

UNVEILING THE SECRETS OF SICILY WITH **Donnafugata**

Nestled in the heart of Sicily, Donnafugata winery stands as a testament to the region's rich winemaking heritage. Donnafugata literally means "woman who fled" but the family behind the successful winery is rich with history, rooted in the wine region, and isn't going anywhere. Donnafugata has become known for producing some of the finest wines in Sicily, blending traditional techniques with innovative methods to create unique and unforgettable flavours. With a deep commitment to sustainability and a passion for the art of winemaking, it is a true gem in the world of wines. José Rallo, 5th generation vintner and CEO & co-owner of the award-winning winery has shared the history behind the brand and her vision of the winemaking industry with NARGIS Magazine.

INTERVIEW SAKINA MEHRALIYEVA
PHOTO PRESS MATERIALS



What was the inspiration in naming the winery Donnafugata?

The story of the name Donnafugata originates from the most Sicilian of novels: *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard). It refers to Queen Maria Carolina who, fleeing from Naples, found refuge where the company's vineyards are located today. A story that also inspired the logo: a woman's face with her hair in the wind. A face that is also that of my mother Gabriella Rallo, the "donnafugata", who abandons her job as a teacher to take care of the Contessa Entellina vineyards full time. One of the first women in Sicily to produce wine in a sector typically dominated by men: a pioneer of quality viticulture for women.

Let's go back in time to 1983 when the company was founded by your parents. Your family had been making wine for generations, what is the story behind Donnafugata's establishment?

My father Giacomo Rallo, the fourth generation of the family with over 170 years of experience in quality wine, founded Donnafugata in 1983 together with my mother Gabriella, a pioneer of viticulture in Sicily. Thanks to their passion and commitment they were able to innovate the style and perception of Sicilian wine throughout the world. Their aim when founding Donnafugata was to focus on high-quality table wines that were contemporary and competitive with the best wines of the rest of the world. Today, my brother Antonio and I lead the company pursuing the mission of our parents together with a team of people focused on excellence.

You also consider yourself a "donnafugata", tell us about how you fled Sicily and what brought you back.

After graduating, I started working in a leading management consultancy firm. The love for music then introduced me to my husband and brought me back to Sicily. When I joined Donnafugata in the 1990s, I never thought it would be difficult for me to interpret my role, to express my opinion, to manage a team. *My mother - the protagonist of the company - has been a great example of determination for me and has profoundly influenced my way of being*, while my father has always supported and pushed me to look to the future with optimism and vision. By joining the family business, I had the opportunity to implement and further develop my skills and interests. *I love making long-term projects and I love challenges*. I have also introduced innovations in communication such as Donnafugata Music & Wine.

You believe in the synergy of wine and music. How different is the inclusion of music in wine tasting from the traditional wine experience?

Donnafugata Music & Wine is a project born in 2002 from an idea of my husband, Vincenzo Favara, and I, both passionate about jazz and Brazilian music. Music is a universal language, capable of interconnecting people like

nothing else. So, I thought: why not convey the personality of my wines through music? For each wine, I chose a piece of music that underlined the sensations of tasting. Let's take for example our Ben Ryé, the Passito di Pantelleria: it is a sweet, natural wine obtained from dedication and passion in a context of heroic viticulture (its grapes are grown on Pantelleria, in soils that to define impervious is an understatement), virtue without which I could not do my job well. It contains all the scents and colours of Sicily that I deeply love and in which I am reflected. It is important due to its extraordinary complexity and a youthful and cheerful vibe due to its proverbial freshness. In fact, I combine it with the Brazilian song Branquinha by Caetano Veloso which I love very much: it is "cheerful and sensual".

Tell us about the unique and artistic labels that you put on Donnafugata wine bottles.

Donnafugata's labels are designed by Stefano Vitale, an exceptional artist who brings out the personality of each wine. Their harmonious understanding has continued for more than twenty years since they first met. The illustrator, won over by my mother Gabriella, immerses himself in the history of Sicilian art, in the colours of the land, in the character of wine until one day his skilful hand captures the elusive image of a woman: the charming La Fuga (The Runaway) with her hair in the wind. Unique and inimitable, Donnafugata's artistic labels represent an identity trait for the company. In 2018, Donnafugata celebrates its friendship with Stefano Vitale by curating the exhibition *Inseguendo Donnafugata* (Chasing Donnafugata) together with the FAI - Fondo Ambiente Italiano (Italian National Trust), in the beautiful setting of Villa Necchi Campiglio in Milan. The exhibition, with over 10,000 visitors, was also a multisensory experience of wine and music.

Has the concept of your winery changed over the years?

Of course, we have evolved over the course of the years but the vision and concept have always remained the same: offer unique and distinctive quality experiences, whether it comes to wine drinking or visiting Donnafugata.

Tell us about your collaboration with Dolce & Gabbana.

We started the collaboration with D&G in 2017 when the designers chose Donnafugata wines for their prestigious Alta Moda events in Sicily in Palermo and then once more in 2019 in Agrigento. All the events were accompanied by the best Donnafugata labels, thus celebrating an encounter between two excellences of Made in Italy that take Sicily into the world. Shortly after that, we decided together to pursue our collaboration driven by common values such as unconditional love for Sicily, attention to detail and craftsmanship. United by the desire to make the colours, scents and history of Sicilian culture known to every corner of the world D&G and Donnafugata



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