



THE INSTITUTE OF
MASTERS *of* WINE

MW SICILY TRIP

12-18 May 2012

Trip Report

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MW SICILY TRIP 2012

12th May

Tenuta de Fessina – Ed Adams MW



Not many MWs one suspects will have visited vineyards on an active volcano before; you know you are on a rather special soil when one of the group comes up to you with a small clump of soil attached like iron filings to the back of their magnetic name badge. It was clear from this first visit that Sicily was going to be unusual and fascinating.

Tenuta de Fessina is a 250 year old estate which was purchased in 2007 by Tuscan producers Silvia Maestrelli and Roberto Silva along with Piemontese winemaker Frederico Curtaz. There are 10 hectares under vine, of which 40% is ungrafted. Phylloxera only reached the area in 1925. Apparently, the wretched louse finds granular, volcanic soils rich in pumice with fine-grained clay hard work.

Nearly all the vines are alberello trained to single posts at around 7000 vines per hectare. Vine age varies between 60 to 100 years old with grape yields of around 1 kilo per vine. Good annual rainfall of 900-1000 millimetres ensures that water is not an issue. Indeed, due to the solidified lava 2 metres beneath us there is no water table.

The vineyard is made up of 90% Nerello Mascalese (original to Etna), 8% Nerello Capuccio (understood to be Carinena) and 2% white varieties, principally the excellent Carricante (also an Etna original). Generally on Etna the red varieties are planted on the north-east side of the volcano, where paradoxically there is more heat and radiation, while the white varieties are found more to the south of the crater.

In total, Tenuta di Fessina produces between 70 – 80,000 bottles per year. They have a Chardonnay vineyard in Segesta (western Sicily) but also buy in some grapes from other growers.

Harvest at the main estate we visited in Castiglione is usually in mid-October, with the two Nerellos being quite late ripening combined with a vineyard altitude of 550 metres. The alkaline soil appears to help with the acidities, with the reds coming in at 7g/l with unadjusted pHs of around 3.5. The white Carricante has fabulous pHs of around 2.9/3.0.



The wines (shown in order tasted):-

Il Musmeci 2010, Etna DOC, 14% alc.

95% Nerello Mascalese/ 5% Nerello Capuccio

Lovely colour, light ruby, bright. Precise, pure, evident but ripe tannin. Good acidity, nicely wooded (French) and lively on the palate. Bitter cherry fruit with good length and minerality.

Rather charmingly named after the Musmeci family who owned and looked after the vineyard prior to 2007

€20 per bottle ex cellar.

Il Musmeci 2009, Etna DOC, 13% alc.

95% N.M/ 5% N.C.

Lovely, bright colour again. Nose quite closed, bitter cherry and wood. Firm, ripe tannin, more diffuse than 2010. Good length and acidity but less concentrated than the other vintages.

€18 per bottle ex cellar

Il Musmeci 2008, Etna DOC, 14% alc.

95% N.M./ 5% N.C.

Light ruby, bright. Clean, bright cherry nose. Good mouthfeel, fresh, ripe, evident tannin. Good, fresh length. Attractive, serious wine.

€20 per bottle ex cellar

Il Musmeci 2007, Etna DOC, 14% alc.

95% N.M./ 5% N.C.

Light ruby, some paling on rim. Quite ethereal, cherry, red berry nose. Tarry, quite chewy fruit. Velvety with firm tannins and a good finish. Lots of structure, more extracted than others.

In a nice phrase, winemaker Frederico Curtaz referred to this wine as a “ polaroid snapshot” of how vines were when the estate was purchased in 2007. Later vintages seem to have more balance.

€20 per bottle ex cellar

Overall generalization with Nerello Mascalese is that style appears to be a mix of Nebbiolo and Pinot Noir. A very interesting variety worth exploring more!

Pudara 2009, 13% alc.

100% Carricante

My first introduction to this wonderful white variety. Grapes from another Etna vineyard at 1000 metres on the other side of the mountain. Wood fermented and then matured for 6 months. Lovely, honeysuckle fruit, quite floral. Very good acidity, nicely textured and mineral with very good length. Extremely moreish. Will last.

€15 per bottle ex cellar

General Carricante comparison made with Hunter Valley Semillons/ ripe Riesling style.

Nerello Capuccio 2011 (from tank)

Deep ruby, purple rim. Bubblegum, primary fruit. Cherry on palate, quite chocolatey. Nice, easy drinker but not the match of the majestic Mascalese.

Around €7 per bottle ex cellar, not far shy of £20 on shelf, which seems expensive.

Azienda Cottanera – Tim Atkin MW



Our visit to Cottanera began with a lecture rather than a tasting or winery visit. But this was no ordinary lecture. The man at the lectern – or rather the computer, since he spoke with the aid of Power Point – was one of Italy’s star academics, Professor Attilio Scienza of the University of Milan, who had flown in specially to talk to us MWs about Sicilian viticulture.

Scienza emphasised the antiquity of the country’s vineyards – what he called a 2500 year journey – throwing in learned references to Sicilian amphorae (the island had its own

model), Homer and African elephants before telling us about the current situation on the island.

My space is restricted here, so I will stick to a few highlights, rather than reproducing his speech in full. Professor Scienza emphasized Sicily's diversity, mentioning its three-month-long harvest, its range of climates, its four main soil types and the influence of the sea. Sicily is a mountainous island, but only 5% of its vineyards are to be found at altitude, most of them on Etna.

Even more interesting perhaps was Scienza's contention that Nerello Mascalese, Etna's best red grape, is related to Sangiovese, rather than Pinot Noir or Nebbiolo, and that Nerello Cappuccio is the same variety as Carignan.

After the theory, it was time for the practical. Cottanera is a family-owned and run winery with 55 hectares of vineyards on volcanic soils. It was set up in 1999 by Enzo Cambria and his late brother, Guglielmo, and is today the largest producer on the volcano, producing around 250,000 bottles.

The initial focus was on so-called international varieties (Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc, Syrah, Viognier and Mondeuse, the last planted by mistake), but these are now less important than local grapes, most notably Carricante and the two Nerellos, Mascalese and Cappuccio.

"We started put making rich wines with lots of new oak and changed our mind," says Enzo. "Every year we are searching for more finesse, for something that reflects this place. For me, 2009 is our best vintage yet, although there aren't huge vintage differences on Etna in terms of weather."

We did a series of mini-verticals, which confirmed the winery's on-going improvement, even if there were one or two very good wines from older vintages, such as 2006 and 2007. The stars were divided equally between indigenous and international varieties.

The stand-out wines were the 2009 Etna Rosso, the 2010 Fatagione (made from 85% Nerello Mascalese with 15% Syrah and Merlot), the varietal 2009 Sole di Sesta Syrah, the 2009 and 2007 Grammonte Merlots and lastly, that glorious mistake, a wine made entirely from Mondeuse. The 2006 was like a cross between a St Joseph and a Hawkes Bay Syrah, showing cracked black pepper, violets and clove spice. If this was an accident, it was a serendipitous one.



13th May

Frank Cornelissen, Etna –Beverley Blanning MW



Frank Cornelissen has been tending patches of old, indigenous vines on the slopes of Mount Etna since 2000. A native of Belgium, he describes his decision to live and work here as ‘a hobby that went out of control’. He produces mainly red wines from Nerello Mascalese and other indigenous varietals. Production has grown since 2001 from 500 bottles to around 25000.

Like many winemakers today, Cornelissen says his wines are natural. But unlike most, his definition does not conform to any conventional organic, biodynamic or sustainable doctrine. He prefers to distance himself from these organized movements and instead works to his own, straightforward rule: no additions of any kind, either in the vineyard or the winery. While he occasionally uses biodynamic treatments, such as dynamised silica to ‘reanimate the vines’, he rejects regular treatments as unnatural to the growth of the plant.

