

# Ep 174: The Wines of Alto Adige - Trentino with Beatrice Bessi, Head Sommelier of Chiltern Firehouse (Part 2)



**Janina Doyle 00:00:07** Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just cannot get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So, stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving, wonderful world of wine. And wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Hello, wine friends, and welcome back to part two with head sommelier Beatrice Bessi. Now, if you haven't caught part one, go back and have a listen. Beatrice is the type of person who you can tell pours her heart and soul into all of her endeavours. And I think this is what I love most about wine, listening to people about their wine journey in whatever capacity and hearing and feeling that passion.

So, that will continue in this episode as well, whilst we talk about Beatrice taking her Court of Master Sommelier exams, her recent trip to Australia, old vines and the main theme of this episode, which is on the Italian wine regions Alto Adige and Trentino.

Now imagine snow capped mountains, Alto Adige is on the border of Austria and Switzerland. It is more Austrian than Italian with two-thirds native German speakers. So, we'll be talking about some of the indigenous grape varieties that grow there, such as Schiava and Lagrein.

An interesting fun fact, 98% of Alto Adige's wines are released at at least the DOC level, which is more than any of the other wine regions of Italy. Now, just below Alto Adige is Trentino. I always think of the incredible traditional method sparkling wine producer Ferrari when I think of Trentino, but Beatrice has been to Alto Adige and Trentino several times considering it one of her favourite wine regions. So, I shall leave her to work her magic and inspire you all.

Now, if you are enjoying these episodes and you have two moments free, don't forget it helps the podcast massively if you can leave a rating or a review on the podcast app you are listening to. If you guys are ready, let's go over to the chat now.

**Janina Doyle 00:02:26** Now I want to take us to you taking your Court of Master Sommelier advanced exams, because there's several levels. They're not easy. They're a little bit challenging. And well, anyone who listened to part one will know that you're into challenges, you've taken on a lot and you're amazing at achieving things. So, how has that been doing your Court of Master Sommelier Advanced?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:02:50** I mean, I passed it in 19 and the moment I passed was such an achievement. It was probably one of the peaks of my career and I don't think I achieved the peak

actually of my career yet, but at that moment, the pressure was very high. You put yourself through a lot of sacrifices. I had my daughter – how old she was? So, in 2019, she was 10 now? Yes, nine. And I remember, the night before she was reading me the flashcards.

**Janina Doyle 00:03:29** Amazing.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:03:30** I think I have a picture of her falling asleep on the pile of the flashcards.

**Janina Doyle 00:03:33** Oh, the poor girl! But amazing that she helped you.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:03:37** Yeah, she was like, “Mom, no, I want to help you.” And I mean, I failed the first time in February, I think. And after two months, I decided to do it anyway because I had a bit of a panic attack.

So, I knew I could do it. It wasn't that I was missing knowledge or, I didn't manage myself in the right way. So, I remember I didn't open any books for those two months. I just did a lot of meditation for stress, kind of anxiety.

And I remember I passed it. I remember after you do the exam, you finish the three days in the case of the advanced, you are called again.

**Janina Doyle 00:04:15** Three days?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:04:16** Yeah. So, it's a five day exam, let's say with three days of lessons and two days of examination. So, you are there for five days. Three days where they ask you, they are advised with you, blah, blah, blah.

**Janina Doyle 00:04:29** Okay. So, some last minute learning.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:04:32** Not really. I mean, you cannot really, but they tell you, oh, this thing, you need to know it. That thing, you need to know it. And there were also some sessions of blind tastings together with a group of candidates. But if you are not ready, you're not going to be ready for those three days, obviously. So, I remember it was 10 months intense preparation before the exam with the six months counting the hours – scheduled hour by hour every day.

**Janina Doyle 00:05:03** And this is all self-study though, isn't it?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:05:05** Yes, self-studied. I had a bit of a blind tasting group but it's all self-provided, self-studied. Obviously, I was working back in time in 67 so I could ask questions to my colleagues saying, how do you think about this, about that? Should I study that? Should I not? But it's a self-learning process.

