

Texans Find Your Inner Sicilian: Do it with Special Wines from Donnafugata



Sicily is immensely diverse with its microclimates and terroirs, mostly a mystery to many of us living in Texas. Each of these has their own extraordinary potential and biodiversity evident in the wines. **Donnafugata** shows the history and nature of this diversity through its vineyards, from Eastern to Western Sicily. For Texans to better understand and appreciate the wines of Sicily, is a great thing, as both Texas and Sicily share terroir of warmth and sun exposure, and at times Mediterranean influences, as well.

Most of what I know about Sicily comes from a long time friend, Texas winery owner, and fifth generation winemaker, Paul V. Bonarrigo of Messina Hof Winery in Bryan, Texas. His roots are Sicilian and he speaks fondly of the country of his forebears with added vignettes from his recent visits leading wine-loving Texans. Paul says, "My family's city is Gualtieri Sicaminò, not too far from Messina. My favorite full bodied red wine of Sicily is Nero d'Avola and my favorite white wines are made from Carricante and Catarratto. If you plan to go there and experience Sicily and its people, foods and wines, you'll need at least ten days." If you're thinking about a visit to Sicily, a conversation with Paul at Messina Hof should definitely be in order.

In the hopes of better understanding the wines of Sicily and perhaps finding our "Inner Sicilian", VintageTexas is featuring these three special wines from the Sicilian Winery, **Donnafugata**.



Vineyards on the slopes of Mount Etna

SUL VULCANO 2019 – ETNA ROSSO DOC

Volcanic expression from the sandy and decomposed lava slopes of Mount Etna, Europe's highest active volcano, defines its unique terroir. Grape varieties focusing on **Nerello Mascalese** with a touch of **Nerello Cappuccio**, are harvested from Mount Etna's north side. This is where rainfall is less and diurnal temperature shifts are high, providing for a long growing season. The wine expresses tart red cherries and a medium-light body supported by balsamic nuances and soft tannins. It is made to drink now but may gain benefit from a few more years of bottle age. Food pairings: from the sea – sardines, tuna, and swordfish; lighter meats – sausages, meatloaf, and meatballs; but, don't forget the eggplant and pasta.



Eggplant pasta

MILLE E UNA NOTTE 2018 SICILIA DOC ROSSO

At **Contessa Entellina** in western Sicily, Mille e Una Notte, one of Donnafugata's icon wines, was born. Mille e Una Notte – "Thousand and One Nights" – is a reference to the collection of Middle Eastern folk tales compiled in Arabic by that name that also inspired the wine label's artwork. This "old world meets new world" wine brings together the island's most famous grape variety, **Nero d'Avola**, conjoined with international varieties like Petit Verdot and Syrah, among others in full-bodied display. The blend showcases generous black cherry fruit melded with spice and aromatic eucalyptus, all of it promising excellence now and possibly up to two decades of further evolution in the bottle. Food pairings: well marbled steaks, burgers, pork chops, meatloaf, and even smoky Texas barbecue.



Trio of Donnafugata wines sampled for this story. Samples provided.

BEN RYÉ' 2019 PASSITO DI PANTELLERIA DOC

Ben Ryé, named after the Arabic for "Son of the Wind", pays tribute to the breezes that constantly blow around the **Zibibbo** (Muscat of Alexandria) grapes on **Pantelleria**, a volcanic island between western Sicily and Africa. This wine offers a golden color and a rich bouquet of apricot and candied citrus, followed by unique notes of green Mediterranean herbs. An intense Passito, a wine made with raisinated grapes, it has a balance of stone fruit and citrus, crisp acidity and honeyed sweetness. Food pairings: duck confit, foie gras and blue and other flavorful cheeses. It also goes well with pastries and gourmet chocolate.



Vineyard and winery on the Sicilian island of Pantelleria

Donnafugata is a family-run winery representative of an modern, innovative and sustainable Sicily. As defined by the wines above, Donnafugata illustrates Sicily's wine diversity from mountain viticulture on Mount Etna, Vittoria between the Hyblean plateau and the sea, the hilly inland of Contessa Entellina, and terraced vineyards just above the sea on Pantelleria island between Sicily and Africa.

For more information about Donnafugata and its wines, [click here](#). Remember the old Italian proverb: "**Nel vino c'è la verità**"- In wine there is truth!

Photo credit: Donnafugata Winery

