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## [Anatomy Of A Twitter Wine Tasting Homerun \(2011 Donnafugata Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria\)](#)

*Vinted on* December 26, 2013 under [sexy wines](#), [wine review](#)



HiYa! If you're new here, you may want to [Sign Up](#) to get all the latest wine coolness delivered to your virtual doorstep. I've also got [short, easily-digestible mini wine reviews](#) and some [educational, entertaining wine vids](#). If you're looking to up your wine tasting IQ, check out my book [How to Taste Like a Wine Geek: A practical guide to tasting, enjoying, and learning about the world's greatest beverage](#).

Cheers!

Back on December 18th, 2013, a Sicilian dessert wine made from dried Zibibbo (aka Muscat of Alexandria) ruled the wine twitter world for an hour.

Think about that for a minute. A \$40 half-bottle of sweet wine. Of Zibibbo. From *Sicily*.

I recently wrote up [the top five most mentioned wines online in 2013](#), and Sicilian dessert wine was... uhm... *not* anywhere near that list... nor in the top twenty... I'm guessing it wasn't in the top 600...

As good as the wine is (and it's great – more on that in a few minutes), I was skeptical after I received [Donnafugata's](#) invitation to join their twitter tasting of the then newest [Ben Ryé Passito](#) release. First of all, after [last week's top ten Most Interesting Wines 2013 roundup](#) (the 2008 Ben Ryé made the cut), how much more publicity did they need from me? And there was no structure whatsoever to the tasting, which isn't typical of most simultaneous twitter tasting gatherings; usually, there are more than one wine to taste, someone sets the order, and those with the wine (mine was received as a sample for the event) are paced through the tasting by a leader, who fields questions snet via twitter to winery representatives, sometimes with video involved. This Donnafugata tasting had none of that. Until the day of the tasting, they hadn't even announced a hashtag to use for summarizing all of the tweets involved.

But... I wanted to try the wine, had a free hour that evening, and it was being spearheaded by a friend of mine, Master of Wine candidate and indefatigable wine promoter [Luiz Alberto](#). And so I figured, what the hell, let's do it. I was unprepared for the outpouring of love that Ben Ryé received. Let's take a look at the numbers, 'cause they don't lie...

Aside from a handful of people asking "what the f\*ck is #benrye?" during the online tasting, a few publicly (and privately to me) started asking where they could buy the wine. So at a minimum, Donnafugata's event generated a handful of sales and new customers they'd otherwise not have acquired. But [according to Tweetreach.com](#), the event put Ben Ryé Passito into the eyes/hearts/minds of between 76,000 and 308,000 people.



Those are fairly impressive exposure numbers for any small wine brand, particularly a sweet wine made of Muscat grapes from 100+ year old vines that are dried for two to three weeks and result in a wine that, according to their press materials, has a "very personal aroma" (I don't get it either... whenever I have personal aromas, I take a shower...).

As I [emphatically gesticulated to the South African winemaking community during my keynote speech at the Nederburg Wine Auction earlier this year](#), as a small-ish wine brand you cannot compete in the U.S. wine market against behemoths like Barefoot, who will probably be filling up sidebar ads, billboards, and the sides of buses with pictures of their wares. Instead, you need to go guerilla, trying to win the hearts and minds of wine consumers. One of the least expensive and most effective ways to do that is online, which is exactly what Donnafugata did for its Ben Ryé brand last week.

In other words, *Homerun*.



**2011 Donnafugata Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria (Sicilia, \$40)**

The Summer was long on the sandy, volcanic island of Pantelleria in 2011, which probably accounts for how powerful the fruity notes are for this vintage of Ben Ryé Passito. While the trademark hints of tea leaf, orange peel, and balsamic are there, they are playing background to the intense dried and fresh apricot fruits, sultanas, and exotic flowers that dominate this release. The wine is a baby, sweet to its core, with freshness that will certainly carry it through several years of repose in the bottle. The finish is

lingering, carrying the fruit, freshness, and sultry smoothness of the sugar all the way through. Queue up "You Sexy Thing" on Pandora, with this wine, you're gonna need it.

Cheers!

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0

I have to say no other sweet wine has been so often discussed on the Web or blog 'universe' as this wine, with the possible exception of Vin Constance due to its historical heritage & past literary figures associated with it.

Lets get real Tokaji Essencia or Aszu Essencia doesn't create this kind of buzz, neither does vintage Mosel TBA, or even over priced Sauternes; most people haven't heard of vino Santo either. So for this to generate such high levels of discussion on Twitter is pretty mind-blowing & I say its a good thing as sweet wine is NOT to be underrated by any means.

I say this as I drink a '04 Royal Tokaji Aszu 5 Puttonyos, a leftover from Christmas Dinner; think about peaches, apricots, sweet almonds, honey, Muscat notes & mega smokiness. I mean this wine's smokiness is off the charts, you can almost see & smell the barrel makers toasting the barrels; pretty amazing stuff.

Back to the topic I think its good that sweet wine is getting due attention again as the last few years it has been not cool or trendy to like sweet wine or talk about sweet wine. Witness the big on-line & off line debate about sweet German Rieslings and the competing opinions about that complicated and sensitive topic. Again its all about balance and having the right thing at the right time.

Cheers!

