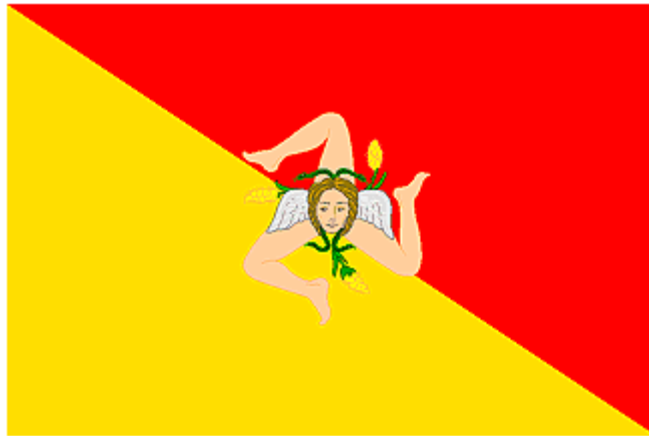


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Women in Wine: Donnafugata – Lighea, A Burst of Summer



Donnafugata, a winery near Marsala, is extremely well known on the international market. Usually, I try to shy away from these types of wineries and prefer to try something from a smaller producer however I am an unabashed fan of most of Donnafugata's wines. Whether it is their Tancredi made from Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon or Angheli made from a blend of Merlot and Nero d'Avola or the two wines made from 100% Nero d'Avola, Sedara, and Mille e Una Notte, I am always transported back to trips I have taken to Sicily and memorable experiences related to that region. These are heady wines and while it sounds extremely trite, they evoke that passion that one associates with Sicilians. Donnafugata also makes delicious white wines such as Lighea from Zibibbo, Anthilia from Ansonica and Catarratto and Vigna di Gabri from Ansonica. One of my favorite wine from Donnafugata is the exquisite Passito di Pantelleria Ben Rye'. I have never had the pleasure of visiting Pantelleria but it is absolutely on my long bucket list.

The flag in the picture is the Trinacria. It was first created in 1282. The winged head represents Medusa and three wheat ears, according to an entry in Wikipedia. The bent legs instead are for good luck and prosperity. Trinacria was also the ancient name for Sicily.

I first tried Donnafugata wines years ago at MIWINE, a trade show in Milan where I worked as a Sommelier, thanks to an Italian Sommelier and I have been hooked ever since. I have had the pleasure of meeting the members of the family many times, most recently at VinoVip 2013 in Cortina.

Donnafugata is headed by José Rallo. The winery was started in 1983 by Giacomo Rallo and his wife Gabriella. José is the next generation and leads this innovative

winery together with her brother and her husband. The historic winery lands are located near the towns of Marsala and Contessa Entellina on the western coast of Sicily. Marsala is best known for the dessert wines of the same name.

The name Donnafugata comes from the legendary novel, “Il Gattopardo” or “The Leopard” by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. It was published by Feltrinelli after his death after having been passed over by the publisher Einaudi, a tremendous mistake. That novel is extraordinary in its depiction of Sicilian life and a must read for anyone hoping to understand Sicily. Often, it seems to still be an appropriate description of the immutable nature of Italy. It describes a world where no matter what happens, nothing really ever changes. One of the most famous quotes from the novel is “Se tutto deve rimanere com’è, è necessario che tutto cambi.” If everything is to remain as it is, then it is necessary that everything changes. That is a quality that I find true today in Italian life but not one that always displeases me. In some ways, it is very frustrating while it can also be strangely reassuring. I worked for three years with a group of Sicilians. It was very enlightening and a totally different experience. In the novel, the name Donnafugata is associated with country properties which the novel’s protagonist, the Prince of Salina, owns. The Rallo family’s Santa Magherita palace where Lampedusa spent his summers was the backdrop for many of the most important scenes in the novel.

Today I want to mention one of their wines that I tremendously enjoyed last year at [Vino Vip](#) at a dinner at [Il Campanile](#). The food was mountain oriented as we were in Cortina but this wine was pure Sicily.

Made from Zibibbo (Moscato d’Alessandria), the wine was floral and fruity with good acidity and minerality as well as a hint of residual sugar, according to my notes. I was drinking the 2012 last year but now they are promoting the 2013 vintage.

According to their website, “on Pantelleria 2013 was a vintage with slightly more rainfall than in previous years, with temperatures in line with the average of recent years. The harvesting of the grapes for the production of Lighea, which come from vineyards in the cooler districts, began on August 25. The wide temperature range between day and night enhanced the aromatic richness of the Zibibbo.”

Donnafugata is a real go to winery for me. I have found they never disappoint.