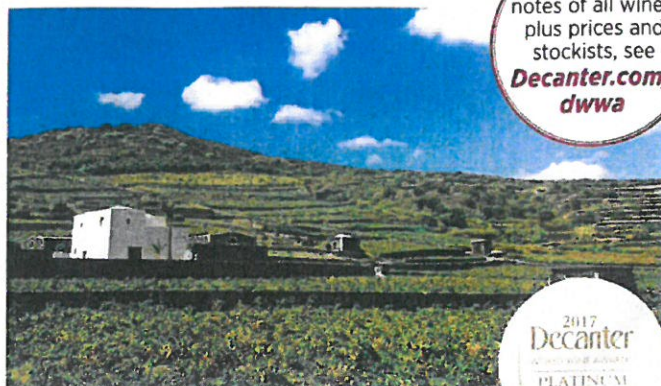


# Decanter

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**BEST SWEET SOUTHERN ITALY**

**Donnafugata, Ben Ryé, Passito di Pantelleria, Sicily 2014 (14.5%)**

*Intense nose with notes of honey, flowers, ripe tropical fruits and spice. Displays a powerful umami and mushroom flavour on the palate. The balance between sweetness and acidity borders on perfection. Will age well but hard not to drink now.*  
 £74.99 Harvey Nichols, Hedonism, Liberty Wines, Valvona & Crolla POA \$ Folio Wine Co

THE NAME BEN Ryé means ‘son of the wind’ in Arabic and refers to the winds that constantly sweep across the vineyards on the volcanic island of Pantelleria, between Sicily and the African coast. ‘The wind is an important climatic factor in determining the quality of the grapes,’ says José Rallo of Donnafugata. ‘In some areas an unusually windy year can substantially reduce production.’

Rallo and her brother Antonio now run Donnafugata, which was founded by their parents Giacomo and Gabriella in 1983. The company has recently started producing wines on Etna, as well as owning a family cellar in Marsala, the Contessa Entellina winery in western Sicily, and the Khamma winery on Pantelleria.

Producing the island’s signature Passito di Pantelleria is a labour-intensive process that involves working with Zibibbo vines planted on steep, terraced vineyards, using the traditional *alberello pantesco* bush-training system. Grapes are hand-picked and dried in the sun on cane mats, then destemmed and selected by hand before fermentation. ‘This kind of viticulture requires a great deal of manual labour – about three times that employed in our Contessa Entellina vineyards,’ says Rallo.



Tasted against ■ Ferruccio Deiana, Oirad, Isola dei Nuraghi, Sardinia 2014