This uncompromising approach to grape growing and winemaking requires that the raw materials be, in his words, 'impeccably clean'. Understandably, adverse weather conditions can greatly influence crop levels. We learned that 2010 was the worst possible vintage for grape quality. Even in 2011, which he considers to be a great vintage, early season mildew slashed the potential yield by 20 to 25 per cent.

We visited the new cellar, built in 2010. Here Cornelissen ferments and ages the fruit from his 12 hectares of vines. The grapes are all destemmed and crushed, then placed in large plastic buckets for 'Burgundian-style' fermentation: closed cuve, with punch-downs three to four times a day to begin with, then every couple of days thereafter. There is no cold soaking and exposure to oxygen is minimized throughout. The reds are aged in terracotta amphorae, although Frank says he attaches no significance to the material or the shape. When he realized the terracotta absorbed the wine and was difficult to clean, he coated the inside. 'I'm pragmatic,' he says, 'Natural is the road, not the end.' The aim, he says is to avoid any extraneous flavours permeating the wine from the ageing vessel. It probably goes without saying that there is no oak here.

We tasted four wines, all unbottled samples from the most recent vintage.



Contadino '9' 2011 (9 signifies the ninth vintage) is a blend of 80% Nerello Mascalese and 20% of a mix of grapes including Alicante Bouschet, Nerello Cappuccio and Sangiovese. This wine has rich plum and prune fruit, intense minerality and crisp tannins, with a long finish. Alcohol 15.6%

MunJebel #8 is a mixed vintage wine, 2010 and 2011 of Nerello Mascalese from a selection of vineyards. Firmer than the easy-drinking Contadino, this showed similarly ripe fruit sweetness and aromatics. Alcohol 15%

MunJebel 8MC 2011 is made from Nerello Mascalese grapes planted in 1946 in the Monte Colla vineyard. It is fragrant and tight, with dense, concentrated, mineral fruit (prunes, black cherries, chocolate). The wine finishes with powdery tannins and some perceptible alcoholic warmth (the alcohol is over 17%).

MunJebel VA 2011 comes from high vineyards of ungrafted Nerello Mascalese (hence VA: Viña Alta), where the grapes grow on basalt soils at 850 metres above sea level. Pale in colour, with a nose of fresh cherries, the palate shows delicate and complex red fruit enveloped in fine tannins. It is fresh, vibrant and long. Alcohol 15.6%

The flagship wine of the property, Magma, is made in tiny quantities, from the best sites of Nerello Mascalese, but was unavailable for us to taste on this visit.

We are grateful to Frank for taking time out from his family on a Sunday morning to give us a fascinating insight into his work. His dedication to this wild corner of Sicily is plain to see.

Azienda Benanti, Etna – Christy Canterbury MW



The Benanti family hosted our fourth and final visit on the slopes of dramatic Mount Etna. Our itinerary informed us we were to learn about this historically important estate, which is not only credited for reviving Etna’s native varieties but was also one of Etna’s first to internationally market Nerello Mascalese and Carricante wines.

So, it seemed very fitting that Dr. Giuseppe Benanti and his son, Antonio, (his other son Salvino also works with them) greeted us with glasses of Carricante Noblesse Brut, the first *metodo classico* Carricante made. The family makes the base wine for this bottling then sends it to Alto Adige to undergo its second fermentation in bottle and 18 months of lees aging.

Antonio and Giuseppe began the visit by telling us their family’s story. We learned that Benanti means “well born” and that the family’s roots are in Italy, not Sicily. They arrived in Catania from Bologna around 1794. When their predecessors began farming, they did so in a polycultural manner. It would be decades before Benanti juice went anywhere other than the port of Riposto, where it journeyed to mainland Italy and France for wine “refinement”.

When *Dotore* Giuseppe scooped up the reigns of the family wine business in 1988, he began researching the clones of autochthonous grapes. Since then, Benanti has also selected and patented 14 yeast strains from their vineyards. Furthermore, the family has stretched its vineyards sources from its Etnean origins and now produces wines made from grapes grown in Pachino and on Pantelleria. (I wonder what they will do next.)

Before the tasting began, we enjoyed a late, light lunch. (Caution: gigantic garlic cloves in one of the pastas!) It may have only been Day Two, but our clever crowd already was starting to understand just what Sicilian hospitality would entail for our waistlines and hips. However, with food that good, the mantra could only be “*Non importa!*” It all washed down very well with the Carricante Noblesse Brut and Rovitello Etna Rosso 2004.

The sit-down formula for this tasting was particularly welcome. We had reached back to 2000 with one wine at Cottanera, but now we were to encounter several 1990s. Time for diligent notes! We tasted:

Pietramarina Etna Bianco D.O.C. Superiore 2008 – 2006 – 2001

- Carricante from Milo, on the eastern side of Etna
- Own-rooted vines
- Gentle pressing in a Wilmes press
- 100% free-run juice
- Stainless steel fermentation
- Native yeast ferment
- Comments from my table included references to Chablis and Furmint
- We began with the 2008 because it still isn't on the market but will be in a few months. They find that it takes four years for this wine to show "excitement".
- 12.5-13% abv
- €16.50 ex-cellar

Serra della Contessa Etna Rosso D.O.C. 2011 (tank sample) – 2006 – 2004 – 2002 – 2000

- 80% Nerello Mascalese (NM) and 20% Nerello Cappuccio (NC)
- Aged in Allier barrels of light to medium toast for 18 months
- 14% abv on all wines
- €16.50 ex-cellar

Rovittello Etna Rosso D.O.C. 2005 – 2002 – 1998 – 1996

- 80% NM and 20% NC
- Aged in Allier barrels of light to medium toast for 15 months
- Gently pressed as they also make a grappa from these skins
- 14% abv on 2005 & 2002; 13.5% on 1998 & 1996
- €13.50 ex-cellar

Monovitigno Nerello Cappuccio Rosso IGT Sicilia 2005 – 2000 – 1998

- Aged in Allier barrels of light to medium toast for 12 months
- 13.5% abv for 2005 & 1998; 14% on 2000
- €13.00 ex-cellar

Monovitigno Nerello Mascalese Rosso IGT Sicilia 2006 – 2002 – 1998

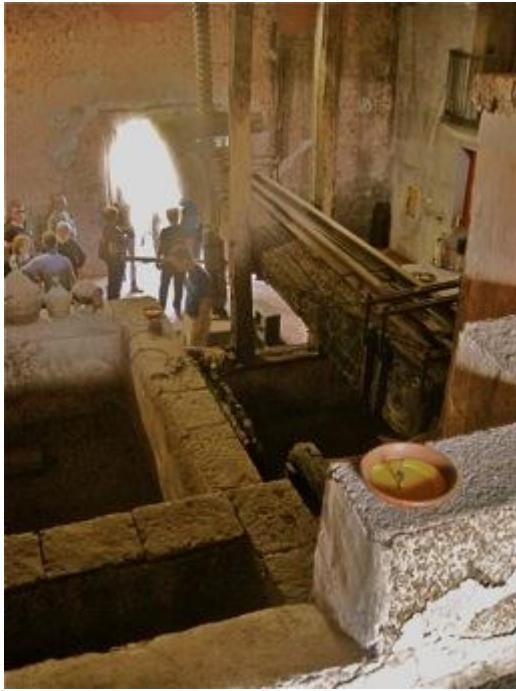
- Aged in Allier barrels of light to medium toast for 12-15 months
- 14% abv on all wines
- €13.00 ex-cellar



After this extensive tasting, *Dotore*, Antonio and their agronomist, Giacomo Gravina, took us on a hike up a dusty slope into the vineyards. Giacomo talked about how many vines are *franco di piedi*, or free of foot (so says Google Translate; I prefer “barefoot”.) Whatever the best connotation, this means ungrafted. Most of the vines are 80-100 years old although the NM Monovitigno vines average 60 years of age and the NC Monovitigno vines average only 12 years. As Giuseppe teased with a few of us, in reference to the vine in the photo below, “This one, she is very old. She’s tired. She’s lying down on the wall.”



