



# PRESS KIT

## GARDA DOC

GARDA DOC CONSORTIUM

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A hilly region with unique landscape characteristics, straddling Lombardy and Veneto, protected by mountains and overlooking the largest basin in Italy: here, between the provinces of Brescia, Mantova and Verona, lies the Garda DOC appellation. This is a wine production area where special climate conditions have shaped the qualities of the various grape varieties that grow there over time and still define their distinctive characteristics to this day. Recognised for the first time in 1996 to enhance the value of the varietal wines produced in the 10 historical production areas of the Garda region, Garda DOC is an appellation guided by a strong spirit of innovation. It is this spirit that has enabled it to evolve over the years based on consumer demands, whilst always respecting a product with ancient origins here. Having been recognised by the government in 2015 and operating *erga omnes* since 2016, today, the Garda DOC Consortium represents 250 users of the appellation for more than 30,000 hectares of vineyard land eligible for the appellation, giving voice to and promoting one of the most highly regarded specialities of Italian food and wine.

### AN AGE-OLD LINK BETWEEN LAND AND VINE. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

*'Vine growing in the Garda DOC area has an age-old history, a tradition that, thanks to particular agroclimatic characteristics, has characterised this area since the Iron Age, producing a wine that is an expression of these conditions unlike any others in the world'.* **Paolo Fiorini**, President of the Garda DOC Consortium.

The Garda DOC region and vine growing seem to be intertwined, bound by an inseparable link, traces of which can be found as far back as **the Iron Age**. As shown by recent scientific studies, vine growing was already being practised here in the days of the Celts, the Etruscans and the Greeks. This tradition was then carried on in Roman times—as documented by the discovery of wine press finds around Verona—and continued through the Middle Ages and into the modern era, finally reaching the present day, bringing in and adapting modern cultivation techniques over the years.

This is a tradition that has seen different geological formations and great climatic variability over the centuries, with alternating cold-humid and hot-arid phases that can be found in and characterise the genome of the grape varieties grown currently. Today, a balanced climate, moderated by the lake and with rainfall spread evenly across the year, makes Garda DOC an area that is naturally predisposed to high-quality vine growing. It was with the aim of recognising and safeguarding this exceptional production that in **1968**, the geographical term 'Garda' was first used to label the wines produced in this region, whilst the DOC (controlled appellation of origin) was recognised in **1996**; this was also the year in which the Consortium was created to promote and protect the varietal wines from the area defined by the 10 historical appellations in the provinces of Brescia, Mantova and Verona.

In **2015**, the Consortium was recognised by ministerial decree and the following year, **2016**, the new production regulations were approved, with the addition of white sparkling wine made from grapes and wines from the 10 production areas, which by decree must only bear the name 'GARDA' on the label; the first such sparkling wine was produced in the province of Verona, using the Charmat method, in **2017**. The amendment of the regulations confirms that Garda DOC is a region that cannot be separated from the long history that has distinguished it, but that is also far-sighted and capable of adapting and changing over time: it meets the needs and tastes of the times, accommodating and embracing the growing interest from consumers in sparkling wines, in this case.

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As of 2016, the Consortium was granted *erga omnes* recognition, and therefore acts in respect of everyone, whether a consortium member or not, who registers under the appellations. Beyond simply promoting and protecting the wines produced in the appellation areas, today, the Consortium works to develop the land where these specialities originate, thus contributing to creating a virtuous link between treasures of food, wine, culture and history.

## THE GARDA REGION: A PIECE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AT THE FOOT OF THE ALPS

*'Garda DOC wines have their origins in a matchless geographical area, a unique place enveloped by the Alps and lit by a captivating light that is reflected in the waters of the lake. Here, the hills, dotted with vines, speak of a landscape rich in iconic features whose story is fundamentally intertwined with that of the vine growing'.* **Paolo Fiorini**, President of the Garda DOC Consortium.

