

drinks. by mike bennie

say salut 

Mike Bennie brings a new flavour to aperitivo with great Italian varietals grown on our soil.

Nebbiolo? Sangiovese? Prosecco? How do you sort out the varieties, regions and styles of Italian wine in Oz? While Italian-Australian wine production is based in Victoria's King Valley, the warm wine region of Heathcote to the west is rapidly climbing the ranks. Nebbiolos with ripe flavours, bold tannins and high acidity – the hallmarks of Italy's Barolo wines – flourish here. The Galli Estate Artigiano Nebbiolo 2009 (\$30) is big on personality, with redcurrants, earth and herbs intermingling in a medium-weight palate with proper tannin grip.

Most are familiar with raffia-clad Chianti, a staple at red-and-white-checked tablecloth joints, but these days the bottles imported into Australia are a lot more sophisticated. Coriole Vineyards in McLaren Vale has a long history with sangiovese (the primary grape in Chianti) and the Coriole Sangiovese 2009 (\$25) is an exceptional example. It's composed, generously flavoured and an ideal foil for pasta.

Meanwhile, for an Italian sparkling wine, prosecco instantly comes to mind. The Dal Zotto Pucino Prosecco NV (\$18.50) is full of fresh flower and grapefruit aromas and pops with green apple on the palate. There's some musky complexity but it's a perfect aperitif – pristine with laser-like fizz.

Ros s have also come a long way with pale-coloured, drier styles that complement a variety of foods and match Australia's warmer climate. Try Foster   Rocco Ros  2010 (\$25) made from Heathcote sangiovese. Its cool, lean feel is just the ticket for ultra refreshment and food friendliness.