Back down the slope, we stopped in to inspect the very old palmento. Benanti’s film from the 1931 harvest gives a great (and concertedly serious) visual of the process. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6THjIrNYnE&feature=plcp>



As we piled back onto the bus for the 134 km drive to Modica, there's no doubt this visit was a terrific denouement for our days on Etna.

Modica – Jane Skilton MW

I think I was given the task of scribing our visit to the chocolate shops of Modica because at 11.15pm at night, thanks to the miracle of jet lag, I was presumably the only MW guaranteed to still be awake. Though having enjoyed a great meal of pasta, pasta and yet more pasta, possibly my tastebuds were possibly not as finely honed as they could have been.

I profess that I wasn't aware of Modica's reputation as producer of superlative chocolate. Located in the province of Ragusa, the Spanish brought chocolate to Modica at the end of the 16th century and to this day, it is made by the same centuries old tradition.

In traditional chocolate making, cocoa beans are roasted whole and, when a temperature of around 140°C is reached, the beans lose their shells and the edible part is reduced into nibs which, in their turn, are transformed into cocoa paste. This paste is then heated mixed with other ingredients such as sugar, a process known as *conching*. The resulting substance is then *tempered*, which means that it is taken to different temperatures in succession giving a glossy look and silky mouthfeel.

Modica chocolate is made without either conching or temping which means that the process is almost entirely without heat. The temperature is not sufficiently high to melt the sugar, which remains in its crystal form. Flavourings such as orange peel, chilli or vanilla may be added and the liquid chocolate is poured into rectangular tins, called *lanna* to cool.

What does this mean? Well, that Modica chocolate has dull rather than glossy appearance and a brittle, crunchy, granular texture. Those that enjoyed chomping through sugar lumps as a child will no doubt appreciate the curious, slightly bitter texture but I can't say I was

wholeheartedly won over. Though judging by the legions of MWs who queued up to buy multiple bars, I must have been in the minority.

14th May

Gulfi Estate, Ragusa – Jean Michel Valette MW

Grey skies and ‘a zuppa viddano’ – a Sicilian mist – could not dampen our warm welcome to the Gulfi Estate in Chiramonte Gulfi. First things first: individual espressi made by winemaker Salvo Foti to ward off the chill; followed by a tour of the new winery led by next-generation proprietor Matteo Catania.

Begun in 2003 and finished in 2008, the new production facility – well equipped with newest technology, a large barrel room, integrated hospitality facilities and a nod to local stone and materials – could not signal better the transformation of the historical family volume and bulk wine business to an entity focused on exploring the highest potential of native Sicilian varietals. The mix of stainless steel included horizontal tanks for carbonic maceration of Frappato and an easy drinking style Nero d’Avola and 1:1 width to height ratio tanks for gentler handling of single vineyard Nero d’Avola crus.

Recently certified organic, the Estate’s 70+ ha of vineyards span 3 distinct geographical areas with approximately 30 ha on the home farm in Gulfi (including the only local plantation of Carricante), approx.. 40 ha in Pacchino – the heartland of Nero d’Avola’s origins and source of the Estate’s signature single vineyard Nero d’Avola crus, and 3 ha on Etna’s slopes planted to Nerello Mascalese. In keeping with its focus on celebrating indigenous approaches, most of the vines are pruned to the traditional alberello or bush-vine method.

The centerpiece of the visit was a comparative tasting of younger and older wines from the estate’s 4 top single vineyard Nero d’Avola parcels....for good measure done blind. The first flight were from 2007 (current release) and the second from 2001. Subsequently we tasted other releases including the fresh, red fruit driven ’06 Reseca (Nerello Mascalese from Etna), a deeper colored, barrel fermented ’09 Carricante (from Gulfi). Some highly personal notes from the single vineyard Nero d’Avolas:

Nerosanlore’: (From 30 year old alberello pruned vines on red Mediterranean soil on a windy site only 700 meters from the sea).

Wishful thinking...or is there an iodine mineral note from the sea? Fresh, black cherry, ripe, linear, focused in the younger sample. Fresh, a bit astringent and losing fruit in the older sample.

Nerobufaleffj: (From alberello trained vines in the Bufaleffi district in a vineyard with polychromatic mix of 4 soil types including limestone, red Mediterranean, black clay and volcanic sand.)

Medium bodied, smoky, structured, fresh, plummy and complex. Perhaps the most elegant of all four wines; carries alcohol well. Sadly no older sample.

Neromaccarj: (From old vines on deep dark, ferrous soils with a high fossil content in the Maccari district.)

Dense, with noticeable but generally round tannin; oak more overt than on the others; fresh, lively finish. Elegant, fresh, slightly mineral in its elder incarnation

NeroBaronj: (From limestone, chalky soils only 200m away from Bufaleffi)

Concentrated, structured, medium bodied, with more coffee and plum notes than the cherry of others. The most successful, lively and concentrated of the old wines.

Key learnings:

- Nero d'Avola, when well tended and carefully vinified, is fully capable of expressing the subtleties and complexities of individual terroirs.
- Focus, attention to detail, willingness to invest are alive and well in Sicily....as is generous hospitality
- Sicily's indigenous varieties have a clear place in the international wine context.

Cerasuolo DOCG – Peter Scudamore-Smith MW

At Valle dell'Acate's Contrada Bidini: tastings of Valle dell'Acate's ranges, some vertical and Consorzio Cerasuolo's DOCG Cerasuolo di Vittoria and Frappato DOC. I wish to record the group's appreciation by the hosting and hospitality of Gaetana Jacono. A lovely property entered along a date palm lined drive. The palmento and its historic contents was an outstanding museum to view and photograph.

CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA

Sicily's lone DOCG since 1973; covers a large permitted area for residents, though only 287 ha are declared, with additional 123 ha of DOC Vittoria (more recent), apparently recognising native white varieties grown in the same Vittoria region. Innovative this one, being market led. Eighty seven per cent of the declared surface belong to the Consorzio membership.

Style evolution. Franco Giacosa, an invited speaker from Veneto, and previous chief winemaker at Corvo outlined past Sicilian wine styles-with ripeness in excess. That must have applied to Cerasuolo di Vittoria in the 70s era, and there are traces of the "dead fruit, overripe" styles during this past decade. These are fading from the market and the replacement style is terrifically modern. That places some issues for industry marketing as fresh, accessible, balanced and juicy day-drinking reds which don't need to the subject of campaigns to buy Cerasuolo di Vittoria for cellaring. As a result of the style movement this tasting contained current vintage 2011's ready to go.

Fruit flavours: both blend varieties, nero d'avola and frappato contain the strawberry, raspberry, red fruits, confection like fruit flavours. These are appetising, nose appealing and readily identified within the structure of the designated blend rules, and serve to make the wine easy to sell young with these red fruit profiles easily recognised. The challenge for producers is to engage their winemakers to take wines to the next stage of flavour layering. This is balancing fruit characters with production management to layer ripe tannins, barely discernible oak and the lowest alcohol possible in the light-medium body range.

Wines identified for longer aging can depart from that stereotype to gain better extract and tannin intensity for longer development in bottle. The one hundred percent nero d'avola wines made as individual vineyard expressions with even higher intensity again, do not look

suitable for Cerasuolo di Vittoria classification. Frappato is creating a lightening effect on the two grape blend here. Some very fine more heavyweight single site nero d'avolas were also tasted during the tour.