**Janina Doyle 00:05:24** But those two days then are exams, two days, what is one day more the knowledge of wine and then the second day is more the practical pouring wine and serving to customers?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:05:35** The first day of the examination, you do the theory. It's a written questionnaire. So, it's a written paper. You do it all together. Now I'm learning to remember because it's four years ago.

I think in the afternoon you start to do the blind tasting. Yes. Yes, you do the blind tasting so you are called in a room by yourself with two or three master sommeliers.

**Janina Doyle 00:06:00** Oh, not intimidating at all.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:06:03** No, not at all. So, you are in a closed room. So, they run three or four people at the same time, just depending on the space they have, in which hotel we are. And so, you have six wines to be described orally, verbally in 25 minutes, calling the grape variety and the region and the vintage too.

The day after you have the practical, where you have basically a scenario of a restaurant. You have three, four tables. Every year can change slightly. And you have some service to be done with questions, but definitely the decanting service of a sparkling and so on.

And you call back on the second day. So, in the afternoon, when you have done the three parts, you are called back again for the result of communication. So, you are called again individually, you're called in front of one master. And I remember I have a video of it because Ronan back in time was my boss. And obviously, he didn't approach me at all for that exam. And he was behind me recording my reaction.

I didn't see him at all because I was like, oh my God, I cannot do this anymore. I want to pass. So, one of the other master sommeliers gave me the answer and he was like taking his time, obviously like, "So, how do you feel? And how was last time? Why did you fail? Why did you not pass the advance last time? What was the issue?" And I said, yeah, I had a bit of a panic attack in the blind tasting part. "So, how did you feel this time?" Like, I don't know. I feel confident. "Yeah, this time you passed the tasting."

**Janina Doyle 00:07:42** Yay!

**Beatrice Bessi 00:07:43** And now I'm like, okay, but did I pass the other parts? Because if you don't, you fail the exam. So, you cannot save one part or the other or so. Another five minutes I was like, oh, please tell me!

**Janina Doyle 00:07:57** Hurry up and tell me!

**Beatrice Bessi 00:07:58** Can you just tell me. I want to die. So, obviously, I passed and I started to cry and Ronan was taking video of me from behind. I was like, ah, look at you. And I lost my phone. I didn't know where my phone was because I was only thinking about exam. And actually, I left the phone back at home.

So, I didn't see it for another hour or two. And Ronan posted the video on the WhatsApp group of the sommelier in 67. And everybody was laughing about me. Anyway, it was...

**Janina Doyle 00:08:30** In a good way.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:08:31** I mean, honestly, probably was the better night of sleep I had in years after that. I remember, I had a bottle of champagne to celebrate myself. A nice bottle of champagne that night for dinner and I just collapsed on my bed.

**Janina Doyle 00:08:47** Passed out. Beautiful. That sounds gorgeous. I love that. Now I want to take you on a wine trip again. For people listening, they can get inspired. And I know you said to me recently, you just had the most amazing trip in Australia.

So, why did you tell me that one of your best trips that's coming to mind right now is Australia? Who did you go with? Where did you actually go in Australia?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:09:08** So, we spent two weeks in Australia. One week in New South Wales, across all the GIs, all the appellations, the most important appellations. And after, we crossed borders and we moved to South Australia and we did one week in South Australia. Amazing, amazing trip. So, the trip is called the James Busby trip.

**Janina Doyle 00:09:30** James Busby. For anyone who doesn't know, he's the Scottish guy, ironically, who brought all the grape varieties across. And I assume, you must know, he is buried in a cemetery somewhere in London.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:09:43** I didn't know that.

**Janina Doyle 00:09:45** I think South London, but anyway, everyone, I'm sure you can Google it.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:09:50** Yeah. All right. So, the trip is called James Busby. It's organised from a Master of Wine by himself that is based in London, obviously. Unfortunately, that was the last trip of the last 14 years. He organised the trip almost every year, sometimes twice per year.

