

Wine and Spirits / Wines you can't refuse

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By [Daniel Rogov](#)

The families of Giacomo and Gabriella Rallo are no strangers to the wines of Sicily, their links with the island going back 150 years. With historic cellars in the city of Marsala and vineyards in the heart of western Sicily at Contesse Entellina and on the island of Pantelleria, the modern-day wine history of the family started in 1983 with the opening of the Donnafugata winery.

For their white wines the winery relies on indigenous varieties like Catarratto, Zibibbo and Ansonica Bianca (also known as Inzolia), as well as classic varieties such as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. For their reds, the indigenous variety most often found in the Donnafugata wines is Nero d'Avola; French varieties used include Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. The combination makes for wines that are uniquely Sicilian in what might be termed a thoroughly modern yet old-world fashion. Not striving to produce huge wines that are overloaded with oak and tannins gives the winery the freedom to produce wines that some will describe as "feminine" - that is to say, round, soft, well structured but not at all aggressive.



The Donnafugata Winery in Sicily: a history going back 150 years with the Italian island.

Photo by: Haaretz



In addition to providing interesting wines, the labels of Donnafugata have interesting stories to tell, some mythological, some historical and nearly all relating to women. One can see the labels and read about their background on the winery's Web site at www.donnafugata.it

Donnafugata, Chiaranda, Sicily, 2009: A bright gold, full-bodied blend combining equal measures of Ansonica and Chardonnay, reflecting its partial development in barriques with a gentle note of white chocolate. Opens in the glass to reveal fresh summer fruits, apples and a light note of citrus. A full-flavored wine with fine balance between wood, acidity and fruits, all lingering nicely on the finish. Drink now-2013. NIS 275. Score 92.

Donnafugata, Lighea, Sicily, 2009: A dry white blend of 75 percent Zibibbo (a synonym for Muscat of Alexandria), 20 percent Chardonnay and five percent Sauvignon Blanc. The color of damp straw with orange and green tints, opens with a floral nose (think red rose petals), goes on in the glass to reveal aromas and flavors of summer fruits, citrus peel and, perhaps reflecting the volcanic soil on which the grapes were raised, hints of minerals and salt water. On the finish an enchanting note of eucalyptus honey. Drink now-2013. NIS 125. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Vigna di Gabri, Sicily, 2009: Indigenous Ansonica grapes blended with 20 percent Chardonnay, showing pale golden straw, a mineral-rich wine with aromas and flavors of green apples, citrus peel and flinty minerals. Long, refreshing and mouth-filling. Drink now or in the next year or so. NIS 144. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Sedara, Sicily, 2009: Ruby towards garnet, an unoaked, soft, round and medium-bodied blend of 65 percent Nero d'Avola that is fleshed out with Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. A generously black-fruit nose makes way for flavors of black cherries, black currants and blackberries, those complemented by notes of freshly picked Mediterranean herbs, cigar tobacco and earthy minerals. Drink now-2012, perhaps somewhat longer. NIS 90. Score 89.

Donnafugata, Sherazade, Sicily, 2009: Ruby towards garnet, made entirely from indigenous Nero d'Avola grapes. A round, gentle wine, medium- to full-bodied with soft tannins and a red fruit nose. Opens in the glass to reveal a generous array of currants, black cherries and blueberries, those on a background of freshly turned earth and, on the long finish an appealing note of mocha. Not a complex wine but a delicious one. Drink now-2012. NIS 105. Score 89.

Donnafugata, Angheli, Sicily, 2007: Super dark garnet, a full-bodied blend of 70 percent Merlot and 30 percent Nero d'Avola. Reflects its development in French barriques for around 12 months with gently gripping tannins, opens to reveal aromas and flavors of black fruits, crushed berries and earthy minerals. On the long finish, appealing note of cherries and loam. Drink now-2013. NIS 182. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Tancredi, Sicily, 2006: An oak aged blend of 70 percent Nero d'Avola and 30 percent Cabernet Sauvignon. Dark garnet with orange reflections, full-bodied with tannins that start out firm and then meld nicely into the wine. Look for blackberries, black cherries and crushed berries, those on a background that hints nicely of mocha and green olives. Long and mouth-filling. Drink now-2014, perhaps longer. NIS 227. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Mille e Una Notte, Sicily, 2006: The flagship wine of the winery, the name (A Thousand and One Nights) bringing a first smile to the eyes. A blend of 90 percent Nero d'Avola and 10 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in mostly new French oak barrels for 24 months, opens with a nose rich in black fruits, smoky oak and melted chocolate. Goes on to reveal a rich array of aromas and flavors, those including black currants, blackberries, raspberries, the fruits on a background generous in chocolate, spices and earthy minerals. Tannins and fruits rise on the long finish together with a note of freshly hung tobacco leaves. A well balanced wine with the structure to age. Drink now-2018. NIS 496. Score 93.