

The Chosen Table



SOUTH WINERIES, WINERIES IN ITALY

A Taste of Cerasuolo di Vittoria: The Only DOCG Wine of Sicily

Sicily, the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea just off the toe of the boot-shaped Italy, has another strength to its already abundant chest of treasures. It is a magical place famous for its stretches of fantastic beaches, ancient archeological sites, rich gastronomic heritage, active volcanoes, and roots of oenological culture. It is Italy's largest wine producing region by landmass at more than 112,000 hectares of land dedicated to viticulture.

Different types of soils, styles and grape varieties, the regions offers a mosaic of flavors and aromas in the bottle. While in the northeast, home to Mount Etna, the volcanic soils and cooler high altitudes enrich the wines with freshness, the west offering the famous fortified wines of Marsala among others and in the southeast, Cerasuolo di Vittoria, a blend of two indigenous grapes Nero d'Avola and Frappato. **In the Italian designation for controlled production methods and wine quality, Sicily only has the Cerasuolo di Vittoria as its only DOCG, the highest classification designated to a wine and 23 DOCs.**



Assovini Sicilia

Assovini Sicilia is an **association of Sicilian winemakers that brings together 90 wineries aiming to promote the quality of Sicilian wines globally**. The association was founded in 1998 by Diego Planeta of Planeta Winery, Giacomo Rallo of Donnafugata Winery and Lucio Tasca d'Almerita of Conte Tasca d'Almerita Winery. At present its chairman is Laurent Bernard de la Gatinais of Rapitalà Winery. **The 91 association members produce about 900 labels from which more than 80% bottled Sicilian wine originates**. Regardless of the size of the company, each one contributes to the achievement of common objectives and to strengthen the brand Assovini Sicilia, intended as the full blending and expression of history, territories, vines and terroir.

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A Bit of History

Going back to the history of viticulture in Vittoria, an official deed called the Plaga Mesopotamium documents the sale of a one-hectare vineyard to a woman in the 3rd Century B.C. It is the most ancient evidence of viticulture in the territory of Ragusa. Indeed, the southern part of Sicily has always offered

extraordinary wines especially in the area of Vittoria, a city prospering on the wine trade from the XIX century. Traces of the wine business like millstones, warehouses and furnaces for the making of wine amphorae on the route between Catania and Kamarina (through Lentini, Caltagirone, Acate, Vittoria, and Comiso) are still evident.

A prominent figure in viticulture in Vittoria was Vittoria Colonna Henriquez, the woman who founded the city of Vittoria in 1607. She promoted wine production granting privileges to wine growers. To celebrate the foundation, in 1607 she gifted 75 settlers a hectare of land if they would cultivate grapes favoring the quick enlargement of the vineyard in different sections of the region, until the wine production, enhanced by the natural fertility of the soil, became a relevant fact in the whole area.



Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG

Meaning cherry-colored in Italian, Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG lives up to its name by its identifiable cherry red color with tinges of violet, a note of cherry among its fruity and floral aromas coming from the Frappato grapes and full body and tannins from the Nero d'Avola. **The wine is a blend of only two indigenous grapes, Frappato that can be between 30% to 50% and Nero d'Avola between 50% to 70%.** The regulations for the production of the Cerasuolo di

Vittoria DOCG is a minimum of 8 months of aging while the **Cerasuolo di Vittoria Classico DOCG imposes 18 months of aging so the color has the tendency to go from cherry red to garnet and the aroma is more complex** with notes of chocolate, leather and tobacco, and has more structure and richness. Instead, Vittoria DOC is an independent DOC that was established in the same geographical region when Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG was designated in 2005. The production in Vittoria includes mono-varietals from the grapes Nero d'Avola, Inzolia and Frappato. Blended wines are also produced using these grapes, and there are 5 types in this DOC, including a Novello.