92 COS 2009 (13%); earthy, not feral, fresh sour cherry fruit, quite firm tannins, long length of flavour, extended powdery tannins and weight

92 Valle dell'Acate Classico 2007 (13.5%); earth and perfume, big wine yet medium bodied, vanillin oak, richness, mouth sweetness

91 Valle dell'Acate Classico 2009 (13.5%); nice volume of fruit, ripe not jammy, ripe and rich tannin underneath, has sour cherry concentration for a light bodied wine

91 Feudi del Pisciotto "Gambattista Valli" 2009 (13.5%); 50/50 blend, fruit and oak sweetness abound, fabulous texture, silky yet with backbone and fineness.

90 Carpe Diem 2008 (13.5%) Vigna Serra Valle (Mortilla) ; lovely fruit perfume, fruity palate despite age, softness very obvious, finishes with light bodied elegance

90 Planeta 2010 (13%); despite the lighter colour, fruit perfume and freshness abound, terrific fruit sweetness, fineness on the finish, racy, light bodied

90 Feudo di Santa (Tresca) Classico 2010 (13.5%); terrific bright colours, fruit nose and flavour weight backed up on palate, very soft, purity, mineral finish as result.

89 Planeta Dorilli 2010 (13%); black fruits rather than red, some intensity, juicy but light, somewhat plain, needs more weight, maybe an alternate style in the making

88 Occhipinti SP 68 2011 (12.5%); purple, pretty, cherry fruit and intense fruit aroma is so cool, sweet in mouth too, soft, light body for early drinking

FRAPPATO

This grape is the fruitiest portion of the Cerasuolo duet, and that is positive. Nero d'avola can be made in the richer style while the frappato becomes the softener. As monovigneti, they are also a delight but expect fruitiness, softness and light body as hallmarks. Some wines show their aging activity very easily which is expected to be a grape characteristic (not different from what pinot nero will do, and as discovered on Etna, also nerello mascalese can behave this way). Discovered some very attractive, drink soon wines here . They are best kept away from any serious oak application.

90 Valle dell'Acate 2008 (13%); a mature example, jam, age gives good texture, wood char, sweet fruit but not plain, has some complexity, very good

90 Valle dell'Acate 2010 (13%); again shows age, yet jammy and aromatic, the fruit persists, nice and long, real fruit

89 Feudo di Santa (Tresca) 2011 (12.5%);Frappato 2010 (13%) jam, floral, fruit, very easy, soft drink

89 Valle dell'Acate 2011 (13%); aromatic sweets, herbs too, cherries, soft and light bodied, easy drink now

89 Rappata 2010 (13%); jam. Floral fruit, very easy, soft

88 Valle dell'Acate 2009 (12.5%); bright fruit, sour cherry fruit, different, starting to mature, drying

88 Belsito Terre di Giurfo 2011 (13.5%); floral, strawberry, jam-fruit, generous, light body

88 COS 2011 (12.5%); cherry/purple colours attractive, fruity but herbaceous, soft palate, cherry fruit

88 Gurrieri 2011 (12.5%); pale colours don't assist, strawberries nose and palate, simple, soft

VALLE DELL'ACATE

91 Insolia 2011 Vittoria DOC (13%); pale green, hard to find this in Sicily; beautifully made and exceptionally attractive, great texture, bitter almond fruit, the finest

90 Zagra Grillo Insolia 2011 (13.5%); 85/15; pale, great, aromatic, flowers, clean and fresh, zippy palate from dissolved gas, green apple skin, low tannin, fabulous

100% NERO D'AVOLA

92 Il Moro 2009 (13.5%); cherry fruit, soft, juicy, very fine, prune developed flavours

91 Il Moro 2008 (13%) ; fruity, cedar, fineness, flavour layers, powder tannins

90 Il Moro 2007 (13.5%) ; big ripe fruit style, juicy despite the palate dryness, fine

90 Il Moro 2006 (13.5%) ; deep on colour, nose herbal, complex, dusty, big mouthfeel

89 Il Moro 2005 (13.5%) ; mature and stylish, going jammy, very ripe, hot

SYRAH

88 Rusciano 2007 (14%); light colour, purple-red; jam-ripe, soft and silky, low weight

88 Rusciano 2006 (14%); light colour, jammy, very ripe, simple-soft

Feudi del Pisciotto – Paul Liversedge MW

Situated at 250ms altitude in rolling hillside just 7kms from the sea in the DOCG of Cerasuolo di Vittoria are the beautifully restored hilltop winery and cellars of Feudi del Pisciotto. With 33 hectares of vineyards, this winery is the 3rd part of a “triangle” of wineries owned by Paolo Panerai, a successful Northern Italian businessman. The other 2 wineries in the group are Castellare di Castellina in Chianti Classico and Rocca di Frassinello, a joint venture with Domaines Barons de Rothschild Lafite in the Maremma.

Approximately 50% of Feudi del Pisciotto’s production is international varietals and 50% indigenous Sicilian grapes – Inzolia and Grillo for the whites and Frappato and Nero d’Avola for the reds. They have 2 main ranges; their more “commercial” Baglio del Sole range and a premium “Italian Fashion Top Designers Collection”, a series of labels designed by Italy’s most famous fashion houses such as Versace, Valentino and Missoni. In return for these label designs, Feudi del Pisciotto contribute 10% of all profits made on sales of this range towards restoring some of Sicily’s great works of art.

The marketing, particularly of the Fashion Collection, is potentially very astute. Sicily’s local grapes are still relatively unknown on the international stage, but the developing markets of Asia and Russia particularly do have a good knowledge of Italy’s most prestigious fashion brands. Given that these countries buy very much on label, this should be a clever way of encouraging sales of the harder-to-pronounce indigenous Sicilian grapes.

From a style viewpoint, all the wines we tasted were clean and polished, with ripe fruit and smooth tannins; wines which would please an international palate, particularly that of the Chinese or Americans who love bold , sweet fruit flavours and silky smooth tannins.

“Marengo” Grillo and “Ferretti” Chardonnay 2010 were rich and fruity with buttery French oak, the Grillo showing its hallmark firm acidity and Chardonnay with that ripe, tropical fruit flavour typical of Sicily.

The Baglio del Sole reds were easy going, unoaked and fruity, clearly made to appeal to a wide international audience at lowish pricepoints.

Of the “fashion collection” reds the Versace Nero d’Avola 2009 and ‘Eterno” Pinot Nero 2011 stood out, the former showing clearly the trade mark firm acidity and sweet and sour plum fruit of Nero d’Avola, the latter an impressive Pinot Noir, more Sonoma in character than European, but with richness, balance and complexity.

These wines were different to most we tasted during our tour, and I’m sure purposely so. They perhaps lacked some of the real “soul” and “taste of terroir” of Sicily, but definitely had

wide “international” appeal, which combined with the innovative marketing-lead approach, should bring good results for Feudi del Pisciotto in future.

15th May

Agrigento temples – Mark Savage MW



I am happy to report that the Institute’s Sicilian Expedition was rather more successful than the Athenian one which resulted in the complete destruction of their army and their fleet in 414BC.

There is a bonus to be derived from good wine by getting inside the skin of the place and the people concerned with its production and by examining viticulture in the context of a more general culture. It was therefore a bonus that this ‘study trip’, action packed as it was with vineyard and cellar visits, interesting tastings and lectures, also managed to allow an hour and a half for a wander through the so-called ‘Valley of the Temples’ at Agrigento.