And yeah, so I was very privileged to be invited to this trip for 2020. And obviously, as you can guess, it didn't happen because of COVID. I was crying all year probably. Finally, it could happen last year. We went at the end of October till the beginning of November. It was amazing. I knew that would be the best trip of my life and it definitely didn't disappoint.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:35** Who's the Master of Wine who organises this?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:10:38** Tim Wildman.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:39** Okay. Tim Wildman. Oh, my God! Well, okay. For anybody, I've actually spoken with him and he said he will come on the podcast at some point when he's not so busy.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:10:50** He's doing wine as well. He's making wine as well between the UK and Australia. So he keeps travelling back and forth. He's a very busy person, but he's such a personality. And we talked about the trip, on the trip and after the trip, quite a lot of time, and we met a lot of people. Obviously, on these kinds of trips, you're meeting people that you've never met before most of the time and you make connections and so on, coming from different countries in the world.

Think about the connection that you make. And also we just realised during the trip that Tim shared his friend's connection with us. It wasn't like, okay, from eight to nine, we are here. From 10 to 11, we are there. Guys, ask your questions. It was more about, I know this winemaker since 15 years when I was travelling by myself, backpacking in Australia, and we became friends. Now we're family. Sometimes I sleep here. And so, it makes everything completely different. We felt part of a group, of a family.

**Janina Doyle 00:11:58** I think for anybody who loves wine and has always thought about getting in the industry, you have to. It's like this story that you're telling me now and many of my own personal stories, you enter a world that is almost only for the wine trade, which is this combination of hospitality and people's homes and people's cultures and foods and experiences and behind the scenes and going places that the richest of people wouldn't pay for because it just wouldn't be there on offer to them. And you come away with something so special deep in your heart.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:12:31** That's why you cannot leave it afterwards. That's the problem.

**Janina Doyle 00:12:34** Yeah, totally.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:12:35** You start to feel these emotions and this connection and after how can you leave it? It's not about knowing – I mean, obviously from my perspective, it's all about knowing and having the knowledge and having the power to understand and to get the hang of it after years and years and years and years of experience and trying and still not there 100% and you keep going and you keep going and you keep having new things, new appellations, new regions and new discoveries.

But also the beauty of connections and travelling and people that you meet along the way and they become, oh, we met a few times and we taste your wines already and I'm gonna list your wine because I like it and because it represents who I am too. And I remember your land and I remember how you take care of your land and how you take care of your children and I remember your dog and whatever it was. And we had sorbet made with wine in the freezer. That's what it's about.

**Janina Doyle 00:13:37** Now that does not surprise me on a Tim Wildman trip because for anybody who doesn't know, he makes these awesome pét-nats and he makes pét-nats in Australia and one's called Piggy Pop.

I mean, he doesn't take himself seriously, but the wines are serious. And I met him when he was first showing the first vintage in England, the pét-nat, I think it's called Lost in a Field. And the reason I want him on this podcast at some point is because he is rescuing as many old vines or unknown vines in England.

And he's got a great project getting people to kind of work together as a community. And then it's like hacking away, cleaning up the land, to clear out a vineyard so people can start making grapes from it. And then he camps, everyone camps under the stars. So, you don't get paid, but you get this incredible experience and then you eat and drink and camp. He's a very inspiring man. I kind of semi-can-understand why that was a beautiful experience for you.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:14:41** Yeah, we had everything, from historical producers made in a classic style to, you know, of course, obviously we visited some of the oldest vineyards in the world that are planted in Australia, the oldest plant of planting of Grenache, one of the oldest of Shiraz and so on, some of the actually more than one, ungrafted.

So, the beauty of the land to the beauty of the people, the connection with the historical family to new upcoming producers, natural wine making style, orange, pét-nat to classic to full rich style to light. The food scene is absolutely incredible. We went squidding one day. So, fishing squids.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:26** Oh, I was going to say what's squidding?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:15:27** Squidding. Yeah, that's what they say. So, we woke up one morning when we were in South Australia and we went. I think we woke up at five. I don't remember. 5 A.M. We went with a few boats on the ocean and we just tried to fish some squid and we had squid for lunch afterwards. Anyway, it was incredible.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:52** Where did you go for the oldest vines of Grenache?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:15:55** Oh la la la! Oh, wow!

**Janina Doyle 00:15:56** Did you go to quite a few?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:15:58** Oh no, we had Marco Cirillo. Marco Cirillo is a producer that has some of the most...