Solomon Mengeu

**Reply**[1 reply](#) · active 3 weeks ago**1WineDude** 119p · 3 weeks ago

+1

Thanks, Solomon. I think we are starting to see the pendulum swinging they other way, with the great sweeter wines being recognized as great by a public more willing to view them as special and not lumping them into a bucket with lower quality sugary wines that aren't nuanced, etc. If sherry can regain some popularity (nothing against it, I love it, but it was persona non gratta forever), then my god, the great sweet wines ought to be able to do it, too! :-)

**Reply****pawineguy** · 2 weeks ago

0

OK, I admit I could use some further info, as I feel I must be missing something? There were a total of 20 people who tweeted this? And a grand total of 15 re-tweets? So of the 300K+ impressions, 205K came from the person paid to generate the buzz, another 23K came from a twitter account that exists to re-tweet wine info, 18K from a friend of the organizer, and 10K from the biggest proponent of social media in wine... and of all of those impressions, only 15 people felt compelled to retweet, including 0 of your followers and the same number of Paul's?

What am I missing? Out of the 205K impressions from the organizer, 4 re-tweets? Is that considered good?

**Reply**[3 replies](#) · active 2 weeks ago**1WineDude** 119p · 2 weeks ago

+1

PA - the part that you're missing is that 76,914 twitter accounts were reached through the network of people who participated, and the topic trended on twitter for a time during the event. I'm not sure how retweetable the discussions were, given the nature of the event (a participatory tasting rather than quotable keynote speech or similar). So I'd agree the RTs seem low overall, but I think that's to be expected. Bottom line is that people felt compelled to ask about the product, about wine, and about how to purchase it. Now, not all the accounts of the potential reach can ever be reached on twitter at any one given time, which is why the estimated reach of the discussion was 76K vs. 308K unique followers from those participating in the event. 76K people for a dessert wine... might not be impressive figures where you come from, but from where I stand that's really, really good for a Sicilian dessert wine! It \*owned\* the geek wine space on twitter for an hour; and if most of the impressions (naturally) came via the most-followed participants (including Luiz), then that just shows how smart Donnafugata were in hiring the right guy for the job and the platform.

**Reply****pawineguy** · 2 weeks ago

0

So where you say it reached between 76,000 and 308,000 people, I assume that was an incorrect statement? The number is actually 76,000? How much does an event like this cost for a winery?

How many twitter followers did the winery gain from the event?

**Reply****1WineDude** 119p · 2 weeks ago

+2

PA, according to that report, it's 300k or so total potential reach, of which it's estimated that 76k or so of those followers were reached/exposed to the brand during the event.

**Reply****Kyle Schlachter** · 2 weeks ago

0

Joe, how many owners of those twitter accounts actually saw the tweets? Maybe a few more than the 20 people that actually tweeted it? I'm not trying to bash, but your conclusions are quite the exaggerated take on reality... ;)

**Reply**[5 replies](#) · active 2 weeks ago**1WineDude** 119p · 2 weeks ago

+2

Guys, these aren't my claims, they're from the report that luiz sent to me and that's linked clearly in the blog post. Am I to believe that you don't think those numbers are impressive for a wine event online involving a Sicilian dessert wine? What planet are we on??

### Reply



pawineguy · 2 weeks ago

0

Dude,

20 people tweeted. 20. As you noted, it was poorly organized, and it looks like everyone involved were social media / industry people. What was actually accomplished? You always bash people who don't supply the pertinent stats... we're trying to understand what he got for his money. One wholesale salesman standing in a store would have tasted dozens of people on the wine, same for a retailer that cracked a bottle on a busy night...

### Reply



1WineDude 119p · 2 weeks ago

+2

Dude, 20 people tweeted... \*\*\*to tens of thousands of followers\*\*\*. Some of the respondents indicated they'd be trying to purchase the wines. Some of the participants were Master Somms. The topic trended on Twitter, which gets the brand a high exposure level during that time. Sorry, I'm not sure what else you're looking for here.

### Reply



pawineguy · 2 weeks ago

0

I run a Super Bowl commercial for my new little winery... I reached hundreds of millions of people! It's a home run! Right? No, we'd all agree it's not.

You'd want to know what it cost, what the reaction was to the ad, etc... you'd want to know if I had the wine was available so that people could actually buy it... ANYTHING to enable someone to judge the success. If I paid a wine publicist for reach and he got a grand total of 20 people to tweet about it, I'm not sure I'd be happy, never mind warrant a blog piece calling it a home run.

As far as I can tell, the most you have noted is that several people indicated that they were going to buy the wine. That's not a home run. Surely there must be a better example of social media success?

### Reply



1WineDude 119p · 2 weeks ago

+2

PA - What you're saying may be true or might be totally off base; it depends entirely on the goals of the event / ad / whatever. If the idea is to get brand exposure, then it was a homerun, because that's exactly what they did (the same would be true of the SB commercial). If the idea was to instantaneously move several cases of wine, then it was almost certainly a failure. But if that was their intent, then they were running the event on entirely the WRONG platform. Fixating on the twenty tweeters is not what you want to do here, those were the influencers who were invited to participate, so in those cases you want quality, not quantity. The event didn't reach twenty people, it potentially reached 70+ thousand by way of those twenty.

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[Paving The Off-The-Beaten Southern California Wine Path \(Four Brix Recent Releases\)](#)

 Solomon Mengeu

It's great to read about Californian wines that are mixing it up & doing something different...

» 25 minutes ago

 1WineDude 119p

FBW - well deserved. It was a great visit, looking forward to when we next cross paths!

» 15 hours ago

 @FourBrixWine

Wow! Dude thanks for the props. It was great having you out in Cali and all the best to the Family....

» 22 hours ago

 1WineDude 119p

Thanks. I'll be focusing the content here more and more on small production / producers this year....

» 22 hours ago

The last comments for

[Why Social Media Advice From Traditional Wine Media Is Almost Always Wrong](#)

 1WineDude 119p

Thanks. I actually know people who'd argue that small step is too much work. :-)

» 22 hours ago

Comments by [IntenseDebate](#)

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