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# Prosecco row bubbles up over wine sold on tap

## Consortium of Italian winemakers says sale of sparkling wine on tap in Britain is illegal under EU rules

Stephanie Kirchgaessner in Rome The Guardian, Wednesday 7 January 2015 18.24 GMT

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Prosecco is less expensive than champagne and has become increasingly popular in British pubs. Photograph: Bon Appetit/Alamy

From the placing of pineapple on pizza to the matching of spaghetti with bolognese sauce, the British approach to Italian culinary habits has long perplexed the inhabitants of the *bel paese* – and the latest creation is no exception.

Italian producers of prosecco are demanding Britons start enjoying their fizzy wine by the bottle instead of on tap in a row over how it is sold in bars.

A consortium of Italian winemakers says the sale of prosecco on tap is illegal under 2009 European Union rules that set strict guidelines over how it may be sold, similar to rules that dictate what kind of wine may be

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called champagne.

Prosecco is less expensive than its sparkling French rival and has become increasingly popular in pubs in Britain, where it is being sold out of barrels by the glass, much to the chagrin of Italian producers.

“For the British consumer we say if they want to drink a real prosecco they have to open a bottle, because prosecco can only be sold in the bottle,” says Giancarlo Vettorello, director of the Consorzio di Conegliano Valdobbiadene, one of the main consortiums of prosecco producers.

The Italian government has already raised the issue with its British counterparts, Vettorello said, and it is expected to be raised again in the Italian parliament following a British media report over the soaring popularity of prosecco on tap.

Daniel Spinath, a director at Frizzenti, a UK producer of prosecco in bottles and sparkling Italian wine sold on tap, said the company is fully supportive of European rules that mandate how the wine may be sold.

“As far as we’re concerned, ‘prosecco on tap’ is a contradiction in terms, it doesn’t exist. We’ve made very clear that the product we sell in kegs is the same product as the bottles, which is 100% glera prosecco grape, but that we cannot call it prosecco even though it is exactly the same product.”

He concedes that all of the company’s retail outlets may not agree.

“We clearly spell out exactly how the product can be labelled. Unfortunately what we tell people and what people do are not the same thing.”

The distinction between bottled prosecco and sparkling wine on tap is not good enough for the Italian wine consortium, which says any sale of the prosecco product in a barrel causes confusion in the market and among customers.

One manager of a London pub that sells “prosecco on tap” that asked not to be named because he did not want to upset suppliers or end up in an “international prosecco-based fiasco”, said that “fair or not”, the term prosecco had become a byword for sparkling wine.

A manager at Mele e Pere restaurant in Soho said his menu makes clear that prosecco is sold by the bottle and a sparkling white wine made from the glera prosecco grapes on tap. But online, the restaurant



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markets a special offer of a glass of prosecco with dinner.

“That’s a marketing tool,” the manager said. “It’s an EU law so we have to adhere to it [on the menu], but it makes it more difficult from the outset to sell it because people don’t know what glera is,” he says.



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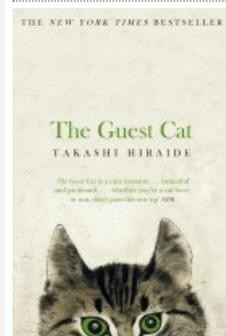
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