



DONNAFUGATA

PRESS RELEASE

Chiarandà protagonist of the Donnafugata Day in Rome

On December 6 hundreds of sommeliers and wine-lovers attended the 2nd Donnafugata Day held by **AIS** (Italian Sommeliers Association) at the Rome Cavalieri.

In addition to the tasting of all the estate's wines, an extraordinary **vertical tasting** – run by Daniela Scrobogna (AIS) together with Antonio Rallo and Stefano Valla (Donnafugata) – was dedicated to Chiarandà. Seven different vintages – from 1999 to 2007 en primeur – demonstrated Chiarandà's ageing potential. A wine that grows in quality while remaining faithful to its territory.

At its birth with the 1992 vintage it was called **Chiarandà del Merlo** (referring to the two vineyards from which it is made). Ten years later this was shortened to **Chiarandà** and its label enriched with a female figure underlining its refinement.

It has always been Donnafugata's premium white, the finest expression of viticultural heritage in the **Contessa Entellina** territory in the heart of western Sicily.

Behind it was the idea of producing a wine that could be internationally appreciated for its sunny taste and well-balanced structure. The chosen blend of two grape varieties is still basically unchanged: **Ansonica**, a traditional Sicilian grape, and **Chardonnay** that for years has been giving excellent results in this territory.

In striving for extreme quality many **innovations** were introduced in both vineyard and cellar to create a wine as prestigious as Chiarandà.

Innovation in grape harvesting: after initial experimentation in August 1998, in 1999 Donnafugata opted definitively for a **nighttime harvest** of the Chardonnay, a technical decision that this year celebrated its first decade. In Sicily, Chardonnay grapes ripen first, in August. Since daytime temperatures are high at this time of the year (sometimes over 95°F), there is a risk of undesired fermentation during the transport from vineyard to cellar and volatilization of aromas during pressing. Whereas at night temperature drops down to 60°-64°F. Besides maintaining the grapes' organoleptic potential intact, nocturnal harvesting provides a 70% energy savings by cooling the grapes prior to pressing. Picking the grapes at night does not only give a wine of great finesse and aromatic complexity but is also more respectful to the environment.

Through the years the ability to "read" the **estate's vineyards** and to reach the vegetation-production equilibrium has increased considerably, arriving at very low yield per plant (less than two pounds per vine). Also decisive was monitoring the ripening process by taking and tasting a great many samplings of grapes in order to fully assess the state of phenols, aromas, sugars and acidity. And in this there has been a very close collaboration at Donnafugata between agronomist and enologist, together deciding - on the basis of analytic and organoleptic parameters - the **ideal moment** for picking the grapes in each vineyard: in August for the Chardonnay and in September for the Ansonica.



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As for **vinification**, the Chardonnay and Ansonica musts obtained from soft pressing in the Contessa Entellina cellar are fermented in the historic winery in Marsala, where the production cycle is completed. Since 2002 the **alcoholic fermentation** of the musts destined for Chiarandà has no longer been entirely in oak barrels as before, but partly in **stainless steel vats**, primarily to enhance the “fruit” component.

As time went on, by tasting earlier vintages it became easier to assess the wine’s development potential and even to perfect the highly important **maturation process**. For example, it was decided to mature in oak only a portion of Chiarandà, not the entire vintage. From the initial 100% this was reduced to 70% in 2003 and 2004, decreasing – in 2005 – to 50% of the wine being matured in **oak** while the other half ages in **small cement vats**.

The main purpose of the oak use is not to give structure and aromatic content to the wine but, instead, to help it to evolve in a way that expresses all of its potential.

With this objective the time **maturing in barrels** has been slightly reduced, from the former 6 to 8 months to 4 to 6 months for the 2007 vintage.

To reach the same goal, a wider range of oak is being used, differing in zone of origin, seasoning and toasting as well as in size (both barriques and tonneaux) and cooperage. This enabled the optimal wood choice on the basis of the various crus (wines coming from specific vineyards).

Furthermore, **refinement in the bottle** has been lengthened. For the 2007 vintage it will last at least a year.

Focusing on quality the **Ansonica** has been surprising in its ability to give the wine tastiness and floral notes. The **Chardonnay** gives it a full-bodied and elegant character. The two grape varieties together have created a blend that is extremely balanced and complete.

The result is a wine that in its latest vintages has been enhanced in its fruit, crispness and minerality. **A Chiarandà with character and territoriality, increasingly endowed with complexity, longevity and elegance.**

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