A 'piece of the Mediterranean' at the foot of the Alps: this is how we might define the geographical area surrounding Lake Garda. It is a region that looks like no other, characterised by **morainic hills** with a typical semi-circular shape, the result of the numerous glaciations and depositions left by Garda when the basin was still a glacier. Here, thanks to a special constantly temperate climate, the **air is Mediterranean**, redolent of the typically Mediterranean vegetation such as olive trees, caper bushes, lemon trees, citron trees and agave plants that surround the lake.

Vine growing in this region has played a prime role since ancient times, always working from a perspective of connecting with and protecting the surrounding landscape: in fact, this is how the numerous **iconic features** of this area have stayed intact, remaining, even today, distinctive features of the landscape around Lake Garda. The vineyards thus provide the backdrop for parish churches; *marogne*, typical dry-stone walls of great architectural value, a testament to geological eras and professions of the past; country roads that their way through valleys; and towns and villages that safeguard an ancient production tradition and simple rural architecture. In addition, there is the typical vegetation of the Mediterranean landscape, which still holds rich and varied biodiversity. The iconic features that distinguish the Garda area thus tell the story of a region that draws lessons from its successful past but that is able, at the same time, to constantly keep its eyes on the future, demonstrating how **vineyard management and landscape protection are interconnected** and how this protection is strategic for developing cultivation models capable of combining viticultural tradition with technological innovation.

Officially recognised in 1996, Garda DOC was created to enhance the value of the varietal wines from the 10 historical production areas of the Garda region: Valtènesi, San Martino della Battaglia, Lugana, Colli Mantovani, Custoza, Bardolino, Valpolicella, Valdadige, Durello and Soave. These 10 exceptional areas overlooking Italy's largest lake have now seen production expand beyond varietal wines thanks to the addition of sparkling, white and red wines in the production regulations.

### ***Wine production and terroir***

The special characteristics of the Garda region translate into a wide variety and abundance in terms of the wine production. Looking more closely at the region's vine-growing areas reveals a production mosaic that can be subdivided into **four main geographical areas**: the eastern shore, the southern shore, the western shore and the eastern branch.

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As for the terroir, the characteristics are determined by the unique aspects of this geographical area, which are due, in turn, both to the favourable climate provided by the proximity of the lake and the successive geological events that, over the course of millennia, shaped the territory that we know today. The vines grow in morainic agglomerate soils formed from the movement of debris, rocks, sand and clay deposited over millennia by the same glacier that would later create Lake Garda and that time, water and vegetation have transformed into the present-day hills that characterise the Garda landscape.

The soils show little differentiation in terms of their pedological profile; they are generally stony, rich in rock fragments and highly calcareous, but with low levels of active lime. In most cases, they are moderately deep and do not retain water well due to their coarse texture and poor structure.

This terroir, with such particular characteristics, forged by time and helped by a ‘friendly’ climate, is the birthplace of the Garda DOC wines that are recognisable for their **softness, freshness and minerality**.

## **GARDA’S CLIMATE AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE VINEYARD**

*‘A temperate climate that seems to recall the Mediterranean but that also enjoys the breeze from Lake Garda, a one-of-a-kind luminosity and sun exposure that guarantees exceptional grape ripening’.* **Paolo Fiorini**, President of the Garda DOC Consortium.

Garda DOC wines come about thanks to a combination of favourable conditions, a unique predisposition that they seem to recount with every sip, in their incredible range of aromas, rich in nuance, softness and fragrance. In no place apart from the Lake Garda area can it be said that the climate plays as much of a major role in the vine growing and is as decisive in defining the characteristics of the wines to which it gives rise.

The climate in this area is **temperate subcontinental** and can be further defined as sub-Mediterranean in that it is characterised by summers that are not too hot and winters that are relatively cold, with rainfall evenly distributed throughout the year. This prevents any particularly significant water deficit in the summer, thus avoiding the drought conditions typical of fully Mediterranean areas.

**Lake Garda** itself also plays a key role in the climate thanks to its crucial mitigating effect—acting on both the summer heat and the winter cold—and the breezes, typical of larger lakes, that cross it and are particularly intense here as a result of the proximity to the mountains.

