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*The feast issue*

50 REASONS TO FINE DINE IN L.A. NOW



# VENICE to VALTELLINA

Here is your must-see and drink itinerary through these two Italian towns.

By Katie Kelly Bell

From left: Grapes at Nino Negri are harvested by helicopter because of the precipitously steep location; retired Nino Negri winemaker Casimiro Maule.



From top: The Gabbiano Bar at the Belmond Hotel Cipriani in Venice; the Baron's gin and tonic; a buonanotte cocktail.

## VENICE

### THE DESTINATION

Venice is legendary for its canals, but it also deserves credit as the birthplace of one of the world's treasured cocktails: the Bellini. We asked Francesca **Nonino**, the third generation of Italy's artisanal award-winning Grappa **Nonino** (which is produced outside of Venice), to share her top spots for the perfect Venetian mix of cocktail tradition and innovation.

### STOP 1

The Gritti Palace ([thegrittipalace.com](http://thegrittipalace.com)) hotel bar delivers the ultimate Venetian drinking experience with its muraled ceilings, marble floors, gold-leaf accents, recessed booths and white-clad waiters. "If you have time for only one cocktail, have it here," Nonino says. She loves the grappa-inspired Friuli Bellini, a deluxe concoction of **Nonino** Chardonnay Barriques Grappa and fresh white peach puree.

### STOP 2

Any mention of cocktails in Venice would be remiss without including the Belmond Hotel Cipriani ([belmond.com](http://belmond.com)), which was founded by the inventor of the Bellini, Giuseppe Cipriani. The Cipri-Ami Martini may be its second-best claim to fame, with gin, mashed lime, wild fennel, fresh pear, star anise, Peychaud's and cane sugar.

### STOP 3

At Hotel Londra Palace's ([londrapalace.com/en](http://londrapalace.com/en)) Londrabar, head bartender Marino Lucchetti "is well-known for serving amazing traditional or with-a-twist cocktails from exclusively seasonal ingredients," Nonino says. The Bellini Londrabar, with white peaches, is only prepared May to September, but he serves two riffs on the cocktail: the Rossini with strawberries or the Romantic Passion with passion fruit.

## VALTELLINA

Valtellina is Italy's Aspen—but with wine. While other tourists are peeling off for Lake Como or heading west to Piedmont, Valtellina quietly awaits. Located in the Lombardy region, it rests on the fringes of the Alps and comes with stunning scenery, impeccably balanced nebbiolo wines, Michelin-rated dining and, in season, plenty of skiing.

First, stop at award-winning Nino Negri ([frederickwildman.com](http://frederickwildman.com)), the cellars of which are in a restored medieval fortress. The wines are polished, silky and powerful—be sure to taste the flagship 5 Stelle Sfursat.

Bresaola, salted beef dried in the mountain air, is one of Valtellina's prized specialties, as is its Bitto PDO cheese, with cheese festivals each October. Casimiro Maule, Nino Negri's winemaker of 47 years, who retired last April, recommends dining at the region's Michelin-rated restaurants, especially Ristorante Lanterna Verde ([lanternaverde.com](http://lanternaverde.com)), for its impressive wine list and local trout served with puntarelle and anchovies.

At ARPEPE Winery ([arpepe.com](http://arpepe.com)), the Sassella Stella Retica Riserva stands out. Plus, Triacca's ([triaccavini.eu](http://triaccavini.eu)) La Gatta Estate, formerly a 16th century Dominican convent, offers vineyard tours and tastings. Don't miss La Gatta Riserva—you'll rarely see it in the States.