



DONNAFUGATA®

PRESS RELEASE

The quality of the 2009 vintage

Satisfaction at Donnafugata: a felicitously Sicilian year
that will give life to wines fully expressing the territory

With the 2009 grape harvest over, at Donnafugata it's time to draw conclusions. **Normal weather trends** and **scrupulous vineyard tending** created the premises for an excellent harvest allowing us to bring healthy and perfectly ripe grapes to the cellar.

These are the **year's highlights**. In the **fall** and **winter** rainfall was above seasonal averages. In **spring** (April and May) there was a slight delay in budding and blossoming. In June we trimmed the vines to facilitate the growth of new leaves that would be physiologically active in the final stages of grape ripening.

Summer temperatures were a bit higher than usual. In any case, there were big temperature changes between day and night, aiding the vineyards' vine/grape growth balance, preventing stress from summer heat and at night allowing what was photosynthesized during the day to be transferred from the vine leaves to the grapes.

For example, on the hillsides of the Donnafugata estate at Contessa Entellina, on one of the hottest days, such as July 16, maximum temperature reached 103°F while the minimum was 65°F. And even during all of August the difference between highest and lowest temperatures was considerable.

In July the vines went through the grape-setting phase. Towards the end of the month the most productive vineyards were selectively thinned.

At **Contessa Entellina** the harvest began on August 10, with the nighttime picking of the **Chardonnay** grapes, the earliest variety to ripen. Nocturnal harvesting is a technical choice that preserves the grapes' aromas much better during transport from vineyard to cellar, thanks to cooler temperatures.

It was then the turn of the **Sauvignon Blanc** (August 13), the **Viognier** (August 19 to 27), the **Merlot** (August 26 to September 5), the **Syrah** (August 27 to September 12), the **Nero d'Avola** (starting from September 5), the **Grecanico** (September 6) and the **Ansonica** (September 7 to 10).

The **Cabernet Sauvignon** harvest began on September 9 and the **Catarratto** on September 12. The rain that fell on September 16-17 and 22-23 delayed grape picking by about a week, ending on October 1 for both varieties.

At the vineyards located at Pandolfina (Sambuca di Sicilia) the most recently planted varieties were harvested as follows: the **Alicante Bouchet** was picked on September 19, the **Tannat** on the 21 and 29 and the **Petit Verdot** on September 29.



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These are grapes traditional to several Mediterranean basin countries such as France, Spain and Italy (Alicante in particular has been grown for more than a century in Sicily, too). In the past few years Donnafugata has found that these varieties grow extremely well on the Belice Valley hills and so will gradually be added to the blends of some of the winery's reds.

Where **overall rainfall** is concerned, this was quite a wet year: from October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009, 34.4 inches of rain fell versus the average of 26.6 registered over the past seven years by the S.I.A.S meteorological station at Contessa Entellina (www.sias.regione.sicilia.it).

In conclusion, at Donnafugata **white wine quality is excellent; the same high quality was achieved for the reds although production was smaller** because the rainfall on September 22-23 made greater selection during picking necessary.

Satisfaction was also great on **Pantelleria**, where the Donnafugata vineyards in 11 different parts of the island are important examples of heroic viticulture. Here the **Zibibbo** harvest began on August 12, picking the grapes in a few small vineyards, and went into full swing from August 17 on. The harvest terminated on September 19.

In general, good temperature changes between day and night helped enhance the fragrances of the Zibibbo, which is grown shrub-style on volcanic soil.

Just over a month ago fermentations ended for the **Ben Ryé** production process and early tastings show the great harmony and elegance towards which this sweet wine is projected.

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