

THE ITALIAN TRIBUNE

The Premier Italian American Weekly Newspaper Since 1931

NOVEMBER 27, 2008

www.ItalianTribune.com

\$1.00

GREAT WOMEN OF ITALIAN WINE



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GABRIELLA ANCA RALLO
OF DONNAFUGATA



DONATELLA CINELLI
COLOMBINI OF CASATO
PRIME DONNE



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Recently, in Milan, 10 "Heroic Women of Italian Vines and Wines" were feted. The names of the award winners all carry weight and forcefully recount the many faces of Italian wine: Maria Pia Berlucchi of Fratelli Berlucchi, Maria Grazia, Chiara and Teresa Lungarotti of Giorgio Lungarotti, Donatella Cinelli Colombini of Casato Prime Donne, Marina Cvetic Masciarelli of Gianni Masciarelli, Gabriella Anca Rallo of Donnafugata, Ornella Costa Correggia of Matteo Correggia, Isabella Pellizzatti Perego of Cantine Arturo Pellizzatti Perego, Paola De Mauro of Baraccone di Piacenza and, finally, Anna Pesenti of the Italian Wine Women Association.

Wine women are rising in numbers in Italy and throughout the wine world, says the "Goloraris 2008" which met at the Milan Convention Center in Milan to honor the magnificent 10. This was the third year of the wine and food show organized by Paolo Massobrio and Marco Gatti.

The Italian Tribune has had the distinct pleasure of visiting four of the 10 honored vineyards, and two of them just a few weeks ago. Last year we visited Fattoria Barbi in Montalcino, Tuscany and met with Marchese Colombini and Donatella Cinelli Colombini. In October we met with the Rallo family at Donnafugato Vineyard in Marsala, Sicily. Later that month in Torgiano, Umbria we had an extensive wine taste of the Lungarotta Vineyard.

Interviewing the women of these vineyards led us to a desire to do the feature "Great Women of Italian Wines." We will begin our five week series with the matriarch of the wine dynasty known as Donnafugata (fleeing woman).



MARIA PIA BERLUCCHI, right,
OF FRATELLI BERLUCCHI



GABRIELLA ANCO RALLO RECEIVES AN AWARD FROM PAOLO MASSOBRIO. Rallo received the award as an ambassador of premium Italian enology, leader of a profound innovation process in both winemaking and communication that began in the late 1970s.

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Food *Wine* & TRAVEL

GREAT WOMEN OF ITALIAN WINE GABRIELLA ANCA RALLO

This week we begin a five week series on Italian women of Italian wine. The first feature is on Gabriella Anca Rallo, founder of the Donnafugata Vineyard with her husband Giacomo Rallo. Why the name Donnafugata (meaning “fleeing woman” in English)?

The name is a literary citation referring to the extraordinary novel *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. In it, Donnafugata is identified with the country properties, situated in the heart of the Belice Valley, that were owned by the Prince of Salina and, in particular, the palace at Santa Margherita, the setting of some of the most memorable scenes in the famous novel. It was here that the Habsburg queen and consort of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon, Maria Carolina, took refuge after her flight from the court in Naples upon the arrival of the Napoleonic troops of Murat. That event inspired the image of the head of a woman, her hair tossed about by the wind, which appears on each bottle of Donnafugata.

When the Rallo's were fourth generation wine makers of the family vineyards Contessa Entellina (in the heart of western Sicily), Gabriella began to reduce vineyard yield, improve the quality of indigenous grape varieties and introduce the international grapes that could express themselves best here.

“Wine women are an important resource for this still a bit too masculine world. Handing down our passion to future generations.” - Gabriella Rallo

During this time, it was truly rare for Sicilian women to be involved in agriculture. But step by step Gabriella put her decisions to work, convinced that the island possessed great and still unrealized potential. In the 50's Gabriella and Giacomo started the Donnafugata Vineyard in Marsala, Sicily.

This led to an innovation like the nighttime harvesting of Chardonnay to keep all of its aromas intact. And then the remarkable achievement on Pantelleria, where Donnafugata makes Passito Ben Rye, one of the world's most highly acclaimed sweet wines.

Imagination, beauty and femininity were Gabriella's guidelines in communication: it was her idea to name the winery Donnafugata and use the effigy of a woman's head with windswept hair on every bottle. Even the names of several wines and the feminine illustrations for quite a number of the labels, all Gabriella's ideas, were inspired by *Il Gattopardo*.

The rest is current history. At Donnafugata Gabriella and Giacomo work side by side with daughter Josè and son Antonio who have accelerated the winery's pace on its path to extreme quality and reaped honors internationally.

Gabriella Anca Rallo states: “This award I received helps us realize that we women can be an important resource for the wine world, still a bit too male-based. It moves me very much to know that we're a reference point for the new generations, to which we hope to hand down all of our passionate involvement.”

The Donnafugata Winery is now listed among the top seven Italian Wineries in all the guides. Only seven wineries have all Italian wine critics in agreement: Gaja and Braida in Piedmont, Caldaro in Alto Adige, Trabucchi and Corte Sant'Alda in Veneto, Masciarelli in Abruzzo and Donnafugata. This is the response



GABRIELLA, bottom left, AND HUSBAND GIACOMO RALLO, top right, are the founders of Donnafugata Vineyard. Their children Antonio, top left, and Jose, bottom right work with their parents at Donnafugata. Pictured with them is the future generation of Donnafugata, their grandchildren Ferdinando and Gabriellina.

from a survey published at www.winenes.it, the reference website for Italian wine. The survey was conducted by comparing the ratings of the 2009 editions of Italy's five top wine guides.

Their prize vintages are Ben Rye, Mille Notte, and the 100 percent Nero Davola simply called Donnafugata.

After a successful 2007, Donnafugata Day comes back to the Italian Sommeliers Association in Rome. It will be an event entirely devoted to the Sicilian winery and will draw a great crowd of sommeliers and wine-lovers. It will be held on Saturday, December 6 in the prestigious setting of The Waldorf at the Rome Cavalieri Hotel.



GABRIELLA RALLO WITH HER DAUGHTER JOSE, the next generation of Donnafugata's great women of Italian wine. Jose has introduced wine and music as she travels around the country with her husband promoting jazz and wine.

You will read much more about Donnafugata Vineyard in January when we begin the Italian Tribune Publisher's tour and we feature an exclusive interview with Antonio Rallo, along with photos of the winery and the Rallo family.