



# Sicilian Wines ERUPTING

By Dick Rosano

Workers at  
one of Tasca  
d'Almerita's  
vineyards

Goethe's oft-quoted description of Sicily is over 200 years old, but the mystery, intrigue and traditions of this island-once-nation continue to inspire artists to dream and lovers to swoon. From teeth-chattering eruptions of Mount Etna on the east coast, to the "bread basket" middle regions that supplied the Roman Empire with wheat, to the cinematically picturesque beaches of Trapani on the west coast, Sicily delivers exotic dishes and mouth-watering wines.

Although indigenous grapevines have long grown in Sicily's volcanic soils, most cultural historians credit the Greeks with introducing the vine to the island about 800 B.C.

But, what of the wines? Are there any nebbiolos such as grace the Barolo and Barbaresco of Piemonte? Or any sangiovese that make up the bulk of Tuscan Chianti? Or even arneis or freisa that we find in the north, or aglianico and primitivo from the south?

Well, no. But, then, Americans have not fully explored the unique grapes and wines of the region that Wine Enthusiast calls one of the "Ten Best Wine Destinations for 2017." Renowned for its bold flavors and silky textures, the nero d'avola alone could shoulder the entire wine market in Sicily. Many of the most highly prized Sicilian wines are based on this red grape. There's also Cerasuolo and Nerello Mascalese, Zibibbo and Grecanico, and the ephemeral Malvasia, known to produce one of Italy's greatest dessert wines.

It's settled that Italy is a source of great wines, but sub-regions and micro-climates like this rich environment are continually being discovered. Still, today, the quality of the wines in Sicily outpaces their prices—for now!

So many grapes being turned to wine by the island's 130 current wineries that there's not enough space in this column to list them. Which means wine lovers should focus more of their attention on the island to the south. Toward that end, here's a guide to show off some of Sicily's best wines. For easier buyer tracking, each wine's distributor is parenthetically noted.

A Guide to Some of the Region's Best



"To have seen Italy without having seen Sicily is to not have seen Italy at all, for Sicily is the clue to everything." *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*



Tasca d'Almerita's Capofaro estate

# Tasting Notes

## SPARKLING

**Feudo di Santa Tresa (non-vintage) Il Grillo di Santa Tresa Brut (\$20).**  
A gentle, soft bead introduces this fruity, lightly sweet sparkling wine.  
*Score: 85 (Vias Imports)*

## WHITE

**Donnafugata 2015 Anthilia (\$16).**  
Aromas and flavors of cream, toast and light spice.  
*Score: 86 (Folio Wine)*

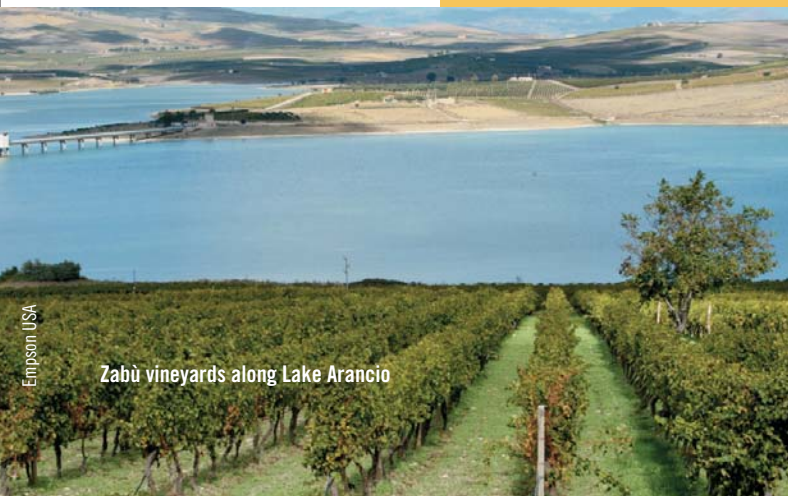
**Donnafugata 2011 Chiarandà (Chardonnay; \$40).**  
Typical of a Chardonnay, with pure fruit flavors layered with vanilla and light spice.  
*Score: 87 (Folio Wine)*

**Feudo di Santa Tresa 2015 Grillo Viognier Terre Siciliane (\$13).**  
Medium body, apricot and mango flavors, long finish.  
*Score: 85 (Vias Imports)*

**Hauner 2015 Salina Bianco (\$18).**  
Scents of melon and mango, soft gentle mouthfeel, melon and mango continue on palate.  
*Score: 85 (Empson)*

**Tasca d'Almerita 2015 Regaleali Bianco (\$13).**  
Tangy and forward, green apple and slice of lemon on the approach, hint of green herb. *Score: 87 (Winebow)*