**Janina Doyle 00:16:07** He has some really old Semillon vines, right?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:16:10** Obviously, I do have a bottle at home.

**Janina Doyle 00:16:12** Oh, of course!

**Beatrice Bessi 00:16:13** Because I couldn't really think about not coming back home without a wine. And stupidly, every time I do these kinds of trips, coming from not a very super rich background, I started to have these opportunities to travel outside Europe.

Not long ago, I crossed the European continent for the first time just two two years ago. And when I went to Australia again, I didn't think about it taking a bit of space in the luggage. Every time I forget this. Stupid of me. But I did have a bit of space and one of the bottles I brought back with me was the Grenache 1850 from Marco Cirillo. One of the best Grenaches you can taste in your life.

Also the connection with him, you can see that he truly cares about his land and the passion that he has. And the vineyard is incredible. It's so beautiful. And his wife is incredible. They are a lovely couple. They love each other so much. And you can see that. And they hosted us in that winery and it was an amazing dinner time. I mean, every day was an amazing day. It was so hard to pick one day. It was impossible to pick which day would be the best out of all of them.

**Janina Doyle 00:17:33** I can imagine. Was it Langmeil Winery or Langmeil Estate, they're the ones with the oldest Shiraz vines. Is that where you went for the oldest Shiraz vines?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:17:43** We have been there. Yeah, absolutely. We have been there too. We also have been to the older plot of Semillon as well from Marco. We had some other older plot of Grenache. Everywhere, especially in South Australia...

**Janina Doyle 00:18:03** Old vines...

**Beatrice Bessi 00:18:04** Old vines, yes.

**Janina Doyle 00:18:06** ...are spiritual experience. They make you feel something different when you're in a vineyard with the chunkiest, gnarliest...

**Beatrice Bessi 00:18:14** I mean, especially if you are in this industry for a reason, you're doing this for passion, every time you go to these places and you see these people, it's the most beautiful. You feel accomplished in a way, I don't know, and connected to motherhood.

**Janina Doyle 00:18:31** Connected. It's a connection.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:18:34** Connected. And also we cried so many times. I cannot believe it. How many times we cried on that trip. Like about connections, people were moving us. People were telling us about their stories and about the way they try to save the land and the way they try to apologise to the ancestors, to the Aboriginal people.

Obviously, the wine industry is very connected to it because the farmers are the first people to see the changes in climate change, and the environmental issues because they are the first affected by it. We are living in a town, unfortunately, we have one week of hotter weather, oh my God, we complain. They are the first people to see first hand what actually we are doing to mother nature, and connecting back to the land is the only solution. Absolutely.

And it was a wine trip, it was a friendship trip and it was also a cultural trip. And you discover, again, that you are ignorant in a way that you don't know Australia because I've never been there and I'm not from there. And you cannot know these kinds of things if you don't go there.

**Janina Doyle 00:19:42** I love it. So, now you are very passionate about your latest trip but I am going to bring you back to your homeland because when I asked you again, what are the regions that you really like to talk about, you said Trentino, Alto Adige. So, we're going now to the northeastern part of Italy. So, why do you love this region up in the mountains?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:20:09** Because I think this is one of the regions that probably deserves most recognition and it's a unique region regarding style, regarding wine making, regarding personality. And again, if we want to do a comparison with Sicily, it has not been recognised with any highest top tier appellations yet. And it's crazy to think that.

**Janina Doyle 00:20:33** That is true. Yeah.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:20:35** Probably down to the historical site of the region where you have a lot of fragmentation, the way the region is made is definitely fragmented. You do have kind of two regions within the region.

**Janina Doyle 00:20:49** Well, yeah. So what do you feel? Because actually very often gets put together, but Trentino is South, Alto Adige is in the North,. And actually, two thirds...

**Beatrice Bessi 00:21:00** It is, it is the reality of Italy, you know, especially. Italy, we do have certain regions that are autonomic regions as we call them. So, geographically speaking and also for the government side of things, they have the 100% autonomy to do their own rules. They have most of the time a double language that is their regional and national, let's put it in that way, language.

