

Donnafugata is one of Sicily's great new winemakers

By SEAN WOOD Wood On Wine
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THE DONNAFUGATA WINERY, owned by the Rallo family, is in the vanguard of Sicily's new wave of great winemaking. Headquartered in the famous old wine town of Marsala, Donnafugata has 260 hectares under vine and three separate properties in southwestern Sicily and on the island of Pantelleria where they produce the elegant and complex dessert wine Ben Rye, Passito di Pantelleria DOC. The name Donnafugata is a literary reference from the historical novel

The Leopard by Giuseppe di Lampedusa.

Donnafugata creates brilliantly harmonious blends using both native and international grapes. While deeply committed to restoring native varieties such as Ansonica and Nero d'Avola, the Rallos believe that international varieties are completely compatible with local conditions. This belief is based on the premise that, ultimately, it is the quality of terroir that creates great wine. Donnafugata's labels are, in themselves, works of art. Every one tells a story that is intimately connected to the region and its compelling history. It is well worth visiting their excellent website — www.donnafugata.it — to learn a little more about this fascinating winery.

REVIEWS

Note: All the Donnafugata wines reviewed this week are available exclusively at Bishop's Cellar, Bishop's Landing, on the Halifax waterfront. Some, such as Polena, are in very short supply.

Donnafugata Anthilia Sicilia IGT, 2007, 13 per cent, \$22.75, \$14 (375ml). This is a blend of two Sicilian white grapes, Ansonica and Catarrato. The former is usually known as Inzolia in Sicily. The name Ansonica is used mostly in Tuscany where the grape is also grown to a limited extent. Generously ripe yellow and stone fruit scents with a hint of honey lead into similarly mellow, full-flavoured fruit on the palate. Nicely balanced, with good length. Pair with flavourful sea foods and lighter, soft ripened cheeses.

Donnafugata Sedàra Sicilia IGT, 2006, 14 per cent, \$22.75. One hundred per cent Nero d'Avola, showing developed red fruits and an overlay of attractive light spice on the nose. Warmly ripe red and dark fruit in the mouth is backed up by moderate tannins and balanced acidity. Good structure and length. Stylish wine in this price range.

Donnafugata Sherazade Sicilia IGT, 2007, Nero d'Avola and Syrah, 13 per cent, \$25. Plummy fruit with a whiff of herb, a trace of mineral and a dusting of cinnamon and clove on the nose. Dark berry, currant, lightly firm tannin with a splash of chocolate on the palate. Drinking well now, but will improve over the next two to three years.

Donnafugata Polena Sicilia IGT Bianco, 2007, Catarrato Viognier, 13 per cent, \$25. Green and yellow tropical fruit on the nose and lovely, lush citrus and apricot flavours on the palate with a bracing note of mineral and refreshing acidity. Appetizing wine that makes you want that second glass.

Donnafugata Tancredi Contessa Entellina Rosso DOC, 14 per cent, \$46. A blend of Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon aged separately for 12 months in French oak. Refined, quite developed vinosity with layers of fine fruit and enticingly subtle spice on the nose. Predominantly dark berry with secondary black plum flavours, firm but supple tannins and deftly melded fruit, dark chocolate and discreet oak on the finish. Drinkable now, but will benefit from a few more years in the cellar. Worth the money.