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ABBAZIA DI NOVACELLA RIESLING PRAEPOSITUS

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Located at the entrance to the Dolomites, high in the Isarco Valley near Italy's border with Austria, the Augustinian monastery Abbazia di Novacella was founded in 1142, making it one of the world's oldest active wineries, with papal documents from 1177 recording the abbey's ownership of vineyards.

Today it is still a functioning monastery with a focus on adding the local community by growing a wide range of crops, including vineyards on high altitude terraces clinging to the valley walls. It is also one of the finest wineries in the quality-focused Alto Adige region, regularly receiving the top Tre Bicchieri (3 glasses) award from the most influential Italian wine guide, the Gambero Rosso.

The wines are sourced from a combination of their own 21 hectares of organically-farmed vineyards alongside 50 or so small growers, reflecting the tradition of a region where the co-operative model holds sway. This allows them to producer a wide range of wines from their modern cellars which straddle both the Germanic varieties found around the Abbey in the Isarco Valley, and the Italian varieties from growers further south around Bolzano.

The high altitude (up to 750 metres) and resulting luminescence, cool nights and long growing season can lend the wines from Alto Adige a clarity and precision unmatched elsewhere in Italy, which isn't to say the wines are delicate – the long growing season, largely granite soils and miniscule yields per vine ensures there

is no shortage of concentration, especially from this winery.

Their top Riesling is made from the very finest parcels of fruit each year and is a regular winner of the prestigious Tre Bicchieri award. Although vinified and aged purely in stainless steel, this is a powerful, layered dry white. Complex, smoky nose of yellow plum, ripe apple, guava; quite wild and intense with lovely driving acidity; this is Grand Cru level stuff - very exciting, long and complex. Perfect with all sorts of pork, fish and poultry dishes, as well as cheese.