So, regarding Alto Adige especially, they have a Germanic language. That's their official language. I mean, that part of Italy has been unified with Italy only after the first world war. So, a very recent situation.

And families there are considering themselves Germanic still now. They have Germanic surnames. They speak Austrian-German at school. Yeah, at the end of the day, they are part of Italy. But I would say, Trentino is definitely a bit more Italian in a way. It's a bit more connected to Veneto and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, but mainly Veneto.

It's like a prolongation of Veneto in a way. You start to see a shift, obviously, in food and everything and in wine culture, but Alto Adige is a completely different organism in a way for wine and especially for the culture connected to the fact that there is a Germanic culture there.

**Janina Doyle 00:22:31** Do you find Alto Adige is the place that excites you a lot? I mean, it's a very continental but alpine-like region, isn't it?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:22:41** Yeah. I mean, I spent a lot of time there before I was in the wine industry. So, obviously, for food and skiing reasons. It's one of the most beautiful areas you can travel and you can visit in Italy. Not maybe the most famous area, if we go down to wine, down in Italy.

But I think if we would be able to promote and to support Sicily as much, I think Trentino - Alto Adige should be the next one in line because they deserve it. The quality is up there. They have amazing, amazing wines, mainly white, but there is a nice red community and red production. The wines are incredible. The wines are incredible. So, yeah.

**Janina Doyle 00:23:32** The whites, obviously lovely and aromatic, and maybe we'll touch on them, but I want to pick your brain about the reds because we have two grape varieties from here that people might not have heard of, which is Schiava and Lagrein, if I'm pronouncing correctly. So, let's talk about that. Because again, in the last episode, we talked about Frappato, an amazing light variety that can be red or the wine, Cerasuolo di Vittoria, that you could chill down and enjoy in the summer.

But Schiava, it's this lovely red, cherried rose petal. I think actually, don't they call it cotton candy? The cotton candy grape.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:24:11** Yeah, it is. It is. You could do a comparison again, but I would say probably both of them, you could start to think that they're quite easy and approachable, but I think Lagrein has a more kind of a spicy and earthier style down to the producers, down to the wine making.

But I would say Schiava, it tends to be a bit more paler in colour, it tends to be a bit more juicier in colour, juicier in profile. Schiava, I would say, it's probably for daily drinking. It's probably the easier approachable wine down to the nuances of the producer and how you want to interpret the wines. But Lagrein definitely has a bit more mineral, earthy backbone to it, but both incredible, incredible grape varieties.

**Janina Doyle 00:25:03** And I've had Lagrein where it's been in oak, so it's a much more age-worthy example. Whereas actually, and this is where I wonder if you could just shed some light. Schiava, the only Schiava I've had, is much more kind of fun, light, fresh style. Is it a grape variety that anyone is trying to put in oak?



**Beatrice Bessi 00:25:24** I would say out of Italy, so we are in London, I think Lagrein is getting a bit more recognition at this stage. It's a bit more spread around, probably again down to what you said that you can see a bit of ageing potential and you can see it's more well suited for oak.

Schiava, it's probably the Dolcetto of Trentino Alto Adige, where you wanna have a lighter, easier, juicier wine. Actually, I never taste Schiava made in full new oak. I wouldn't mind to experiment with it...

**Janina Doyle 00:26:05** Oh, really?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:26:06** But I would say oak, it's definitely, at this stage, much more recognised, suitable for Lagrein. Because the tannins are quite grippy in Lagrein so the oak can at least kind of soften the tannins and make it a bit more smoother.

I remember, back in time when I used to work in Italy, Lagrein was very fashion, upcoming, great variety by the glass. In every top wine bar you had a glass of Lagrein. You can do some easy juicy Lagrein, but the tannins are pretty much intense, so the oak ageing is helping that out.

**Janina Doyle 00:26:43** Yeah, I've always, with the few Lagrein's I've had, there's also and there's that spice, there's like you said, I think you said the earthiness, there's a bit of spiciness, a black pepper vibe going on in the mixed berries. I'm sad that Lagrein obviously had a time and then seems to have disappeared a bit. It didn't make it through.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:27:03** It's down to the fact that we are so confusing as a country. How many grape varieties can you list about Italy? Do you want to list all 650 out of them? I mean, how much space do you have for Italian wines?