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Nero d'Avola is the best known red grape variety among the Sicilian indigenous grapes. It was introduced by the ancient Greeks during their presence in the island. Today, it is cultivated in almost the entire region with a diversity of characteristics but it is native of the territory of Siracusa territory, especially around Avola. Its distinctive trait in the eastern part of Sicily is its refinement, complexity of aromas of cherries and dark fruits, violets and spices with a full body, freshness, rich texture and tannins. **Frappato, which complements the Nero d'Avola in the Cerasuolo di Vittoria, is native to the Vittoria area.** The variety gives wines of low chromatic intensity with an intense spiciness, floral and fruitiness to nose while in the palate, it's rich, refined, and fresh.

Importantly, apart from the vines, **the Mediterranean territory gives wines of Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG an extraordinary flavor profile because of the proximity of the sea to the hills** planted in abundance with secular olive trees and carob trees. It is a unique territory with fertile plain areas leaning delicately toward the low coasts with the cliffs stand out against the crystal blue sea. The area has a good exposure to the sun, receiving continuous marine breezes with

mild temperature. The natural boundary of the area follows the Erei mounts in the north, the Mediterranean sea in the south, the Iblei mountains in the east and the hills of Caltanissetta province in the west.

The area of production comprises the municipalities of **Ragusa, Vittoria, Comiso, Acate, Chiaramonte Gulfi, Santa Croce Camerina, Niscemi, Gela, Caltagirone, Licodia Eubea, Riesi, Butera, Mazzarino and Mazzarrone**, divided into three provinces (five being in Ragusa province, two in Caltanissetta province and two in Catania province). **The production of the Cerasuolo di Vittoria Classic is only allowed in the municipalities of Acate, Chiaramonte Gulfi and Vittoria which are all in the Ragusa province.**



Wineries Visited at Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG and Vittoria DOC

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Donnafugata

Donnafugata was established in 1983 in Sicily by Giacomo Rallo, fourth generation of a family with over 170 years of experience in quality wine, together with his wife Gabriella, a pioneer of viticulture in Sicily. Today, their children José and Antonio lead the company with a team of people focused on excellence. The company has grown into 3 historic production premises in Sicily situated in various parts of Sicily: Marsala, Contessa Entellina in western Sicily, and Pantelleria. Whereas in the southeastern part of the island, in Vittoria, between the Ibleo plateau and the sea, they started the cultivation of Frappato and Nero d'Avola for the production of Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG. The 36-hectare land is located in the territory of Acate, divided into 3 districts: Biddine Soprana, Biddine Sottana and Isola Cavaliere. The soils have medium texture, a bit sandy and interspersed with calcareous tuffs. The climate is typically Mediterranean temperate, mitigated in summer by a breeze that comes from the sea, as well as good temperature excursions between day and night. Here, the wines are characteristically floral, fresh in the palate and finishes with delicacy in the tannins.

Address: Contrada Biddine Sottano, 97011 Acate (RG), Italy

Website: <https://www.donnafugata.it> (<https://www.donnafugata.it>)

*Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/DonnafugataWine>
(<https://web.facebook.com/DonnafugataWine>)*



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Terre di Giurfo

Although the winery was only established in 2001 by Guglielmo Alessi and his wife Giuseppina Giusino, the estate has been with the family since 1872. It is located in Contrada Giurfo in the old Dirillo River valley, in the province of Ragusa. The 90-hectare land has 24 hectares cultivated with vines with a production of 100,000 bottles per annum. To assure quality to their wines, they use thermo controlled winemaking techniques with constant overseeing of the whole winemaking process, from harvest to bottling. The winery has been practicing organic farming since ten years ago.

