

The Vittoria Estate & il Verziere di Acate



Between the Hyblean plateau and the sea, the Vittoria area is a production zone for smooth, floral red wines, home to a prestigious denomination that includes Cerasuolo di Vittoria, Sicily's first and only DOCG.



Il verziere di Acate (*The Verziere of Acate*)

Nestling in a natural amphitheatre of honey-coloured rocks, the Acate winery blends into the agricultural landscape of vines, olive trees and orange trees. Here, the garden becomes a *verziere* or kind of kitchen garden with several square tubs, 80 centimetres high, in which scents, colours and flavours are cultivated in the form of baskets overflowing with aromatic herbs. In one tub several varieties of sage are growing, in the others chillies, oregano and thyme, and in the others still, lemongrass, artemisia and santolina. Once upon a time, the vegetable garden - somewhere between utility and

hedonism - always had a place in front of country houses and around farmhouses, warehouses, cellars: vegetables and flowers blended spontaneously, vegetables and herbs were grown to be eaten and smelled. Building a Verziere (kitchen garden) in Acate, in front of the winery, is not only a cultivation gesture but more importantly a cultural one that brings **biodiversity** and **beauty** back into the rural landscape. Food and beauty are equally essential for survival. And the vegetable garden, no matter how big it is, shows us, unequivocally, that taking care of the earth is taking care of ourselves. The vegetable garden in the winery is a cultural and sensory experiment, in which knowledge

of the species leads to the olfactory and taste experience that becomes discovery, memory, emotion, but also aesthetics. Decorating and garnishing the tasting tables with aromatic herbs means making the connection between the plant world and wine in a journey of memories and emotions never before experienced.

In Acate's *verziere*, exchanges with nature are intertwined and visions of the future are built.

Sages

Salvia officinalis, a species of the Labiatae family, is the best known of the sages, used since antiquity in cooking for the aromatic properties of its leaves and in folk medicine. It is extremely variable in shape, growth habit, the colour of its leaves, which are usually hairy, and its flowers, which are very rich in nectar and attract bees and other pollinating insects. The aroma of sage, which is among the woody aromatics, is **herbaceous, slightly pungent and mentholated**, with a slight hint of camphor. Sage aromas depend mainly on the presence of chemical compounds in the leaves of the plant. The presence and quantity of these compounds

are subject to various factors, including the sage strain, picking season, climate and the way the leaves are dried. For example, sage grown in warmer climates, such as in Italy, may contain more thujone than sage grown in colder climates. Our Italian sages can all be used in the kitchen in infusions or to season and prepare food.

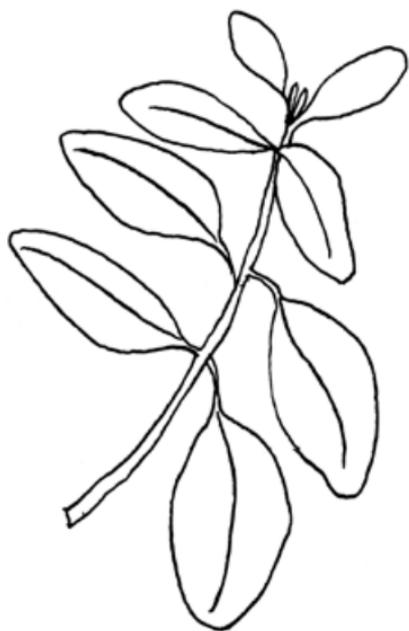


Salvia purpurea is a hybrid identifiable by its distinctive red-bronze leaves and blue flowers. It is very aromatic and has a slightly bitter, spicy flavour.

Salvia icterina

has velvety, variegated green and yellow leaves and lilac-blue summer flowers.





Salvia maxima

has a broad, low growth habit and large, elliptical, grey-green leaves. It is a sterile or low-flowering hybrid. The leaves are

suitable for frying in batter.

