

TOPIC

WINE AND SPIRITS

Three quality Sicilian whites that dispel the region’s reputation for cheap bulk wines

Donnafugata winery’s modern, fresh and fruity pours are perfectly suited to the hot, sticky summer in Hong Kong

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Donnafugata's vineyards and cellars on the island of Sicily.

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Sicily is one of Italy's largest wine regions by volume. Unfortunately, its reputation for high-quality wine has been overshadowed by its cheap bulk wines. In 1983, Giacomo and Gabriella Rallo established the Donnafugata winery and set out to change the negative perception of Sicilian wines.

Donnafugata is the name of the town featured in *The Leopard* (1958), a classic novel by Italian writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa that was the inspiration behind the winery. Donnafugata (“woman in flight”) also refers to Queen Maria Carolina of Naples, who sought refuge in Sicily during the Napoleonic wars and who inspired the winery’s logo.

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Sicily, an island situated in the Mediterranean Sea north of Africa, has a tumultuous past. In 827, it was conquered by the Arabs from North Africa who occupied the region for more than 200 years. Their cultural influence can still be felt today, in place names and the Sicilian dialect, which incorporates words of Arabic origin. So does Donnafugata, whose wine labels and names are infused with Sicily’s Arabic heritage.

During the hot, sultry Sicilian summers, white wines are thirst-quenching. They are also well suited to Hong Kong's tropical, sticky summers. Donnafugata wines are modern, fresh, fruity and approachable in style. They retain the freshness of the primary fruit and are light and uncomplicated, without oak influence. Made from indigenous Sicilian grape varieties, they offer wine lovers new territory to explore and a change from the ubiquitous international white varieties.



Donnafugata, Anthilia Sicilia DOC 2016, HK\$138

This wine is predominantly made from Sicily's catarratto grape. In the past, catarratto was the main blending component for bulk wine and marsala, a fortified wine, but producers have recognised the grape's potential to produce single varietal wines. Catarratto has a characteristic citrus and grapefruit nose, and is full-bodied with lower acidity.

The wine, which is named after Anthilia, a city from the Roman period, is fermented in stainless-steel tanks at low temperatures – between 14 to 16 degrees Celsius – then aged in tanks for two months, followed by two months of bottle ageing before release.

Fruit-salad flavours of citrus, melon, peach, pineapple and apricots. Medium body and fruit forward with balanced acidity. Easy-going with simple, ripe fruit. Appealing and refreshing.

Donnafugata SurSur, Grillo Sicilia DOC 2016, HK\$185

Made from the grillo grape, this wine is a crossbetween catarratto and moscato d'Alessandria (zibibbo), which is widely cultivated due to its ability to withstand high temperatures and is the main component in marsala.

Grillo and *sursur* mean cricket in Italian and classical Arabic, respectively, the insect that is believed to bring good luck. The label depicts a young Gabriella, running barefoot on grass, following the sound of chirping crickets.

The wine is fermented in stainless steel at low temperatures, preserving fresh fruit aromatics, and aged for three months in tanks before release.

Restrained citrus with salty, mineral notes. On the palate, attractive savoury notes with soft acidity and finishing medium long. Clean and refreshing.

Donnafugata Lighea Sicilia DOC 2016, HK\$200

This wine is made from zibibbo, a member of the muscat family. The grape's name is derived from the Arabic word for raisins – *zabib*. The vines are bush trained and cultivated in hollows for protection against the strong sirocco winds on the volcanic island of Pantelleria, in southwest Sicily.

Sensual notes of perfume, rose and lychee fruit. Lighter bodied with good fruit intensity and lower acidity. Fruit forward, with attractive fruity notes.

The wines are available from sinovantagewines.com.

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