So, that's the con of Italian wine. We have so much variety and diversity that it's hard to choose. Even for myself, you need to make decisions. So, you need to think about how many bottles of wines from Italy you can list. Is it an Italian wine list? Go for it. List all of them. List Schioppettino, Schiava, Dolcetto, Freisa, Barbera, Nero Mascalese, whatever you need, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Sangiovese, Nebbiolo. You have space.

But again, down to being an internationally acclaimed town, where competition is very high and you want to please at least the majority of your consumers and your guests and then demand is definitely mainly international and after with the quirky, after with the secret gems, the hidden gems.

Absolutely, Italy is very prone to lead the way regarding secrets, regarding things that you cannot know, things that you might never tasted before, even if you're Italian. But it's hard, again, it's not because Lagrein doesn't deserve the space, it's because there are so many that down to a macro picture, it's hard to pick all of them apart. But I would say, if I need to list – I mean, I am doing it right now. So, if I need to list red wine from Trentino Alto Adige, I have Merlot and I have Lagrein in my wine list.

**Janina Doyle 00:28:50** Well, that kind of also then shows what are the most planted, the most known, probably potentially the most consistent. Surprise, everyone, there's Merlot.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:29:01** Yeah, there is. I mean, that area, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia as well. You have an amazing representation of Merlot. Definitely you say that that area of the country is mainly white dominated and more famous for white production. Obviously, the weather, it's helping in that way. It's a kind of a borderline situation. The winter is very cold and so on. But you do have some exceptional red grape varieties, mainly again, a few internationals and also some crazy grape variety that are beautiful wines.

**Janina Doyle 00:29:36** Well, I don't know, are there any other indigenous reds that people should know about? Is the Teroldego grape actually worth it? Is it actually worth discussing?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:29:46** Teroldego? Yeah.

**Janina Doyle 00:29:46** Oh, Teroldego, because interesting, the reason I'm bringing that up is that I did a podcast on Brazilian wines several episodes ago and that specific grape variety I discovered is growing over there now.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:30:01** Wow! I didn't know that. Oh, wow. Everybody wants to be us, of course. You cross the street, you have an Italian restaurant. Obviously, I mean, no, I'm joking.

**Janina Doyle 00:30:15** Pizzas and pastas. Come on!

**Beatrice Bessi 00:30:17** Oh, come on. Everybody's copying. No, I mean, jokes aside, but I think Teroldego, yes, is one of the older native varieties or autochthon varieties from the area. And it's pretty much restricted in a flat area that is Rotaliano. You do have some few samples here and there, but Teroldego is mainly in this kind of an area between San Michele and Mezzolombardo. So, it's like a flat area within the mountain range that looks upon the mountain range and it's again, another quite tannic, I would say, a Lagrein plus.

**Janina Doyle 00:30:54** Well, it's supposed it's even grippier and deeper coloured, isn't it? Yeah, okay.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:30:58** Absolutely. You definitely put some oak there. There are some natural producers there as well that are taking a different lead. There are a lot of classic wine makings where you put oak and you try to age it a bit, settle down the tannins, ready to be bottled and so on. So, yeah, another amazing, powerful, red, rich, quite dense colour, quite concentrated that you can enjoy from the area. Yeah, absolutely.

**Janina Doyle 00:31:30** Now as you keep on saying, it's all about the whites and I'm like, tell me about the reds. But for the whites, am I right that it is kind of like Pinot Grigio and Gewürztraminer?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:31:44** Okay. For me, the best grape variety. I mean, I'm a big fan. I mean, all of that, you have a Germanic influence, let's say, of Sauvignon, of the variety that they like to be in the cold. So, Sauvignon, Riesling, Riesling Italico, or Welsh Riesling, if you wanna call it.