Bergamot sage

is a collector's hybrid from Israel. Its leaves, when rubbed and brought to the nose, give off the smell of this fragrant citrus fruit.



The Sicilians

Oregano and thyme, both belonging to the Lamiaceae botanical family, are generally pleasant-smelling plants that contribute several seasonings and many medicinal and perfume essences. The tub of **Sicilian oregano, which grows wild on the island**, along with some **varieties of thyme** is a perfect expression of Mediterranean perfumes.



Sicilian oregano is a subspecies of *Origanum vulgare*. It is a small bush with white flowers and round to oval, dark green, hairy leaves that have a strong, pungent, slightly bitter taste,

with citrus notes. The most interesting active ingredients it contains are vitamin C and polyphenols, chief among them being carvacrol, which lends oregano its characteristic aroma. In addition, it is rich in antioxidants that counteract the action of free radicals and their negative effects. It is used both fresh and dried. Oregano is harvested when the flowers begin

to bloom in summer: the sprigs with the inflorescences are cut, tied into bunches and dried by hanging them in a ventilated place away from direct light. Once dried, the oregano bunches should be beaten or crumbled, recovering the flowers and leaves and removing any woody parts. The oregano thus obtained should be stored in paper or cloth bags in a cool, dry place, protected from light. The leaves and flowering apices of oregano are used in traditional Sicilian dishes, sometimes determining their name, as in the famous ***rianata*** (*origanata*): a rustic pizza topped with sardines, tomatoes, garlic, parsley, pecorino cheese and oil and a generous dose of oregano.

Of the approximately 350 species of thyme, the most common are *Thymus vulgare* and *Thymus serpyllum*; the creeping velvety-leaved thyme (*Thymus praecox*) is also grown in our *verziere* (kitchen garden). The leaves of all thymes, either fresh or dried, are used in cooking, their aroma surviving even after long cooking times. Thyme, which is a mellifera, is highly appreciated by bees.

Thymus serpyllum

With slender creeping stems and small, rounded leaves, it bears inflorescences of pink flowers in summer. Our cultivar has variegated



leaves. This plant is rich in volatile oils, particularly thymol, which is a powerful antiseptic (it is an important ingredient in toothpastes and mouthwashes).



Thymus vulgaris
“Faustini”

This plant is rich in volatile oils, particularly thymol, which is a powerful antiseptic (it is an important ingredient in toothpastes and mouthwashes). It has small, elongated, dark green leaves; the pinkish-white flowers, rich in nectar, are abundant in spring and summer.

Thymus praecox **(*mother of thyme*)**

This is a highly branched, creeping plant with little lignification at the base and low growth, reaching a height of 3-8

cm. Its small oval leaves are covered with a dense, silky down: this velvety texture gives the foliage a greyish-green colour. It produces a large number of small, pink, loaded flowers from May to August. It is used by gardeners mainly as an aromatic ornamental, but the leaves can be used in cooking.



Chillies

Every vegetable garden should include the chilli pepper, *Capsicum annum*, which belongs to the Solanaceae family, includes species - to name but a few - such as the potato, tomato, aubergine, tobacco, petunia and Chinese lantern. The chilli pepper, an annual herbaceous plant, native to South/Central America, is a species that includes many varieties. Some with small, conical fruits; others with thin, conical-elongated, slightly curved fruits; some with small, round fruits like cherries; and others with very small, violet, orange and red bi-coloured fruits. It is one of the most diverse crops in terms of shape and colour. There are at least 2,000 varieties, each

called by dialectal names linked to the local culture, which differ from country to country and region to region. The pungency of red chillies is caused by alkaloids called capsaicinoids, which have been developed by plants to prevent mammals from eating the fruits and destroying the seeds in their digestive tract. In contrast, this problem does not occur when birds eat the fruits, which have instead helped to spread the genus throughout their homeland of America. Rich in vitamin C, chilli peppers are said to have an antibacterial and vasodilating effect. They also help control cholesterol and blood pressure levels.



