of pergola-grown vineyards



Above: Recioto Soave DOCG, a sweet, structured wine of intense colours. Right: The garganega grape, grown in 90% of the territory is a vigorous variety. The pergola gives the grapes complexity and aromatic intensity



the Soave pergola gives the grapes better complexity and aromatic intensity. This method, in fact, takes better advantage of the sun's rays and creates a microclimate around the bunch that is ideal for maturing. Sixty per cent of the territory is covered by pergolas of over 30 years of age but there are some that are more than a 100 years old.

A look at the numbers

Soave vineyards extend over 7,000 hectares with a quotation that reaches two billion euros and a production value of 158 million euros. In 2016, over 51 million bottles were produced from 570,000 quintals of grapes - equivalent to 385,000 hectolitres. Production dropped for the Colli Scaligeri and Soave Superiore, but Recioto di Soave registered 80,000 bottles despite the unfavourable market for sweet wines. As much as 75% of Soave is exported while the rest stays in Italy. There are 2,927 companies of which 2,630 take their grapes to the cooperatives, 82 are wine producers and 215 are private companies.

At the table

Soave wine can accompany any course of your meal. It is ideal as an aperitif, on its own or with stuffed olives, mini pizzas, bruschetta or savoury flans. A fine accompaniment with pasta, it also goes well with sauces, risottos, creamed vegetables and vegetable soups. Serving Soave with fresh or saltwater fish is a particularly good combination and it is a pleasant companion for egg-based dishes as well as with white meats and cheeses. It is also worth trying with snails and roast goat, which is traditionally basted in Soave. Recioto di Soave is perfect with desserts, biscuits, jam tarts, fruitcake and chocolate. It is also a good contrast with rich meat pâtés and some mature and spicy cheeses or, with all its characteristics pleasantness, as a wine for meditation. ♦

Soave is the largest specialized wine-growing area in the entire Italian peninsula

