

## Why 2020 was a 'roller coaster' vintage for Amarone

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Why 2020 was a 'roller coaster' vintage for Amarone 18 February 2025  
By Filippo Bartolotta db's Italian correspondent  
Filippo Bartolotta picks 20 bottles from the showcase of the 2020 vintage at this year's Amarone Opera Prima. This edition of Amarone Opera Prima marked a remarkable milestone with a record-breaking 77 participating wineries probably motivated by the exciting celebration of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the current consorzio. The event showcased an array of 77 wines: 33 from the classic zone, 39 from the extended areas, and five from the Valpantena subzone. The appellation is split into different valleys across a spectacular limestone-based semi-amphitheaters located in the foothills of the Alps. So far we haven't seen an official zoning system, but after tasting for so many years we know there's an important diversity brought by the mesoclimate and geological diversities of the roughly 13 valleys. The proximity to Lake Garda creates a milder climate and, as a result, a more gentle maturation for the key varieties of Corvina and

Corvinone. The longer valleys, such as Fumane, Valpantena and Illasi, bring colder winds and so often more floral aromas and vibrant fruit to the finished wines. On show was the 2020 vintage, a year which was a thrilling roller coaster ride, marked by unexpected twists and turns that ultimately rewarded dedicated producers with a unique and varied harvest. I still remember the comment made by many producers taken aback by the clear blue skies and the powerful sound of nature with the total absence of all sort of pollution - a silver lining from the Covid pandemic. In fact, spring 2020 greeted wine makers with mild, dry weather, revving up the vines and pushing them into bloom by May. But as summer rolled in, the weather took a different rhythm, with alternating hot, dry spells and refreshing rain. This led to slightly earlier harvest times, revealing delightful surprises in grape ripening across the region. Partner Content Master Winemaker 100: Gustavo Rearte The story of Penfolds' new era in France Champagne Duval-Leroy unveils 2008 vintage releases Prieuré Saint Christophe: a Savoie

institution When it came time for harvest, the perfectly ripened grapes showcased their incredible aromas of red fruit, balsamic herbs, chocolate and sweet roots. The impressive sugar concentrations, set the stage for the fabulous appassimento process (drying of the grapes) vital to Amarone della Valpolicella. But the asset of the ancient appassimento process is a double-edged sword, as highlighted Andrea Lonardi MW, vice president of the consorzio, who made it clear that he is championing the growing recognition of Amarone as a premium international wine focusing more on the land itself, rather than solely on its production method. So, let's raise a glass to the 2020 vintage and to the 100th anniversary celebration with a toast to the creativity, resilience, and unwavering spirit of Valpolicella! Tasting notes Contrada Palui: A vibrant blend of ginger, juniper, wild basil, and dry figs, accented by wild fennel. The palate reveals red fruits, cranberries, and ribes, offering a super citrus juiciness. This bone-dry wine is a new wave hero, perfect for both now and

ageing. 92/100 Ca la Bionda: Amazingly crunchy red currant fruit with vibrant zest and saline notes. This wine, still very young and slightly tight, showcases a leather crusted nose with mint, basil, ripe cherries, and cloves. Another slender version with great promise but still too young. Needs time. 93/100 Allegrini: Fabulous red fruits, eucalyptus, tea tree oil, and orange peel create a refreshing zest complemented by kumquat. This slender Amarone presents delightful coffee and juniper notes, alongside saline traits and a hint of herbs with a remarkable deliciously easy to drink style. 92/100 Secondo Marco: Notes of tar and roses complement cherries, dry red currant, mint, sage flowers, and violets. The wine presents power and juiciness, with mineral and smoky traits, finishing with intense forest floor and a tobacco-leathery elegance. Needs time. 95/100 Bertani: A unique contrast emerges between pure black cherry fruit and incense, complemented by a flinty tertiary style that unfolds to reveal dry figs, tobacco, and chocolate powder. This uncompromising Amarone has an elegant austerity wrapped around ripe fruit, delivering a refreshing finish. 95/100 Fattori:

Boasting an amazing red fruit character, this wine is saline, juicy, and zesty, with an impressive mineral style. The wildflowers and elegant herbal notes contribute to a vibrating mouthfeel of red dry fruit, bursting with juiciness and orange peel. 96/100 Benazzoli: Mineral and flinty driven with a lot of enticing herbal notes, candied ginger, floral notes and some sour cherries and earthy tones. Alive, mineral and juicy kicking on the palate. Delightful and full of energy. 93/100 Massimago: Cherries in spirit are complemented by crunchy and saline notes. This wine offers a bounty of icy fruit alongside a surprisingly substantial structure, featuring an intuitive, fruit-driven approach with dry herbs and a balsamic touch. 91/100 Santi: An austere profile characterized by intense coffee and chocolate notes, tree bark, and tannins. The palate reveals cherries and chocolate, combining tension and structure for a long-lasting finish. 92/100 Bolla: This super dry version, with no residual sugar, offers intriguing dry red fruits alongside menthol, licorice, and a leather complexity that adds depth to its overall character. 92/100 **Albino Armani**: Floral aromas intertwine with goji berries,

dry figs, wild mint, and earthy notes, enhanced by carob and oak spices. This super juicy wine is incredibly mineral and flinty, concluding with a remarkably long finish. Ready to drink now, but also apt for cellar ageing. 94/100 Campagnola: Refreshing red fruit is complemented by floral and mineral notes, alongside hints of pencil shavings, prunes, and chocolate. The palate is enriched with blueberries, juniper, and a touch of coconut and pine sap, presenting a mineral and saline profile with elegant smoky traits. 94/100 Ca' Rugate: Clean red fruit, floral notes, and medicinal herbs combined with sweet roots create a refreshing, juicy palate. Its amazing energy is built on a medium tannin structure and flavours of sweet cherries and plums. Enjoy now. 94/100 Marion: A captivating mix of blueberries and herbaceous notes, featuring intense vegetal tea tree oil. This wine has a wonderful complexity of liquorice and prunes, with a lovely balance of acidity and a touch of residual sugar, making it enjoyable now while still possessing serious structure for ageing. 93/100 Collina dei Ciliegi - Ciliegio: Blueberries and vanilla come through, with hints of Ferrero Rocher

presenting a unique twist. The palate focuses on cherries and cranberries, delivering a crunchy yet smooth finish. This wine is ready to drink but holds ageing potential. 93/100

**Pasqua:** Intense aromas of chocolate, prunes, and cherries under spirit, combined with notes of blueberry, cola, and violets create a captivating nose. The palate showcases the wine's full potential, activating sensations on each corner with a creamy acidity that supports the overall structure. 95/100

**Sartori Conte Brà:** Rich notes of prunes, chocolate, liquorice, and dates define this wine. On the palate, it offers impressive power and structure, featuring darker fruits balanced by a touch of acidity that hints at its ageing potential. 91/100

**Le Guaite:** With aromas of Fernet Branca, herbal montani notes, and vegetal complexity, this wine also reveals dates and dry figs. An intensely balsamic character, it boasts a rich and powerful structure paired with a sweet and enduring finish. 92/100

**Zyme:** Full-bodied and opulent, this wine is rich in blueberries and blackcurrants with hints of candy floss and vanilla. Its voluminous character and powerful structure suggest excellent ageing potential. 93/100

**Roccolo Grassi:**

Complex aromas of chocolate fudge, pears, prunes, dates, and myrrh lead to a tobacco finish. A concentrated style of Amarone, it presents a mineral and smoky complexity with structure, length, body and power, though needing time to evolve. 93/100

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