You definitely have aromatic varieties of Gewürztraminer. You have an amazing range of Moscatos that are Moscato. Pink Moscato and yellow Moscato that are mind blowing. I think I have a bottle of Moscato Rosa, so the pink Moscato, passito, a sweet wine, is in my cellar in Italy. And I hope my mom didn't find it because if she found it, it's gone. Beautiful. I mean, I used to collect only sweet

wine and fortified when I was in Italy. I don't know why that was my quirk. And now obviously, I have Riesling from Germany. I have a bit of Barolo's obviously, that was an exception.

**Janina Doyle 00:32:53** That was ok, yeah.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:32:54** That was the exception. Yeah, of course. But I have so many sweet, fortified all across coming from Italy. And I still have these amazing Moscato Rosa probably there. I hope so. But yeah. And also, I'm a massive, massive fan of all the Pinot Blanc expressions. So, there is a lot of community, let's say, and a traditional blending wine in the region. So, the wines are a lot of time blended or field blend because of the...

**Janina Doyle 00:33:26** History of the region.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:33:27** Yeah, absolutely. You are in the mountains. The areas are very fragmented. You have a bit of vines there, a bit scattered across. You have two vines growing with that family and three vines growing with that family.

And basically, the top producers or the most well-known producers, what they do, they collaborate, they create collaborations for many generations and they harvest and take care of the grapes coming from that family and that family.

So, most of the time you find this kind of a field blend, Pinot Blanc, so Pinot Bianco, Chardonnay, Sauvignon, sometimes Gewürztraminer as well. And they are incredible wines. Incredible wines, absolutely.

**Janina Doyle 00:34:11** Then actually, in a way, would it be fair to say that the white styles typically of, say, Alto Adige, high acidity, fresh, and that kind of nice aromatics, perhaps not as crazy aromatic as if you're having a Riesling on its own or a Gewürztraminer, but you're going to have that pretty floral freshness, right?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:34:33** You do have that. One of the styles, absolutely, one probably the most known. You have this kind of a nice acidity, nice kind of a orchard, primary fruit with a nice aromatic layer to it. But also you do have some wines that are age worthy and aged in oak, mainly old oak, I would say, but you do have some Austrian or Slavonian oak used in there.

And you do have wines that you wouldn't bet they would be able to age. And actually, they are incredible wines and they can age for 20 years and so more. Yeah, it's a mixture of everything. Absolutely. You find some Grüner Veltliners there. You find some Kerner. You find this kind of...

**Janina Doyle 00:35:19** Kerner!

**Beatrice Bessi 00:35:20** Yeah, Kerner that you're like, probably again, down to Italy was probably they go to wine by the glass when I started to work in Italy.

**Janina Doyle 00:35:26** Oh, really?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:35:27** Yeah, we had Kerner everywhere, you know.

**Janina Doyle 00:35:31** For anyone who doesn't know, when I was looking up and making sure that I knew my grape varieties before the episode, Kerner is a crossing of Schiava and Riesling.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:35:43** How crazy is that? I mean, they change a bit over time again. It's like Müller-Thurgau. We kept changing parents.

**Janina Doyle 00:35:51** This is what they think right now.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:35:53** Yeah. And Kerner sometimes, I mean, you underestimate a variety. You think about it, it's just easy to drink. Pretty easy variety. And after you taste some Kerner from an outstanding producer, a simple wine doesn't mean there is not a quality wine.

You have this bright green apple flavour to it, this bright orchard. You think actually you're having an apple juice and with a bit of alcohol and this bright acidity, it makes everything incredible. Thinking about having some cheese with it, I would be so happy right now.

**Janina Doyle 00:36:34** Okay. Again, another grape variety we should know about. So, if people were going to come to the Trentino region or Alto Adige – I mean, what would be your recommendation? Is there one spot that is your favourite that people have to go to?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:36:48** As a town? As a restaurant?

**Janina Doyle 00:36:52** To just explore the area. I mean, Alto Adige has seven sub-regions.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:37:00** Probably, I would start with Trento and Bolzano as a town. They're amazing, beautiful, beautiful, romantic towns. Even in the winter, you have amazing food markets there as well that are running across. You have also some events, especially around Bolzano, that are running at the same time as Vinitaly. It's the same kind of period. So, there is not only Vinitaly to be seen and to be taken care of regarding wine fairs.