Some countries have a very recent wine culture, but others have an ancient and profound one. The great Greek historian Thucydides writing in the 5th century BC made the point that the Greeks emerged from barbarism and started to become civilised when they began to cultivate the vine. Sicily became a focus of serious colonisation from the Greek mainland during the 6th and 7th centuries BC, to such an extent indeed that it was simply known as ‘Magna Graecia’. And of course both the vine and the olive would have found conditions there to be ideal. It is no wonder that Sicily thus gave to birth to cities of great wealth and renown in antiquity and the great temples of Agrigento are the most obvious proof of this. Pindar, one of the most revered poets in Ancient Greece, living there around 485BC, regarded Akragas, to give it its ancient name, as the finest city on earth and though he would have to revise his opinions rather sharply downwards today, I fear, we can at least try to imagine its former glory and it remains the most visited archaeological site in Sicily. At its

height, it could boast the largest number of temples of any city in the Greek world with as many as ten such sites. The skyline from offshore must have made it the Manhattan of the Ancient World, a rival to Siracuse itself which might be considered the New York of antiquity, a magnet for so much artistic and scientific talent, from Aeschylus to Archimedes.

We were allocated a guide for our visit, but his rather vestigial grasp of the English language proved something of a handicap and fortunately we were able to glean much of the essential information from various information panels at the different locations. We entered the 'Valley' (which is not a valley at all in fact but rather a plateau with an open view of the sea) by the east gate where our focus fell on the temple of Juno, built c 460BC. 25 of its original 34 columns remain. From there we headed west to the Temple of Concord, one of the best preserved of all the Greek temples, Doric, mid 5th century BC, almost intact, with 34 columns. With time rapidly running out, some of us managed to take a quick look at the remnants of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, claimed to be the largest in Ancient Greece, though it was never quite completed. It must have occupied the space of a football pitch and the height of the columns has been estimated at 53 feet. Just as well then that there was plenty of slave labour to be had at the time. The local osteopaths must have been kept busy treating all the bad backs that must have resulted from such labours. We owe those unsung heroes a debt indeed for the beauty and magnificence of such sites. It was only a pity that our crowded schedule did not allow for a slight detour to look at the temples of Selinunte and, in this writer's view at any rate, the finest of all at Segesta. Nevertheless it gave us an insight into the glory days of ancient Sicily and while the treasures of its architectural past are unlikely to be rivalled in the present era, there is a strong probability that Sicily may be about to witness a golden age for its wine industry as it now begins to realise the true potential of its viticultural heritage. The ancients might not think much of our modern architecture but I think they would have approved of the wine being made in Sicily in the 21st Century A.D.

Feudo Montoni, Cammarata – Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW



Three thousand years ago Sicily was Magna Graecia main vineyard. Fourteen centuries ago, somebody provided written evidence that vines were grown at today's Feudo Montoni land holdings. In 1590, Andrea Baci stated that good wines, apt for long ageing, were produced out of an old vine variety to be found here. Much more recently, in the 20th century, the most prestigious vine expert in Italy, Giacomo Tachis, stated that Vrucara, Montoni's most prominent vineyard, was the cradle of Nero d'Avola and the place to find its purest genetic expression.

Anybody with such an impressive historical background would be suffocating under the burden of tradition. Anybody except Fabio Sireci, Feudo Montoni's enthusiastic owner.

Fabio is extremely well aware of the value of the genetic heritage in his Nero d'Avola vines. Because of that, he is not a good client of nurseries. When he needs to replant, instead of buying commercial clones, he employs Pino, a most gifted craftsman with hands that speak of vines, sun and earth. Pino grafts buds from Vrucara vines into American rootstock planted two years before.

Fabio does his best to preserve the essence and authenticity of his vines, but he is by no means a traditionalist. His wines show his interest in experimenting new methods in the winery and the vineyard. We could enjoy a vertical tasting of his Vrucara wines, from 1999 to 2011, the latter still in barrique. At least in two occasions we could detect a relevant change in the wine style. In both occasions the change was intended by Fabio. The Vrucara 2005, complex, genuine, was the result of the selection of native yeasts after extensive testing in more than 500 micro-vinifications. The 2009, probably the most intense and finely grained Vrucara, came after a change in the pruning system, in 2008.

We found the most cherished human tradition at Montoni, the tradition of reinventing ourselves generation after generation, the perpetual movement of creation and experimentation. Thanks to Fabio for that lesson.

Tasca d'Almerita, Tenuta Regaleali – Lynne Sherriff MW

Our visit to Tasca commenced with a visit to the vineyards which are quite spectacular. From one of the vantage points we had a 360 degree view of all the surroundings. It was particularly windy on the day we visited and wind damage is something that causes concern. The vineyards on the estate are situated between 400 & 900 metres above sea-level on a wide variety of soil types. We were welcomed by Guiseppe & Alberto Tasca d'Almerita who were our hosts for the remainder of the day and they were also gracious enough to host us in terms of accommodation which was gracious and charming.

The history of Tasca as known today dates back to 1830 when two Tasca brothers bought the Regaleali estate from the Counts of Almerita. The estate Regaleali is situated on the border between the provinces of Palermo and Caltanissetta and consists of 400 hectares, of which 180 is planted to white varieties and 220 to red. Most of the vines are single or double guyot wire-trained. Bush vines comprise only 5 % of the vineyard area. The estate has been working on a sustainability programme since 2008 and is looking to focus primarily on water conservation and CO₂ emissions. They have also recently implemented a biodiversity programme to ensure sustainability and soil diversity.

The white vineyards are planted to Inzolia, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Tasca, the latter a specific clone of Sauvignon particular to Tasca. Some Sauvignon Blanc and Gewuerztraminer are also grown. The most important red varieties are Nero d'Avola, Cabernet Sauvignon and Perricone. The harvest period stretches from mid-August to the end of October, due to climatic conditions and the varietal split, making for a long season.

The fermentation tanks in the cellar are diverse, with the following mix:

- Cement tanks with fibre glass lining
- Stainless steel tanks for more refined temperature controlled fermentation
- Large Slavonic oak barrels

In terms of maturation facilities, Allier & Troncais barriques are favoured, but clearly the philosophy of the estate is for balance rather than heavy oaking. There is also some renewed experimentation happening with Chestnut and I look forward to a return to the estate to see what this yields.

This family is open to experimentation and they are working with Artilio Scienza, probably one of Italy's most prominent scientists who had given us a rapid-fire viticulture presentation in the same week. Both brothers are focused in their thinking regarding grape varieties and styles. The estate was the first to plant Cabernet Sauvignon, a significant innovation for Sicily, with the first vintage in 1988. Chardonnay is also important, but the focus is equally divided between the international and the indigenous varieties for both red and white wines. This was obvious in the way the tasting had been carefully organised to reflect the diversity of the region 4 x flights of 8 wines resulted in some silence and furrowed MW brows in concentration.

TASTING

The first set of eight wines was presented under the Nozze D'Oro label and is always a blend of Inzolia and Sauvignon Tasca. There is no oak influence here at all and fermentation takes place in stainless steel at controlled temperatures to capture maximum freshness. Giuseppe & Antonio presented the vintages: 1991, 94, 98, 2001, 04, 06, 09 and 2010. Of all the wines, maybe only the 1991 showed the fruit drying out somewhat, but the other 7 still showed amazing freshness and character. In the 1994 and 2006 there seemed to be acidity lacking, but the other vintages were fresh and vibrant, with some very interesting and diverse aromatics which encompassed umami, crushed oyster shells and mineral characters.

The second flight of white wines was 100% varietal Chardonnay and the vintages presented were: 1998, 2000, 01, 04, 05, 06, 09 & 2010. The 1998 tasted a little dry although still had some good fruit on the mid-palate. The 2004 displayed grapefruit & lime aromatics and was creamy and silky, so a modern style but showing great integration. Both the 2009 and the 2010 were very linear and precise and show enormous potential.

Staying with the international varieties, the third flight was made from Cabernet Sauvignon from the vintages 1988 – the first vintage, followed by 1998, 2000, 04, 06, 07, 08 & 09. The 1988 showed some green and marzipan notes and was a bit rustic. From 2004, there is a more modern style to the wines, with the 2004 sleek and elegant. On the younger vintages, the oak is quite pronounced, but showing sufficient fruit in the glass to integrate.