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Address: *Contrada Giurfo, Licodia Eubea 95040 (CT), Italy*

Website: <https://www.terredigiurfo.it/> (<https://www.terredigiurfo.it/>)

Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/TerrediGiurfo>

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Valle Dell'Acate

From a large family of agricultural entrepreneurs, Giuseppe Jacono founded Valle dell'Acate in the late 19th century at the historic Contrade Biddini Soprana and Sottana in the Ragusa province. Its 70 hectares of vineyards in a 175-hectare land is located at the triangle of Vittoria, Comiso and Acate where seven different zones offer unique characteristics to the wine, expressing their individual identities as they demonstrate the great value of the territory. Through the cultivation of the finest native grape varieties, the employment of advance technology in winemaking and the experience acquired by a solid tradition, Valle

dell'Acate produces only warm and elegant expressions of this DOCG territory. Gaetana Jacono, descendant of Giuseppe Jacono, together with Carlo Casavecchia, a winemaker from Piedmont capable of making the notes of this native Sicilian grape variety resound, they created the first vintage of their single vineyard Iri da Iri Cerasuolo di Vittoria Cru DOCG that spent 5 years of aging which successfully demonstrates the longevity of the Cerasuolo.

Address: Contrada Biddine Sottano, 97011 Acate (RG), Italy

Website: <https://www.valledellacate.com> (<https://www.valledellacate.com>)

Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/ValleDellAcate/>

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Santa Tresa

The organically produced wines of Santa Tresa uncover the excellence of the native grape varieties combined with the winemaking traditions and modern technology born from the project of siblings Marina and Stefano Girelli who have had 30 years of wine experience in the northern Italian region, Trentino. In the vineyards, there is “Terra Rossa” or red soil that shows its uniqueness as it shapes the character of their wines. The vineyards are directly connected to a local reservoir of natural rainwater for the irrigation while “Favino”, local green beans are cultivated that serve as natural fertilizer.

Address: *Contrada Santa Tresa, 97019 Vittoria (RG), Italy*

Website: <https://www.santatresa.com> (<https://www.santatresa.com>)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SantaTresa>

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Noto DOC

Noto DOC is a small denomination in the Siracusa province in eastern Sicily, focusing on Moscato Bianco for the white and Nero d'Avola for the red. It covers the communes of Noto, Rosolini, Pachino and Avola which is the home of the Nero d'Avola variety. Noto DOC is reserved for wines that meet the requirements established in the production of the following types: Moscato di Noto; Moscato di Noto Liquoroso; Moscato Passito di Noto or Passito di Noto which uses entirely the Moscato variety. For the red, the Nero d'Avola should be at least 65% and the remainder, other non-aromatic black grape varieties suitable for cultivation in the Sicily region may contribute to the production of this wine.

Wineries Visited at Siracusa – Noto DOC

Planeta

Traditionally, the Planeta Family has always been in the business of cultivating olives and vines since 1694 at the acquisition the Ulmo Estate. Seventeen generations later, the succeeding members continued the family's passion for viticulture. Planeta Winery officially established in the 1990s by Diego Planeta and it has grown dramatically because of the family's continued courage, hard work, respect for tradition and initiative to innovate towards the future. In the year 1997. the Vittoria Estate was established where they started to produce Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG. Next was Noto in 1998 with the acquisition of Buonivini with the specific intention of achieving the excellence of Nero d'Avola within its area of origin. Today there are 395 hectares in total divided into seven estates in five different areas. Each winery has its leading winemaker with wherein four wineries exclusively produce their own grapes and the wines are certified as organic.

Address: Contrada Dispensa, 92013 Menfi (AG), Italy

Website: <https://planeta.it/en/> (<https://planeta.it/en/>)

*Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/planetawinery>
(<https://web.facebook.com/planetawinery>)*





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Feudo Maccari

Feudo Maccari enjoys a position that looks over Capo Passero and Correnti island with Leptis Magna in front that gets the hot sirocco and cold north winds blow. Antonio Moretti Cuseri, a successful textile entrepreneur and owner of the Tenuta Sette Ponti in the Arezzo hills in Tuscany, was fascinated and awed by Val di Noto that at the end of the nineties, he decided to produce, in between the Syracuse of Archimedes and Ragusa his greatest wine. The black earth of Eastern Sicily has always been an ideal place for quality agriculture because the particularity of Etna gives distinctive flavors, thanks to the combination of the volcanic soil, sun and the constant breezes which keep the bunches healthy as they are never stressed by excessive heat. At the vineyards, he uses the ancient training system of “Vite ad Alberello” of head-trained bushes which was

introduced by the Phoenicians and practiced traditionally in the island of Pantelleria. This pruning allows the penetration of a maximum light all hours of the day and the terrain allows an exchange of heat, ideal for the ripening of the fruit through optimum photosynthesis. In the ripening phase the leaves in this form of culture cover the bunches, therefore allowing lesser oxidation of the polyphenolic and aromatic substances and of the organic acids. The result is therefore a unique fruit that makes a round wine with a degree of technological and polyphenolic ripening suitable to the vine.

