

Zibbibo sweetens up the island of Pantelleria

This year as I'm working through a little redesign of my site I have so many articles from when I started this blog almost 3 years ago, but I want to focus more this year on some of the even lesser known varietals and regions that I haven't talked to much about. That brings me to my topic today and with Valentine's Day around the corner I thought it was only appropriate to focus on a dessert wine for the holiday, **Moscato and Passito di Pantelleria**.

Even though I love dry red wines I have a real appreciation for all wines and I definitely have a sweet tooth so when it comes to dessert wines they all call my name. Plus, they're my husbands favorites and I have to keep him happy too. It is Valentine's Day after all.



Love collecting these Annalee dolls

Pantelleria is an island off the coast of Sicily bordering Africa. It suffers from the hot winds blowing over from Africa known as the *scirocco* winds. These winds as you can imagine can be damaging to the grapes grown here as it can literally bake the grapes. The wineries of the island protect their grapes by wrapping the vines to look like wreaths that cover up and protect the grapes with the leaves. I've also seen this done on the island of Santorini in Greece due to it's intense heat and wind. With these temperatures the residual sugars in the grapes increase and produce very ripe grapes, resulting in the amazing dessert wines known as the Passito di Pantelleria or Moscato di Pantelleria.



An overview of the fields of Pantelleria by Luca Volpi

These wines are made from **moscato grapes**, which here are also known as **zibibbo**. What a fun word for a grape! The grapes are actually harvested at night out of the intense day sun to help balance the acidity and sugar. The wines are produced in a multitude of styles as well. You'll find it in a dry style, sweet/*dolce* style, liquoroso (fortified) and the most popular known as the passito style. What makes this wine special is that the grapes are actually dried out in the sun on volcanic black sun concentrating the sugars further. The Passito di Pantelleria is one of the top dessert wines that you'll find throughout Italy.



Any version that you can find to experience is worth the treat. A popular producer and wine on the US market from Pantelleria is that from the well-known **Donnafugata** winery known as **Ben Rye**. This wine retails in about the mid \$40's, but is quite delightful. I hope you get to seek one out this Valentine's Day or in the near future. Let me know if you do or have had others as I always love suggestions.

I'd love to hear from my readers as well. Do you enjoy dessert wines in general or do you prefer a dried style of wine?