

Decanter

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WORLD
WINE
AWARDS
2018
THE WINNERS

SOUTHERN ITALY

Donnafugata, Ben Ryé, Passito di Pantelleria, Sicily 2015 (14.4%)

Dark honey-gold in colour, with burnished bittersweet orange scents almost smoky in their intensity. Thick, intense and weighty on the tongue, the wine is oily in texture, with a saturation of scent which would seem unbalanced were it not for the 193 grams of residual sugar to resolve and refine it. A saline note adds a further factor of balance to this exotic southerner.

Drink 2018-2020

£54.80-£74.99 Exel Wines, Hedonism, Liberty Wines, Vini Italiani
POA \$ Folio Wine Company

Home for Ben Ryé is the volcanic island of Pantelleria, rising from the sea between Africa and Sicily. This is where Donnafugata has its Khamma winery, and 68ha of vineyards bordered by dry-built, lava stone walls.

Donnafugata also has vineyards across the island of Sicily in locales such as Marsala, Etna and Vittoria. Chief winemaker for all is Antonio Rallo: 'I was born in Rome in 1967 but grew up in Marsala, and I actually began my experience in winemaking as a three-year-old accompanying my grandfather in the vineyards and cellars. My sister José and I are the fifth generation of a family that has produced quality wines since 1851, and it was my father, Giacomo, who along with my mother founded Donnafugata in 1983.'

The Zibibbo (Muscat of Alexandria) vines which give rise to Ben Ryé are all bush-trained to help resist the persistent winds that swirl around and through the island, enhancing this passito wine with an infusion of Mediterranean fragrances.

Making this wine is a laborious process which takes three to four months. Healthy grapes are picked mid-August and left to dry on racks. A second harvest occurs in September, batches of the shrivelled grapes being added to the fresh must to release their stored sugars and concentration as it all macerates. Fermentation finishes in November, and the wine is bottled after a period of storage in tank.

