



SICILY'S WHITE MIGRATION

Most have an image of Sicily as hot, red wine-focused territory, but today white grapes are responsible for some of its most exciting wines.

“Cool nights, our unique soil composition, and ocean proximity provide ideal conditions for white wine,” says Antonio Rallo, of Donnafugata Winery and President of Wines of Sicily. Of the many indigenous grapes being rediscovered and rescued from extinction, whites are some of most fascinating and successful, he adds.

Wines of Sicily recently launched a promotional campaign for Grillo (“Go Grillo”), a fresh, aromatic white grape which currently accounts for 10% of plantings on the island. “The U.S. consumer really loves this style; Grillo has become our number two export to America, second to Nero d’Avola,” Rallo says. “It’s approachable and crisp like Pinot Grigio, but with more character.”

Planeta was an early believer in the island’s potential for outstanding whites: “When we arrived to Etna, 85% of the plantings were red and we planted 55% white grapes—we’ve been very pleased with the results,” reports Patricia Toth, Planeta’s winemaker. “Grecanico expresses incredible minerality and freshness from the upper hillsides of the Sambuca area. Carricante, once used only for bulk production, has proved capable of elegant, bright, aromatic whites in volcanic soils of Etna.” Planeta was also the first to plant Chardonnay and Fiano in Sicily in the 1980s and ‘90s; both have thrived.

Sicily’s reputation for stand-out whites is no secret to Italians: There has been big investment by white wine specialists from Northern Italy who recognize the potential, and the island’s whites are among the most distributed throughout Italy: “It’s rare to find wine from Tuscany or Piedmont in Sicily, but not the other way around,” says Rallo.

– KRISTEN BIELER