Merano is another beautiful town, full of history. You really feel this kind of a mountain feeling. You have a lot of Baita style, this kind of wooden houses and so on. The food is very warming, your soul, a rich kind of simple food, but at the same time beautiful. Full of flavours. Cheese, whole grains and potatoes and beautiful – I mean, oh my God, I wouldn't stop eating if I was there.

And also, I would say that all of Südtirol or Alto Adige is probably the area where I would go to, going to small wineries and going to, you don't have to go to fancy restaurants in Italy to be happy. Obviously you do have amazing restaurants there.

It is the real region for comfort food. If you don't know comfort food, you don't know why we say comfort food, you go there for the first time in that region. I mean, I like to go there for winter time. I think it makes more sense, but summertime is beautiful as well. But you go there in the wintertime with a bit of snow and you just cosy up yourself with a glass of wine and a bit of cheese and some Canederli or some strudel. Oh, my God, I love strudel so much.

**Janina Doyle 00:39:05** Love it.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:39:06** I mean, back in time, I used to go there for a lot of skiing and I was competing in this kind of thing back in time when I was much younger. But yeah, the comfort food region, that's what Trentino Alto Adige is all about.

**Janina Doyle 00:39:21** Love it. Okay. That's inspiring. If you like food and you like wine and skiing, get up north into the Trentino Alto Adige region. And we should just point out, you mentioned Südtirol. I've had that issue where people go, hang on a minute. I thought you were talking about Alto Adige and it is the same region, isn't it?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:39:42** Yeah, the region has autonomy. Basically, a kind of government in a way from Italy. So, they are actually fluent in both languages, German and Italian. And also, in the Alto Adige, so in the northern part of Trentino, the official language is actually German. So, they have every single street name, every single town, all region or subregion also in the wine laws side of it is written in German, too. Südtirol is the Germanic name of Alto Adige.

**Janina Doyle 00:40:16** There we go. So to sum up this episode, I think you've already slightly answered it, but with wine, there is the history, there is the complexity, there's the culture, there's also the emotions that come with it. So, I just wonder, is there one specific thing that has gripped you more? What is wine to you?

**Beatrice Bessi 00:40:36** Emotions. Absolutely. I think emotion is the big thing that doesn't make you leave this industry. I think the discoveries that you go through because of your emotions, the connection with people is probably the most important thing.

**Janina Doyle 00:40:53** Beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. Thank you so much. Really, really appreciate your time. Honestly, you know so much and it's been really lovely to hear the passion and the emotion and the feeling that you have behind all wine and all wine regions.

**Beatrice Bessi 00:41:09** Thank you!

**Janina Doyle 00:41:10** And we will speak again soon. So, thank you.

**Janina Doyle 00:41:12** Thank you as well.

**Janina Doyle 00:40:19** Now with the warmer weather, I am definitely going to track down some Schiava to have slightly chilled. And with my glass, I will raise it and give a big cheer to my incredible sponsor of this season, Wickhams Wines. Don't forget, if you are in the UK and want 10% off your first order, just use the code "EATSLEEP10. And I shall leave a link to their website in my show notes along with also a link to the transcript.

So, don't forget with all these Italian words, if you download the transcript, you can read along or you can search a little bit further those wine regions and the wine grapes. Now next week, I'm talking with Master of Wine Justin Howard-Sneyd, who is going to teach us more about regenerative farming.

So, he teaches an introductory two-day regenerative viticultural course. And so, we're going to be discussing why is it important? What actually is it? How does it differ from organics or biodynamics? And discussing a very hot topic right now in terms of viticulture, to till or not to till. So, you do not want to miss this episode.

Now to finish off, I shall leave you with an Italian proverb and it is:

"Buon vino fa buon sangue."

Which means good wine makes good blood. Basically, a glass a day keeps the doctor away. I'm sure that is the saying over here.

Now thank you as ever for tuning in, for listening and hopefully learning and increasing that absolute desire to discover the next best bottle. Wishing you a week of energy, of success and of course, beautiful wine and food experiences. Until next Monday, wine friends, cheers to you!