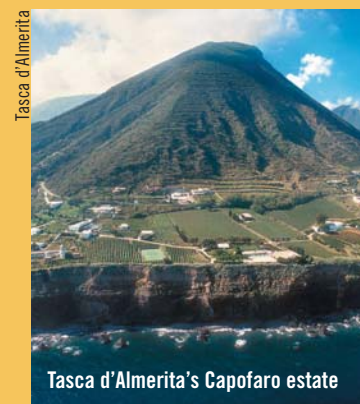
**Tenuta Rapitala 2015 Grillo (\$14).**  
Light bodied and refreshing, light melon and peach flavors. A hint of lime on mid-palate. Bright and brisk.  
*Score: 87 (Wildman)*



Zabù vineyards along Lake Arancio

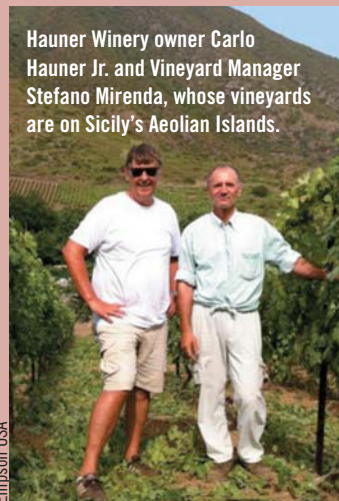
**MandraRossa 2015 Fiano Costa Dune (Fiano; \$11).**  
Floral approach, tropical fruit including mango and pineapple, green herb highlights.  
*Score: 87 (Palm Bay)*

**MandraRossa 2015 Grillo (Grillo; \$14).**  
Fresh aromas of peaches and white apple, refreshing acidity, short on finish.  
*Score: 86 (Palm Bay)*



Tasca d'Almerita's Capofaro estate





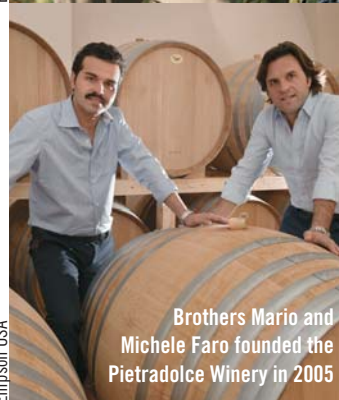
Hauner Winery owner Carlo Hauner Jr. and Vineyard Manager Stefano Mirenda, whose vineyards are on Sicily's Aeolian Islands.

Empson USA



Famed Tuscan consultant Carlo Ferrini is the winemaker at Le Casematte Winery near Messina

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Brothers Mario and Michele Faro founded the Pietradolce Winery in 2005

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Lucio, Giuseppe and Alberto Tasca of the Tasca d'Almerita wineries

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## ROSÉ

### Le Casematte 2015 Rosematte (Nerello Mascalese; \$20).

Pale salmon, floral aromas, impression is one of pink champagne without the bubbles.

Score: 86 (Empson)

### Tasca d'Almerita 2016 Le Rosé di Regaleali (\$14).

Light bodied, bright fruit, tangy acidity with a lemon zest on finish.

Score: 86 (Winebow)

## RED

### Baglio del Sole 2014 Nero d'Avola (Nero d'Avola; \$15).

Evolving aromas of red fruit and soft spice, tart but even on palate, flavors of cranberry and blackberry.

Score: 86 (Vias Imports)

### Donnafugata 2011 Mille e Una Notte (Nero d'Avola, Petite Verdot, Syrah, other red grapes; \$80).

Huge wine, with black cherry, licorice, coffee, and mint on the nose with intense black fruit flavors.

Score: 92 (Folio Wine)

### Donnafugata 2014 Sedàra (Nero d'Avola, some Cabernet, Merlot, Syrah, and other red grapes; \$16).

Earthy aromas, hints of cranberry and black cherry, dry but slightly tart on finish.

Score: 86 (Folio Wine)

### Donnafugata 2015 Sherazade (Nero d'Avola; \$20).

Rich red fruit scent, earth tones with oak and vanilla on nose, cherries, plums and light finish.

Score: 85 (Folio Wine)

### Donnafugata 2011 Tancredi (Cabernet Sauvignon, Nero d'Avola, Tannat, and other red grapes; \$40).

Black cherry and blackberry aromas accented by leather and earth, slight tobacco hint on black fruit palate.

Score: 88 (Folio Wine)

### Feudi del Pisciotto 2012 Giambattista Valli (Cerasuolo; \$33).

Forest floor aromas, brilliant red fruit and tobacco accents, velvety mouthfeel.

Score: 88 (Vias Imports)

### Feudi del Pisciotto 2013 Nero d'Avola

(Nero d'Avola; \$35).

Deep cherry scent, intense flavors of cranberry and plum, toasty oak accent.

Score: 87 (Vias Imports)

### Le Casematte 2014 Faro (\$34).

Dense and chewy, earthy scents of wood floor and herb, flavors tend toward black fruit, light tannins on finish.

Score: 85 (Empson)

### Le Casematte 2015 Nero d'Avola (Nero d'Avola; \$13).

Tangy and forward, ripe red fruit on nose, tangy acidity complements the broad red fruit flavors.