Finally, excellent sun exposure—also helped by the slope of the ground that makes it possible to better regulate the energy accumulated per unit of area—enables the grapes to ripen perfectly and brings out their characteristics even further.

This mesoclimate, which benefits from special characteristics, can, nowadays, be summarised in **two main effects** that can be seen in the vineyard behaviour. The first important effect—due to the increase in temperatures and, in general, to climate change—is the **increase in the sugar content of the grapes**, which means wines with higher alcohol content. The second effect can be seen in the **intensification of the vines’ metabolic activity**, linked to the interaction of the altered climatic factors, resulting in more significant sugar production and, therefore, a higher alcohol content once again.

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These evolving characteristics represent some of the major challenges for maintaining high and consistent quality standards and guaranteeing these standards for consumers. The Consortium draws lessons from such challenges to establish its approach in line with the changing demands of wine lovers, mapping a route where the balance of the vineyard, framed in this climatic context, becomes the key to unlocking the appellation's new approach to production to guarantee high-quality wines that can satisfy the tastes of today's consumers and, at the same time, ensure a fair economic return for the vine grower and the entire supply chain.

## **THE WINES AND GRAPE VARIETIES OF GARDA DOC**

Created to represent the varietal wines in the historical production areas of the Garda region, in the provinces of Verona, Mantova and Brescia, and thus enhance the value of all those wines without any geographical indication or recognition, the Garda DOC appellation has seen its production expand over the years, growing to include sparkling wines as well as red and white wines. Today, the following are the types of wine allowed by the production regulations:

### *Still varietal wines*

Pinot Bianco, Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay, Riesling B., Sauvignon, Cortese, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Corvina, Pinot Nero, Marzemino

### *Still wines obtained by mixing different grapes or blending different (finished) wines*

White (Garganega, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Trebbiano) Red (Merlot, Cabernet, Corvina, Marzemino, Rebo)

### *Charmat method sparkling wines, mainly varietal*

White (Garganega, Trebbiano di Lugana, Pinot Grigio)

### *Classic method sparkling wines, mainly cuvée*

White (Chardonnay, Pinot Nero, Corvina)  
Rosé (Marzemino, Corvina, Pinot Nero)

There are eight **main grape varieties** used to produce the wines in the Garda DOC appellation, according to the relevant production regulations, four white: Garganega, Trebbiano (Trebbiano di Soave and/or Trebbiano di Lugana), Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio; and four red: Corvina, Marzemino, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. There is also a range of native varieties found in the area.

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## GARDA DOC IN NUMBERS

### *In the vineyard*

- **31,000** usable hectares in total (total area of the 10 historical appellations)
- **371,000** quintals [1 quintal = 100 kg] of grapes registered with the Consortium in 2022 (around 78,000 quintals in 2016)

### *In the winery*

- **153,000** hectolitres of wine bottled as Garda DOC in 2022 (around 34,000 hl in 2016)
- **42,000** hectolitres of Chardonnay bottled in 2022, accounting for the most-bottled type of wine (around 6,800 hl in 2016)
- **35,500** hectolitres of Pinot Grigio bottled in 2022 (around 2,000 hl in 2016)
- **30,000** hectolitres of Garganega bottled in 2022 (around 1,316 hl in 2016)
- **22,000** hectolitres of semi-sparkling wine bottled in 2022 (around 12,000 hl in 2016)
- **5,800** hectolitres of sparkling wine bottled in 2022 (around 428 hl in 2016)
- **4,000** hectolitres of Merlot bottled in 2022
- **2,500** hectolitres of Cabernet bottled in 2022
- **20 million** bottles produced in one year
- **250 producers** who make and bottle their own wine ('vertical producers') and cooperative wineries that use the appellation

## MISSION AND VISION OF THE CONSORTIUM

One of the action areas in which the Consortium has been most active and successful over the past seven years is, without a doubt, consolidating the image of Garda wines. The intention has been to enhance the value of these excellent wines, with the aim of ensuring that their value is, first and foremost, perceived and understood by both consumers and the producers themselves.