Address: Contrada Maccari, Strada Prov. Noto – Pachino, 96017 Noto (SR), Italy

Website: <https://www.feudomaccari.it/> (<https://www.feudomaccari.it/>)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FeudoMaccari>

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Peter Vinding

When Peter and Susie Vinding – Diers bought their land in 2005 between Catania and Siracusa in the town of Melilli overlooking the Ionian Sea, they found two fields with perfect soil of light sand with fragments of coral reef and deep loamy granulated black subsoil full of oxygen at the west, and at the eastern part that faces the Ionian Sea, a former seabed with fossilized sand which they refer to as a Paleolithic vineyard. The estate is situated on the remains of a volcano in Sicily which exploded around two million years ago. They planted two Syrah vineyards in 2010, which produce wines that are rated among the best examples in Italy. They then added a hectare that they cultivated with Grillo vines which were selected from the old Whitaker plantation on the Island of Mozia outside Marsala. They now have a total of 5 hectares of land in Melilli where two prestigious wines are produced: the Vigna Grande and Vignolo, and another 5 hectares in Noto where Suzanne and Il Carrubo are produced. On top of it all, Peter is also working on a project of recovering some ancient and long forgotten Sicilian red varieties that have DNA that have 3,000 years. Everything is organically grown including 1,300 olive trees of Nocellara Etnea and Nocellara del Belice cultivars and in addition to that, for biodiversity, they have two large organic lavender fields that have a local honeybee population. Peter is renowned for his major contributions worldwide to wine making and he seeks serious terroir to take out their great potential.

Address: Contrada Case Nuove, 96010, Melilli (SR), Italy

Website: <https://www.montecarrubo.com> (<https://www.montecarrubo.com>)





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Zisola

Mazzei is a well-known and respected family in the winemaking world of Tuscany. The legacy of the family started with Philip Mazzei who was born in 1730 in Florence. He was a man with an abundance of interests including being a physician, merchant, horticulturalist, viticulturalist, pamphleteer, political activist, linguist, diplomatic agent, historian, and royal adviser. One of his accomplishments was being the first one to plant European vines in the state of Virginia in the US in Monticello after drawing up agricultural plans of cultivation of Mediterranean fruits and types of plants. Mazzei's intention was to bring the culture and tradition of Tuscan wine-making to Virginia. In 1773 after securing funding, and with the permission from the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Mazzei set sail for Virginia with his vines, olive trees, ten vigneroni, and other materials

from Tuscany. It was the first “Wine Company” in America. The winemaking tradition in the family remained in Tuscany. Today, Philip Mazzei’s legacy lives on and has been celebrated with the planting of native, exclusive vines from the Marchesi Mazzei in the Chianti Classico by Francesco and Filippo Mazzei. Although they have the vast history in Tuscan winemaking, in 2003, they went for another experience in Southeast Sicily for the desire to take out the great potential in Val di Noto, the land of Nero d’Avola. The estate, called Zisola, has 50 hectares of land cultivated with vines, citrus, olives and almonds. With **Mazzei Zisola Noto Rosso**, their first Sicilian wine production, they were able to demonstrate that with six centuries of Tuscan tradition, they can create a wine in the **DOC Sicily** with a new **Nero d’Avola** style.

Address: Contrada Zisola, 96017, Noto (SR), Italy

*Website: <https://www.mazzei.it/en/The-estates/Zisola/The-estate/>
(<https://www.mazzei.it/en/The-estates/Zisola/The-estate/>)*

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Assovini Sicilia

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