Back to the indigenous varieties with a flight of Rosso del Conte from the vintages: 1979, 1989, 1998, 2000, 01, 04, 06 and 2007. This was a very interesting and informative flight, especially based on the fact that from 1979 – 1984, there were no cooling facilities in the winery at all for red wines. This label is based on Nero d'Avola, based on a minimum of 55% (in the more recent vintages), 10 – 17% Perricone and the balance of the blends a blend of the remaining permitted DOC varieties. In the two older vintages Chestnut and Slavonian oak was used and in the younger wines, French Allier & Troncais. The Nero D'Avola seems

to give structure, black fruit, some mineral and some umami notes and the Perricone seems to add black pepper, tannin and spice.

This tasting provided the MW group with a remarkable insight into the world of both international and indigenous grape varieties and how they age and really added to the learning experience of the area in general and the estate in particular – thank you very much to the owners – also for the magnificent dinner in gracious surroundings. I slept very well!

16th May

Planeta Estate, Lago Arancio – Alison Flemming MW



A valley. A lake. A road. Beginnings are sometimes humble but from such an accident of locational coincidence has arisen a highly professional, innovative and successful company : Planeta. Our journey, like that of the three company founders, Francesca (daughter of the inimitable Diego, visionary and mover and shaker in the Sicilian wine industry over the last 40 years) and cousins Alessio and Santi, started at the Lago d'Arancio on the family farm which has been here for centuries. Today there are six wine properties on very different terroirs covering 364 hectares across the vast continent which is Sicily, offering an amazing and comprehensive portfolio of both indigenous and international grape varieties. Not only is it important to the Planeta family to understand the land and its idiosyncracies, but they also give high priority to landscape conservation and environmental sustainability with their programmes Planeta Terra and SOStain.

In the former cow-shed Alessio presented us with 3 good reasons to love Sicily : 4000 years of viticulture ; a great heritage of indigenous grapes and the longest harvest in the world spanning 90 days. To explore the second point, Alessio explained that in 1985, when he had just finished his studies, his uncle Diego planted 50 ha with a number of different grape varieties, white and red, indigenous and international. There was no doubt much tutting and shaking of heads at the time, as back then 90% of Sicilian plantings were white varieties, largely Cataratto. Today Planeta uses 19 indigenous varieties and is studying a further 20 while the flagship white wine of the company is Chardonnay with Syrah, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon following in the ranks.

However, at Planeta it is not all touchy-feely. Alessio and the other family members (seven brothers and sisters and fifteen cousins now work in the business) are true business professionals who know how to make Brand Planeta work. The whole organisation of our visit, the tasting set-up and choice of informational materials were perfectly orchestrated.

Simple but inspired, the tasting sheet was ingenious: for the „Journey in Sicily with Planeta“ a map of Sicily with each Planeta estate with its own graphics in a different colour divided off with the wines relating to that region, and then a history section „Ten Years with Planeta“. This clear and instantly recognisable overview of the extensive Planeta portfolio was a hit with all of us, and even a rubber band was provided so that we could roll it up and take it with us. True organisational professionalism indeed.

TASTING NOTES

A JOURNEY IN SICILY WITH PLANETA

ALASTRO 2011, IGT Sicily, Ulmo, 95% Grecanico, 5% Fiano, pebbly, slightly calcareous soils, ss, fine lees for 6 months with battonage, Grecanico apparently the same as Garganega Delicious stone fruits and apricot kernals. Quite lean with refreshing acidity and mineral finish.

COMETA 2011, IGT Sicily, Dispensa, 100% Fiano, clay, chalk and limestone, ss, Fiano originally from Campania, low yielder
Peach, apricot and floral nose, fleshy-bodied wine of warmth and richness yet with sufficient acidity and touch of mandarin to balance. Very pleasing.

CHARDONNAY 2010, IGT Sicily, Ulmo, 100% Chardonnay, pebbly, slightly calcareous soil, fermentation and maturation in 50% new oak, and 50% one year old oak, fine lees with battonage until June following vintage, was flagship wine for many years Big blockbuster of a wine, butter, toast and a touch of coconut on nose and palate, rich, lush. If you are into rich Chardonnay, this is a must.

CARRICANTE 2010, IGT Sicily, Sciara Nuova, 100% Carricante, black lava sand, rich in minerals, 870 m high, ss, fine lees with battonage `til February following vintage Touch of nuttiness and saltiness, firm palate with crisp acidity, good balance and mineral finish. No doubt will become more concentrated with vine age and will certainly be a wine of ageing potential.

CARRICANTE 2011, IGT Sicily, Sciara Nuova, 95% Carricante, 5% Riesling, black lava sand, rich in minerals, 870 m high, ss, fine lees with battonage `til February following vintage The addition of Riesling is a new move for Planeta with only 1 ha planted on an experimental basis. Personally I did not feel this enhanced the wine, but rather detracted from the mineral saltiness with the floral Riesling notes tending to dominate. I believe this addition will lead to a conflict of ageing styles for both grape varieties.

NERELLO MASCALESE 2010, IGT Sicily, Sciara Nuova, 100% Nerello Mascalese, black lava sand, rich in minerals, 12 months Alliers barriques, first vintage production
Touch of grenadine and marzipan, taut, rather austere palate, needs a bit more flesh on the bones.

CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA 2010, DOCG, Dorilli, 60% Nero d'Avola, 40% Frappato, sandy soil with tufa subsoil, ss
Delightful sour cherry and marzipan aromas, light yet fruity sweet flesh, marked acidity with touch of tannin, gentle wine.

DORILLI CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA CLASSICO 2010, DOCG, Dorilli, 70% Nero d'Avola, 30% Frappato, sandy soil with tufa subsoil, 12 months in 5 yo 500 litre barrels
Redcurrants and morello cherries, powdery vanilla, richer and softer than straight DOCG with plummy fruit, appealing tannins, very approachable

PLUMBAGO 2010, IGT Sicily, Ulmo, 100% Nero d'Avola, pebbly, slightly calcareous soils, 8 months in 3rd and 4th use barrels
Unfortunate name, but lovely wine. Deep, intense colour with rich raspberry and cherry fruit aromas and crunchy tight fruit on palate. Bright and modern.

SYRAH MAROCCOLI 2008, IGT Sicily, Ulmo, 100% Syrah, pebbly, medium clay soil rich in limestone, 14 months in partly new Alliers oak casks
Toast, cinnamon, leather and cherry nose, powdery texture on palate, not yet knit tannins, bit chewy, needs a bit more flesh on the bones and more varietal definition on the palate.

MERLOT SITO DELL'ULMO 2008, IGT Sicily, Ulmo, 100% Merlot, pebbly, slightly calcareous soils, 14 months in Alliers oak casks
Very rich, high alcohol, almost oily, big plum fruit style, touch balsamic, firm grippy tannins.

BURDESE 2007, IGT Sicily, Dispensa, 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc, limestone and clay soils, 14 months in new Alliers oak casks
Almost opaque, dense, thick wine lacking vibrancy, leather, earth and balsamic notes, very firm, almost hard tannins.

SANTA CECILIA 2007, IGT Sicily, Buonivini, 100% Nero d'Avola, calcareous limestone soil with clay, 14 months in 2nd and 3rd year Alliers oak casks, Planeta's flagship red
Earthy, fruitcake and prunes on nose, bit baked and jammy, lacks freshness, was probably better when younger

SANTA CECILIA 2009, DOC Noto, Buonivini, 100% Nero d'Avola, calcareous limestone soil with clay, 14 months in 2nd and 3rd year Alliers oak casks, Planeta's flagship red, same vineyards now elevated to DOC status
Fresher with grippy tannins, plum and liquorice, leaner and tighter than 2007 with potential for further ageing, not yet polished.