*'The objective we have set ourselves, and on which we will continue to work, is to make people understand the range of opportunities that this appellation can offer, moving in parallel and never conflicting with the historical appellations that coexist in this region. The Garda DOC appellation seeks to enable all users to take full advantage of everything this region has to offer'.* **Carlo Alberto Panont**, Director of the Garda DOC Consortium.

The Consortium, therefore, works not only to increase the (already well-established) quality of the wines but to increase the perception of this quality. Accordingly, it has been working along these lines over the past seven years, establishing itself as a dynamic and knowledgeable body, committed to providing impetus to all the producers in the area based on the possibilities of this appellation.

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A tangible result of this approach can be seen in the genuine **branding of the appellation** that the Consortium has managed to implement in recent years, based on the creation of a **recognisable story and an image that is well represented in the logo** that accompanies the communication activities. This story finds its strength precisely in the concept of territory that is an intrinsic part of and influences the awareness of Garda wines and all the assets that originate here. With this in mind, it is crucial to **link the experience of Lake Garda to the wines produced here**, and a single, unified message must result from this, one that cuts across all the appellations and is aimed at communicating the entire Garda region.

An example of this approach is the participation in the 2023 edition of Vinitaly: the Consortium will be present, for the first time, with its own stand, located outside the regional pavilions, highlighting how the DOC is a home open to all, going beyond the regional systems in the strict sense to establish itself, in broader terms, as a true territorial area system.

## THE CONSORTIUM'S PROJECTS

*'With Garda Wine Stories, our goal is to etch the identity of our exceptional varietal and sparkling wines in people's minds, wines that are intertwined with our enthralling region, with its unique geographical and climatic characteristics that make it not only one of the most popular tourist destinations nationally and internationally but also a privileged area for viticulture'* – **Paolo Fiorini**, President of the Garda DOC Consortium.

The area where Garda DOC wines are born is thus one of a kind, not only due to its unique pedoclimatic and vine-growing characteristics but also to the natural and undisputed beauty that defines this particular geographical region and that undoubtedly represents an important driver in the awareness of and approach to its rich wine and food heritage. For this reason, the Garda DOC Consortium is fully committed not only to enhancing the value of the appellation's wines but also to finding synergies with the thriving region where the wines originate. That is why the area's renown and Lake Garda's beauty become fundamental factors in telling the story of the appellation's wines.

These elements were responsible for bringing about Garda Wine Stories, the Garda DOC Consortium event that tells the story of the richness of Garda's wines, from varietal to sparkling. After the huge success of the 2022 edition, this event will be held again for the second time in 2023, split into two parts this year: **Garda Wine Stories**, which will be a multi-day event dedicated to the press and industry professionals, and **Garda DOC a Bordo**, a public tasting event held over four evenings.

While the professional event will be focused on the different soils of the Lake Garda area and how they are expressed through the wines (with a presentation of the soil map and an in-depth documentary), **Garda DOC a Bordo** will be held on the historical paddle steamer *Zanardelli* on the four Thursdays in June. This vessel will cruise the lake while attendees taste the wines from producers from different winemaking areas around Lake Garda, discovering different interpretations of the selections of varietal and sparkling wines. The walk-around tasting will be followed by a gala dinner, with a menu put together especially for the event offering the perfect pairings for Garda wines. The event will welcome around 100 people each evening.

## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROMOTED BY THE CONSORTIUM\*

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In Parallel to the Consortium's most obvious *raison d'être*—indisputably the protection and promotion of the appellation's wines—this body is committed to providing support to users of the appellation with a view to controlling production and, above all, constantly striving to improve quality.

This is why the Garda DOC Consortium promotes scientific research focused on different technical aspects of vine growing, commissioned by university departments and accredited research centres. Some examples of this include the study to characterise the agroclimate of the Garda area conducted by Luigi Mariani and Osvaldo Failla from the University of Milan (which will continue with further developments on a smaller scale) and the functional biodiversity project aimed at reducing the impact of chemicals in the vineyard, carried out by the Agrea Research Centre.

\*For technical details on these two research projects, please refer to the specific file.

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