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RED WINE



Donnafugata: expressing Mount Etna (/wine-posts-reviews/red-wine/593-donnafugata-etna-2021)

19 April 2021

Art & Expression

In Greek mythology, Zeus was said to have trapped a monster called Typhus beneath the mountain. That might explain the near-constant active displays that we witness on our news and social feeds from those standing in proximity to this tumultuous lady.



Donnafugata is known for its own flamboyance and fun as a producer, with links to art and music appearing in the story of their wines. In the case of these recently released new labels, they seem to have found an artist, Stefano Vitale, who marries the charm of Modigliani with the finesse and storytelling of Botticelli, with bottle images so striking they cannot fail to engage.

Vitale’s images conjure the character of the landscape and the explosive nature of the volcano, with a palette as close to the blown glass of Moreno in the Venetian Lagoon as it is to Sicily.

Labels and bottles 1

There has been much chatter in recent years about the weight of bottles in the face of sustainable ambitions to reduce carbon emissions. 65% of wine producers carbon emissions come from the packaging and transportation of wine.

There has been a long tradition of packing higher-end wines into heavier bottles to draw attention to their gravitas as quality fine wine. It must deliver results, in terms of sales, for it to be such a normalised practice.

Labels and bottles 2

There is a new awareness growing around wine bottles that is very simple to grasp: the lighter the better for carbon emissions. For cheaper wines, there are likely solutions better than glass altogether.

These Donnafugata labels really arrest the gaze. They are genuinely very pretty and signify that the winemaker cares a great deal about what is in these bottles and would like to share them with you.

The bottle size or weight is totally irrelevant. It is the artwork that impresses, that communicates the intention the winemaker.

Labels and bottles 3

Where glass bottles are used for wine packaging, the label design is proving to be the place for signalling to your audience everything you want to say about a wine in anticipation of pouring a glass.

Obviously, the proof is in the pouring and judging a wine by its label can just as easily lead to disappointment. At least if it does, I could take some solace in the fact that an artist was employed and paid for his creation and the carbon margins were reduced in the interest of emissions reduction.

Donnafugata’s Etna wines



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There is a growing interest in volcanic wines and the Donnafugata range is a must for lovers of structured mineral taste profiled wines. Each one has its own personality and layers of complexity. I really enjoyed this tasting and still have two wines to taste which will be posted individually while being enjoyed in our own Ligurian setting.

1. Sul Vulcano, Etna Bianco DOC

Made from Carricante grapes - very elegant and precise.
Shimmering gold colour. Vinified in stainless steel at 14-16°C and aged partly in tanks and in used French oak for 10 months and then a similar time in bottle before release.

Flinty and floral, Mediterranean herbs, a touch of apple, grapefruit
Incredible mineral structure, floral, citrus, fennel, - great balance of acidic structure and delicate flavours.



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2. Dea Vulcano, Etna Rosso Doc

Nerello Mascalese & a small amount of Nerello Cappuccio, fermented in steel tanks and aged in tanks with a small-time in used French oak for 14 months with 10 months in bottle.

Light ruby colour - translucent
Strawberry, cherry, violet, a hint of fresh tobacco.
Fine texture, delicate structure, lovely impression of the wine and terroir
Opens up very prettily, with great purity of flavour - For food, I would definitely serve with lamb chops, red cabbage and artichokes (still just in season here).

3. Contrada Marchesa, Etna Rosso Doc

Grapes are again Nerello Mascalese, small production of 5336 bottles and 200 magnums. Vinified in steel tank and then aged in used French oak for ~14 months and then in bottle for 18 months.



Pale ruby - translucent
Raspberry berry fruit, floral violet, very light balsamic - really attractive.
Excellent structure that holds the fruit and gives elegance

4. **Fragore, Contrada Montelguardia, Etna Rosso Doc, 2018**

Made from indigenous Nerello Mascalese, fermented in the steel and aged in used French oak for 14 months and then in bottle for a further 18months.


Darker, rich ruby colour.
Woodland berry fruits, spice market aromas, complex.
Really intense, lovely fruit flavour, sweet spice, youthful grippy structure but very well balanced
Gastronomic - pair with wild rabbit
The soils of Montelguardia were formed by a lava eruption between 1614 and 1624.

Nick Breeze
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wine/59-travel/551-an-aperitif-by-the-coliseum)

An aperitif by the coliseum

As COVID-19 conspires with the grimmest of winds and rain to force a societal retreat behind our own front doors, the word *ennui* springs to mind. The muddle of displeasure is pierced when Natalia hands me a large bulbous glass of a liquid I do not recognise.



(/wine-posts-

reviews/red-wine/59-travel/549-artichoke-pasta-and-very-fine-pigato)

Artichoke pasta and very fine Pigato

Britain’s lamentable exit

On the eve of Britain’s official departure from the EU, my partner and I decided to explore a small town on the Italian Riviera where the wintry cold doesn’t feel so much like cold war bite.

I had warned my significant other that I would be having an inverse departure party, a release of the sanity valve if you like!



(/wine-posts-reviews/red-



wine/59-travel/520-what's-new-in-soave)

Soave: volcanic wines with elegance and longevity

Sitting inside the ancient castle walls inside the town of Soave, a short drive from Verona in northern Italy, the unique slightly almond aroma of the indigenous grape, Garganega, rises gently from my glass. The castle sprawls up the side of an extinct volcano that gives the region its variant soil structures that mark out the better quality of Soave wines.



wine/59-travel/505-an-american-in-paris-tanisha-townsend-aka-girlmeetsglass-discusses-her-new-podcast,-the-paris-bar-scene,-and-what-she-s-drinking-at-the-moment)

An American In Paris; Tanisha Townsend (@GirlMeetsGlass) discusses podcasts, Paris wine bars, & what she's drinking at the moment

Tanisha Townsend decided to move to Paris 4 years ago after regularly passing through the city en route to the world's most famous vineyards. In fact, it was about 2 years ago at the Printemps de Champagne Bouzy Rouge tasting in Reims that I saw (who we shall now refer to as) GirlMeetsGlass chirpily speaking to her web followers on Snapchat.



wine/59-travel/484-back-in-galicia-sacred-steps-on-the-pilgrims-path-to-fine-wine)

Wine tasting in Galicia: The pilgrims search for Albarino

The cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, the final resting place of Saint James, rises out of the landscape, infested with antiquity. The rambling steep streets give way to shafts of dramatic light, emblazoned chapels, and tightly packed tapas bars, dusty, as old novels pressed together in antiquarian bookshops.








wine/59-travel/475-entre-deux-mers-stephane-dupuch)

Interview: (Re)Defining the Entre-Deux-Mers, climate change & tasting with Stephane Dupuch

Driving into the Entre-Deux-Mers region from the north, the vineyards roll out like a bright green deep-pile carpet across the undulating land. It's hard not to be excited about tasting wines with so much heritage, as we head to Chateau-Sainte-Marie to meet with 5th generation owner, Stéphane Dupuch.

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