PASSITO DI NOTO 2010, Buonivini, 100% Moscato Bianco, calcareous limestone soil with clay, grapes picked second half of August, kept 45 days at 23°C to dry, slow fermentation in ss
Gorgeous bitter orange marmelade nose, dried apricots with touch of honey, very high acidity at 7.25 g/ltr keeping palate fresh despite the 155 g/ltr rs, long and lovely.

TEN YEARS WITH PLANETA

Personal highlights were:

COMETA 2001; 50% matured in barrique, the change to ss came in 2007 when it was decided to let the aromatics of Fiano speak for itself. However, this 2001 is quite stunning with hazlenut and coffee beans on the nose, amazingly high glycerol and richness, long, almost toffee, caramel finish, a wine for rich food

CHARDONNAY 2006, hazlenut and cream with a superb velvety-smooth texture yet with a streak of acidity to give freshness, toasty, figgy finish, extraordinarily long.'

SANTA CECILIA 2005, very complex, petrol and terroir notes, chewy, rich with tobacco and spice, dark chocolate and plums, rich and structured

FACTS AND FIGURES

ULMO: 93 ha in Sambuca di Sicilia, Agrigento, produces Alastro (Grecanico), Cometa (Fiano), Chardonnay, Plumbago (Nero d'Avola) and Maroccoli (Syrah)

DISPENSA: 161 ha in Menfi, Agrigento, produces La Segreat Bianco, La Segreta Rosso, Syrah, Merlot and Burdese

DORILLI : 35 ha in Vittoria, Ragusa, produces Cerasuolo di Vittoria and Dorilli Cerasuolo di Vittorio Classico

BUONIVINI : 51 ha in Noto, Siracusa, produces Santa Cecilia (Nero d'Avola) and Passito di Noto (Moscato Bianco)

SCIARA NUOVA : 16 ha on Etna at Castiglione di Sicilia, Catania, produces Carricante and Nerello Mascalese

LA BARONIA : 8 ha in capo Milazzo, Messina

CONCLUSION

Thirty minutes on winding, dusty roads took us to the beautiful but wind-buffed Planeta resort of La Forestiera and another LLL (late light lunch). This was a delight for those of us suffering from calorie overload with a tempting array of vegetables other than the ubiquitous aubergine, judicious use of fresh herbs and great-for-the-digestion pulses. In summary, a highly educational and enjoyable visit, world-class presentation and very generous hospitality. Planeta deserves the success it enjoys both at home and on international markets.

De Bartoli, Marsala – John Hoskins MW

We arrived over an hour late at 5pm and were graciously received by Renato De Bartoli, fourth generation to make wine at his family's estate. He has 12ha in Marsala and 8ha on the volcanic island of Pantelleria.

No pretensions here - no vanity gravel, no reception team in blazers or heels. Renato is brisk and to the point. He led a whistle-stop tour of the traditional cellar, exotically perfumed with a particularly haunting version of 'the angel's share'. On our trip this was the only place where large 'botte' (both Slovenian oak and chestnut) were still predominant for maturation.

He survived a battery of questions from the group; we were evidently enlivened by the piercing, lively acidity of these unique dry, sweet and fortified wines. At the end of the tasting Renato finally relaxed, confident that we were duly (and inevitably) impressed. He cracked open the special 30th anniversary bottling with quiet satisfaction.

Renato De Bartoli is a fine winemaker. He just doesn't shout about it. He is maintaining (almost single-handedly) an overlooked and worthy tradition; whilst also pushing ahead with experimentation (sparkling Grillo is on the market; Syrah and Nero D'Avola blends are under trial).

He explained that the introduction of controlled temperature fermentation in 1990 was the key development in his lifetime – opening the way for top quality table wine and improving the base wine for Marsala. At the same time he ensured the harvest started at first light, finishing mid morning. What has changed little is the traditional maturation of long ageing with gentle temperature fluctuation.

Most Marsala is, by contrast, made quickly with the use of cooked must and caramel. Perhaps as a result, it remains a style in decline. Total production is now only 100,000 hl, down from 1.5 million hl in its heyday.

(WHITE WINES. Sealed with Vinolok).

1. 2010 PIETRA NERA (IGP)
100% Zibbibo; two thirds in steel; one third in barrique or tonneau (10% new)
11.5%. Acidity 6g/l.

Pale.

Gently aromatic; quite subdued for Muscat.

Dry, delicate, fresh. A refreshing, subtly aromatic example.

2. 2009 GRAPPOLI DEL GRILLO (IGP)
100% Grillo, picked in August, fermented and matured in barrique and tonneau for one year, with battonage. Then into steel for a few months before bottling. (He is keen to reduce sulphur levels but finds a little sulphur in must to be necessary to ensure a clean fermentation with native yeasts. Bottled with 50mg/l sulphur max).
14%. Acidity 7g/l. PH 3!

Pale.

Clearly marked by oak on the nose. Aniseed; 'high toned'. (Felt by some to be a little oxidative and/or phenolic. And yet improved in the glass, so cannot have been oxidized).

Full body, screaming acidity, ripe but complex: salt and fennel. A tough sell; a wine for restaurants.

(MARSALA AND MARSALA-STYLE WINES)

3. VECCHIO SAMPERI, 'Vino Liquoroso Secco' (not a Marsala as un-fortified)
100% Grillo. 17.5%. Acidity 5g/l.
Aged in various older oak barrels, under Solera, for average 20 years.
Pale gold, orange hint.
Nose comparable to a gentle, delicate Palo Cortado (and this from Pedro B-T, so must be right).
Full body; high acidity; ripe but under-stated. Concentrated and yet slight. Salty.
Clear match for hard cheese (Pecorino; Gouda; Manchego); or aperitif.
4. MARSALA SUPERIORE 'ORO', Vigna La Miccia
100% Grillo. 18.5%. Acidity 6g/l. RS of 70 g/l

Aged in various older oak and chestnut barrels, under Solera, for average 5 years.
Fortified with Mistella only (no caramel or cooked must).
Little oxidation

Burnished, old gold.

Marmalade – sweetness with development/complexity, but little oxidation.
Full body; gentle acidity initially but great freshness on the finish.

5. MARSALA SUPERIORE RISERVA, 10 years
100% Grillo. 18.5%. Acidity 6g/l. RS 60g/l
3 year old Mistella added after around 10 years.
Aged in various older oak and chestnut barrels, under Solera, for average 10 years.

Pale gold, orange hint.

Nose much more developed – hint of Madeira; much more oxidative.

Full body; acidity feels much higher (some of it is volatile acidity); savoury – nuts and salt and butterscotch. One hardly notices the sugar on the extremely crisp finish.

6. MARSALA SUPERIORE RISERVA 1987
100% Grillo. 19%. Acidity 6g/l. RS 50g/l.
The vintage is in fact the year the Mistella was added to the wine. Aged in large oak since then. Bottled February 2012.

Deep orange gold.

Salty caramel on both nose and palate. This is very reminiscent of one of the most fashionable flavours in innovative restaurants. Seems sweeter than the 10 year example; more glycerol.

(PASSITO STYLE)

7. 2007 BUKKURAM, Passito di Pantelleria
Named after a 5ha vineyard on the island. Arabic name meaning ‘the father of the grape’. 200m altitude, SW exposition. Harvested mid August.
100% Zibbibo, dried in the sun for 3 or 4 weeks.
Fermentation started with ‘normal’ ripe grapes and continued very slowly with the gradual daily addition of the dried grapes, over 6 months.
Aged in barrel for 30 months.
14.5%. Acidity 7.7g/l. RS 145g/l.

Deep gold, moving to mahogany.

Orange peel. Extremely complex for a Muscat. Not marked by oak.

