

## FOR ENGLAND” ITALIAN SPARKLING RETURNS TO UK

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Contratto, Italy’s oldest sparkling wine, has relaunched under its original name “For England” – a low-dosage cuvée that was all the rage in 1930s London

The winery has a distinguished history, writes *Michael Edwards*. Founded in 1867 by Giuseppe Contratto, its massive cellars in Canelli, Piedmont are a UNESCO world heritage site. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century, the wines were supplied to royal houses and the Vatican.

In order to sate the dry taste of our the UK, For England quickly became the drink of Prince Edward and Wallis and the bright young things in ‘30s Mayfair.

In the early ‘90s, as sales declined, the winery was sold to Carlo

Bocchino, Canelli’s well-known distiller, who began the task of restoring the great edifice. But he too got into financial difficulties and in turn was happy to pass on the business to another Piedmontese, Giorgio Rivetti of La Spinetta, famed for his single cru Barbarescos.

Among his many enthusiasms, Rivetti is a lover of bubbles, especially the finest growers of Champagne, like Egly-Ouriet, reflecting his own family back ground as grape farmers in the Langhe hills. The Rivettis have been involved in wine production at Contratto for the last five years, working closely with the growers of Pinot Noir especially in the Oltrepò Pavese.

“Italian sparkling wine does not yet enjoy the recognition it deserves on the international scene,” remarked Rivetti. “But I think there’s a gap in the market between Prosecco and growers’ Champagnes.”

The entry-level wine of the classic-method Contratto range is the Millesimata – RRP £28.65 (there is no non-vintage). It is a blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay. Soft, full and supple, it has a moderate dosage of 5g/l. For England 2007 (no dosage) is a big step up with an RRP of £32. Fine aromas of baked apples & ginger; linear and energetic, very dry but no hint of asperity.

