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# ALTA LANGA DOCG

RAISING THE BAR THROUGH  
TIME, PLACE AND IDENTITY

**The Piedmontese sparkling wine appellation with one of the strictest production regulations for Traditional Method wines—arguably even more demanding than Champagne—continues to deliver major developments. Among the most significant is the approval of a rule change extending the minimum aging period for Riserva wines from 36 to 60 months, a decision that raises the bar in terms of complexity and depth of flavor. Another major step in understanding the denomination is the launch of a geological study, pending the publication of the much-anticipated work by “Map Man” Alessandro Masnaghetti.**

Always vintage-dated, Alta Langa is a Traditional Method sparkling wine made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, with up to 10% of other Piedmont-grown grape varieties permitted in the blend. The vineyards are located at elevations ranging from 250 to over 800 meters above sea level on well-drained limestone soils. Production standards are rigorous: hand-harvesting in small crates, a maximum vineyard yield of 11 tons per hectare, and gentle pressing with a grape-to-wine extraction rate capped at 65%.

The extension of the minimum aging requirement for Riservas to 60 months further reinforces a stylistic trajectory based on finesse of mousse, controlled creaminess, and tertiary complexity. Above all, it highlights the aging potential of these Traditional Method wines, which require time to reach their full sensory expression. The denomination continues to strengthen, now encompassing around 500 hectares of vineyards, more than 170 member wineries, and a production potential exceeding 3.5 million bottles, while recently surpassing the milestone of 2 million bottles carrying the appellation. Growth is steady and increasingly supported by export development, as the Consorzio expands promotional activities beyond Italy and positions Alta Langa in key international markets.

Recent large-scale tastings further support this trajectory. A comprehensive assessment of more than one hundred commercially available Alta Langa wines revealed not only a high average quality level, but also remarkable stylistic consistency across producers. Perhaps more importantly, quality now appears widely distributed throughout the denomination rather than concentrated among a handful of benchmark estates, a sign that Alta Langa is entering a more mature phase of development.



The spotlight this year falls on the 2022 vintage. A mild winter and a dry spring accelerated the vegetative cycle, while the hot, drought-stricken summer was tempered at higher elevations by significant diurnal temperature shifts. Yields were slightly below average, but the grapes remained healthy and produced clearly defined sparkling wine bases characterized by zesty citrus notes (lime, citron, pomelo), saline-iodine textures, and remarkable length. It is a vintage that emphasizes energy and precision from the outset, with considerable potential for the cuvées destined for longer maturation.

The first wines currently reaching the market confirm the vintage's pronounced tension. Some of the youngest Pas Dosé bottlings still display a certain austerity and structural rigidity, characteristics that appear entirely consistent with the vintage profile and are likely to soften and gain complexity through further lees and bottle aging.

Geology and the taste of place play a significant role in sparkling wines as well. The search for the origins of flavor has become one of the most compelling topics in contemporary wine criticism, and with such a vast territory, the appellation has long needed an analytical tool of this kind. Broadly speaking, two major geological districts can be identified.

The first and dominant one is the sedimentary district, characterized by grey-blue calcareous marls and sandstones known as Pietra di Langa, formed through marine sedimentation within the Piedmont Tertiary Basin. These soils are generally alkaline, well-drained, and range from compact clay-limestone structures to looser sandy textures.

The second, now much smaller, is the crystalline district, marked by outcrops of metamorphic and igneous rocks. Although vineyard surface area is limited, these sites may prove distinctive, producing wines with drier profiles and more tightly wound aromatic and flavor structures.

Limestone-rich soils tend to impart notes of pure citrus fruit, white flowers, chalk, and wet stone, expressed through a palate driven by acidity, salinity, and progression. Sandier sectors offer greater immediacy, warmer citrus tones, and a more open mid-palate. Areas dominated by compact marls deliver greater palate grip, almond-like and saline echoes, and deeper finishes.

Altitude acts as a powerful modulator. At higher elevations, freshness and verticality become more pronounced; at mid-altitudes, wines gain volume and

creaminess. Ventilated exposures, cool nights, and distinctive microclimates help preserve acidity and aromatic precision. Warmer slopes, particularly those on sandier or less compact marl soils, encourage fruit maturity and a softer texture, making them especially suited to generous Brut and Extra Brut styles. Meanwhile, the highest limestone-rich parcels produce some of the appellation's most compelling Pas Dosé wines, marked by incisive citrus definition and intensely saline finishes.

Yet recent tastings suggest that one of the denomination's most interesting developments lie precisely in the relationship between dosage and terroir expression. While Pas Dosé remains a defining category and has contributed significantly to Alta Langa's reputation for rigor, verticality and longevity, the best Brut wines increasingly demonstrate that carefully calibrated dosage can enhance rather than obscure site character. In many cases, a modest amount of residual

sugar broadens the palate, adds textural depth and contributes to a greater sense of completeness, while preserving the freshness, salinity and precision that define the denomination. Perhaps more importantly, these wines often appear to gain additional layers of complexity over time, suggesting that dosage, when judiciously applied, may also support long-term evolution.

As a result, the key stylistic question for Alta Langa is no longer whether wines should be Pas Dosé or Brut, but rather what level of dosage best allows each vineyard, vintage and base wine to express itself. This shift from dosage ideology to dosage precision may represent one of the clearest signs of maturity within the denomination. Increasingly, the finest Brut wines show that dosage is not merely a corrective tool, but an integral component of structure, depth and age-worthiness.

**Erika Montovan**

## ALTA LANGA DOCG

### Vite Colte "Cinquecento" 2023 - Brut

Bright straw-yellow with golden highlights and a fine, persistent mousse. The bouquet combines freshly baked bread, yeast autolysis and subtle smoky nuances, layered with delicate spice and vanilla. Creamy and generous on the palate, yet supported by fresh-ness and structure. A lightly savory finish with hints of toasted nuts adds complexity and length.

Score : 16.5/20 (93)

### Vite Colte "Seicento" 2022 - Pas Dosé

Golden straw-yellow with an ultra-fine mousse. Blood orange and orange-zest aromas dominate the nose. Generous yet structured on the palate, where subtle bitterness and a faint ferric nuance add complexity. Expands impressively through the mid-palate before finishing with notable depth and drive.

Score : 16.5/20 (93)

### Vite Colte "Seicento" 2021 - Pas Dosé

Golden straw-yellow with a refined mousse. Blood citrus fruit and orange peel dominate the bouquet. The palate opens with subtle bitterness and a light ferric note before broadening through the mid-palate. Structured and engaging, with a well-resolved finish.

Score : 16/20 (92)

### Vite Colte "Cinquecento" 2022 - Brut

Golden straw-yellow with fine, persistent bubbles. Aromas of autolytic yeast, baking spice, smoke and vanilla reveal attractive complexity. Creamy and generous on the palate, balanced by freshness and a savoury finish. A complete and highly enjoyable wine.

Score : 16.5/20 (93)