Hot purple chilli

The only variety cultivated in the Acate verziere, it is originally from Mexico and has a

hotness of 650,000-700,000 SHU on the Scoville scale. Once the chillies have turned red, they must all be harvested, so that the plant flourishes again. When eaten, in addition to its pungency, this chilli is fragrant.

The surprising

A tub offers lovely, fragrant surprises, for it contains herbs that unexpectedly give off smells that take one's mind to something else, like santolina that smells of olives, lemon grass that reminds one of a mix of citrus and roses, and artemisia whose young shoots smell of coca-cola.



Olive herb **(*Santolina viridis*)**

A small, compact, rounded, evergreen plant with strongly aromatic, bright green foliage; in summer it produces yellow flower heads

(the flowers of the Asteraceae, to which it belongs). The leaves of this plant are edible and smell and taste like black olives; it is used fresh to flavour many dishes, especially salads and omelettes.

Lemon grass
(*Cymbopogon*
***citratus*)**

A monocotyledon belonging to the Poaceae (grass) family. It is an exotic, perennial herbaceous plant that forms tufts with strong culms (this is the name given to the stems of the grasses) and long, narrow leaves with a characteristic lemony



scent. It contains citral and geraniol, which have **lemon and rose** aromas respectively.

It is used as a food seasoning, especially in Asian cuisine. Both the heart of the young shoots and the basal portions of the stems are used. Due to their lemon-like aroma they are used as flavourings in soups, sauces and curries.



Sea wormwood
(*Artemisia*
***abrotanum* var.**
***maritima*)**

An evergreen, strongly aromatic, bitter herb. It belongs to the

Asteraceae family; the same

genus includes the better known wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) and tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*). *Artemisia abrotanum* has pinnate (finely divided), grey-green leaves with an intense smell reminiscent of **coca-cola**. In summer it produces dense inflorescences with small light yellow flower heads. It is widely used as an ornamental, but also to keep moths and fleas away. Its leaves have been used in potpourri since ancient times.

The Gardens of Donnafugata: a project to enhance biodiversity

Sustainability is a value that forms part of Donnafugata's DNA. For over thirty years, the company has been committed to producing wines that respect both the environment and humanity, convinced that caring for the earth is caring for the quality of production, encouraging a mutually beneficial relationship between wine and the plant world. Since 2008 Donnafugata has been a supporter of **FAI - Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano** (National Trust for Italy), with which it shares the mission of preserving the Italian landscape. The decision to create gardens and green spaces and to contribute to the protection of

natural areas is a cultural gesture, to restore **biodiversity** and **beauty** to the landscape. A choice that takes practical form not only in the Randazzo estate and the unique landscape that surrounds it, but also in a series of projects conceived specifically for each of the estates. The restoration of a **Giardino Pantesco** (Pantellerian Garden) in the contrada Khamma winery, in Pantelleria; the **Contessa Entellina garden**, an embroidery conceptualised by Gabriella Anca Rallo's green thinking to connect the estate with the agricultural landscape in which it is immersed; the creation of **aromatic herb** tubs in the Acate winery, a perfect example of integration between the agricultural and natural landscape; and finally, the desire to house,

in fall, a **collection of ancient Kolymbethra citrus fruits** in the historic Marsala wineries. Thanks to this attention to green spaces, a visit to one of Donnafugata's five estates is an experience that involves several senses: the tasting exploration of the wines and flavours of the land is accompanied by a visual and olfactory discovery of nature that becomes memory, emotion and aesthetic gratification.



DONNAFUGATA®

Artwork Julia Binfield

La visita in una tenuta
Donnafugata si configura come
un'esperienza che coinvolge
più sensi: all'esplorazione
gustativa dei vini e dei sapori
del territorio si affianca una
scoperta visiva e olfattiva della
natura che diviene ricordo,
emozione e appagamento
estetico.

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