Score: 86 (Empson)

### Hauner 2014 Hierà (Alicante 60%, Nocera 30%, Nero d'Avola 10%; \$20).

Richly textured, aromatic and forward, crushed blackberry flavors accented by light acidity.

Score: 86 (Empson)

### MandraRossa 2014 Cartagho

(Nero d'Avola; \$25).

Lightly spicy nose, earthy flavors, including toast and forest floor, subtle raspberry flavors on gentle palate impression.

Score: 88 (Palm Bay)

### MandraRossa 2015 Nero d'Avola Costa Dune (\$12).

Bright and floral on nose, fruity & forward, slight pepper accent, soft focused tannins.

Score: 86 (Palm Bay)

### Pietradolce 2013 Archineri (100% Nerello Mascalese; \$37).

Gutsy and robust, dark fruit with light accents of herb and earth.

Score: 86 (Empson)

### Pietradolce 2014 Contrada Rampante Etna Rosso (100% Nerello Mascalese; \$37).

Medium red, rustic but with an elegant fragrance, cherries, plums, a touch of cardamom.

Score: 88 (Empson)

### Pietradolce 2013 Vigna Barbagalli Etna Rosso (100% Nerello Mascalese; \$105).

Scents of earth, roasted coffee, and crushed walnuts, dark brooding flavors of cranberry, blackberry, and plums, accented with eucalyptus and brown spice.

Score: 94 (Empson)

### Planeta 2015 Cerasuolo di Vittoria (Cerasuolo; \$24).

Delicious aromas and flavors, medium body, hints of cherries and raspberries on palate.

Score: 85 (Palm Bay)

### Planeta 2013 Eruzione 1614 (Nerello Mascalese; \$35).

Dark fruit and white pepper on nose, cranberries, ripe Bing cherries, slight pepper on finish.

Score: 86 (Palm Bay)

### Planeta 2015 Frappato (Frappato; \$22).

Fruity, cherry flavors, simple and direct.

Score: 84 (Palm Bay)

### Tasca d'Almerita 2014 Regaleali Nero d'Avola (\$13).

Aromatic and spicy, black cherry focus, light and focused.

Score: 85 (Winebow)

### Tasca d'Almerita 2014 Lamùri Nero d'Avola (\$20).

Ripe red fruit, herb and forest accents, a bit tangy and precocious.

Score: 87 (Winebow)

**Tasca d'Almerita 2012 Rosso del Conte (\$70).**

A brilliant approach of red berries and herbs, licorice, black coffee and leather accompany the dense red fruit, last kiss of mint on finish.

Score: 91 (Winebow)

**Tenuta Rapitala 2014 Nero d'Avola Alta (\$23).**

Cranberry, tar, and cigar smoke on nose, medium body, plums, cherries, and licorice on palate. Beautifully balanced, rich, velvety finish.

Score: 91 (Wildman)

**Tenuta Rapitala 2014 Nadir Syrah (\$18).**

Very elegant, smooth on the approach, but with hints of bacon and dried cherries. Soft kiss of licorice on finish.

Score: 91 (Wildman)

**Tenuta Rapitala 2015 Nero d'Avola Campo Reale (\$14).**

Rustic aromas of roasted nuts, dried herbs, and wild fruit, explosion of cherry flavors, with soft finish.

Score: 87 (Wildman)

**Vigneti Zabù 2014 Il Passo (70% Nerello Mascalese, 30% Nero d'Avola; \$20).**

Deep red, woody scent accented by mint, blackberries and cranberries on palate, intensely fruity but velvety smooth.

Score: 90 (Empson)

**DESSERT**

**Colosi 2009 Passito di Salina Malvasia delle Lipari (375ml; \$40).**

Delicious honey, vanilla, apricot aromas and flavors, full-bodied, medium sweet, long floral finish.

Score: 92 (Vias Imports)

**Donnafugata 2013 Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria (Zibibbo, 375 ml; \$40).**

Intense and floral on approach, apricots and candied fruit, accent by dried fig on finish.

Score: 92 (Folio Wine)

**Planeta 2014 Passito di Noto (Moscato Bianco, 375ml; \$41).**

Creamy and mouth filling, vanilla, apricot and mango sweetness with hint of ginger in mid-palate.

Score: 90 (Palm Bay)

*Dick Rosano's columns have appeared for many years in The Washington Post and other national publications. His series of novels set in Italy capture the beauty of the country, the flavors of the cuisine, and the history and traditions of the people. He has traveled the world but Italy is his ancestral home and the insights he lends to his books bring the characters to life, the cities and countryside into focus, and the culture into high relief. Whether it's the workings of the winery in "A Death in Tuscany," the azure sky and Mediterranean vistas in "A Love Lost in Positano," the intrigue in "Hunting Truffles," or the bitter conflict of Nazi occupation in "The Secret of Altamura," Rosano puts the life and times of Italy into your hands.*



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