Medium to full body. Fresh (1.5g VA evident on the finish). Gentle (alcoholic) barrel.
Renato calls it dessert wine but surely better with blue cheese or after dinner. The high acidity really ‘cleans up’ the sugar. Would clash with most desserts.

(AND TO FINISH)

8. VECCHIO SAMPERI, ‘Vino Liquoroso Secco’, 30 years old
100% Grillo. 19%. Less than 1,000 bottles made.

Pale gold with green tones.

A dead ringer for fine old Madeira.

Full body; piercing acidity; gentle and delicate fruit – but not fresh fruit; it’s full of dried lemon and orange; positively bitter; tangy and strikingly long.

Donnafugata Estate, Lago Arancio – Anne Tupker MW



We were warmly welcomed at the winery by Antonio and José Rallo, son and daughter of Gabrielle and Giacomo Rallo, the founders of Donnafugata. The winery was built in 1851 in the centre of Marsala, and the Rallo family began their ‘adventure’ here with Donnafugata in 1983, first with its Contessa Entellina vineyards, and later expanding to the island of Pantelleria in 1989.

José explained the importance of premium wine in Sicily as an added value product similar to food and tourism. In the last 35 years Sicilian wines have increased their reputation for quality both within Italy and internationally. Between 2003 and 2010 exports grew by 22%. Sicily now produces wines with flavour and (often) elegance and enjoys a stable presence in all international markets. Their appeal lies in the combination of a sunny Mediterranean character with the crispness and pleasantness of the fruit.

Donnafugata is a family business and as such strongly motivated to produce quality wines, using resources responsibly to create energy savings, clean and sustainable agriculture. They feel a strong social responsibility towards their product, a passion that the family love to share with their employees. Like many other Sicilian producers we encountered, the company is increasingly concerned about protecting the landscape and promoting biodiversity.

The name ‘Donnafugata’ means ‘fleeing woman’ and is a tribute to Sicilian history and literature, interweaving the fate of a fleeing women and the famed novel *The Leopard*. In the early 19th century Queen Maria Carolina, wife of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon, fled from Napoleon’s advancing armies and took refuge in Sicily on the estate named as Donnafugata in Lampedusa’s novel. This estate is now home to the Contessa Entellina vineyards. Hence the name of the winery and its logo, featuring the head of a woman with windblown hair.

As a powerful female in a male-dominated industry, José’s mother Gabrielle has been a pioneer in Sicily as well as establishing the reputation of her wines through the world. She is also responsible for the company’s unique logo and label designs. The wines are seen very much as a reflection of her femininity, imagination and beauty. Some 50% of the staff are female. Although the winery is more than 150 years old, the family aim both to preserve its traditional aspects while also keeping up-to-date with their winemaking.

José’s brother Antonio serves as winemaker, CEO and chief agronomist for the company. We were introduced to Antonio Sontero, Antonio’s right-hand man for the past seven years.

Antonio gave us a more in-depth description of Donnafugata’s two separate estates. The Contessa Entellina estate is located 60 km from Palermo, at an altitude of 200-600 m., and has a mineral-rich, mixed soil of limestone (30%) and clay. The vineyard now covers 260 ha.

and sports its own DOC. Many different varieties are grown: six whites, including Catarretto, Inzolia, Grecanico, Chardonnay, Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc; reds include Nero d'Avola, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Petit Verdot and Alicante Bouchet and Tannat. They are also experimenting with 30 different clones of 12 historic Sicilian varieties.

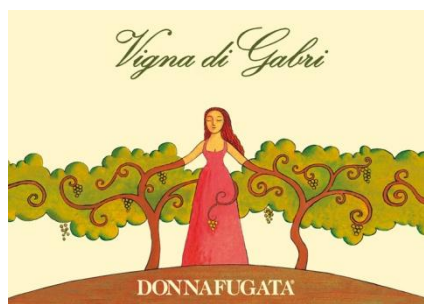
The only grape grown in Pantelleria is Zibbibo, the Arab name for the Muscat of Alexandria grape. Some 50 different biotypes of Zibbibo have been identified. The island lies about 83 km from the coast of Tunisia and 107 km to the southwest of Sicily. Its population today is 4000. Arabs brought the Zibbibo grape there in 700 AD to provide table grapes and raisins. The island came under the domination of Spain in the 13th century. Many of the vines are more than 100 years old, and remain ungrafted due to the phylloxera-resistant qualities of the island's sandy volcanic soil. Since 1946 new vines have been grafted, and these now make up about half of the total. Vineyard area has declined dramatically in the past century, from 6000 ha. before World War I to about 600 ha now. Donnafugata own 68 ha.

The soil consists of mineral-rich volcanic sand, and vineyard altitudes vary from sea level to 600 m. Strong winds sweep the island, and the low, bush-trained vines are planted in holes to protect them from severe wind damage. The name of the island, Pantelleria, in fact means 'very windy'. The grapes are harvested from the end of July to the end of September. The first to be picked are the south-facing vineyards at sea level. Much care is taken to select only the healthiest grapes. The ripest bunches with the thickest skins are selected for drying on racks outdoors, exposed to strong sunshine and wind. Once dried, having shrivelled to 25% of their original size, the grapes are de-stemmed by hand, pressed and added to must made from freshly picked Zibbibo grapes. Traditionally the dried grapes were added at the end of the fermentation, but this produced too much oxidation, so the preferred technique is to begin to add the grapes a third of the way through the fermentation, which normally lasts between 18-21 days. This complex process produces a rich sweet wine with some 200 g/l residual sugar and a minimum 14% alcohol (under DOC law). It takes about 4 kg. of grapes to produce a litre or even 750 ml of this amazing wine. Donnafugata produces several different passitos from different areas and then blends them to add complexity. The fresh acidity of the wine counterbalances its luscious sweetness.

We then proceeded to a very generous tasting of 12 of Donnafugata's flagship wines arranged in vertical flights of 3, followed by a tasting of Pantellerian wines, including a vertical tasting of the legendary Ben Ryé. There was also an extended visit to the cellars, with tasting of young wines, plus a further selection of wines from the Contessa Entellina vineyards. We were treated to a 'light' (in Sicilian terms, which means extended and lavish) and very delicious buffet consisting of specialties from the region.

Flight One:

Vigna di Gabri , Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC



The name 'Gabri' refers to Gabrielle Rollo, Donnafugata's founder, and alludes to her affection for the full-flavoured fragrance of Ansonica, one of Sicily's oldest white grapes. The wine was first produced in 1987.

Yield per ha: c. 6 tons

Winemaking: Controlled temperature fermentation in Stainless steel. 90% of the wine is aged in stainless steel, whilst the remain 10% is matured on the lees in 2nd use French oak barrels for 3 months.

Price ex-cellar: 6.60 euros

Vigna di Gabri 1998, Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC

100% Ansonica (=Insolia)

Alcohol: 12.35%

Total acidity: 5.1 g/l

pH: 3.26

Medium gold in colour with nutty, ripe, melony aromas and crisp, lemony flavours.

Vina di Gabri 2006, Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC

80% Ansonica; 20% Chardonnay

Alcohol: 13.69%

Total acidity: 5.74 g/l

pH: 3.39

More youthful but with a distinct golden hue and similar nutty, ripe melony aromas with a crisp, lemony palate.

Vina di Gabri 2011, Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC

59% Ansonica plus a blend of Chardonnay, Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc and a small % of Catarratto

Alcohol: 13.8%

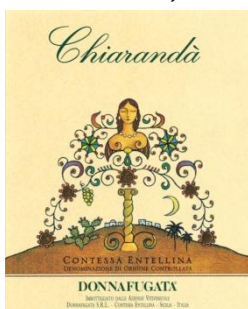
Total acidity: 6.1 g/l

pH: 3.33

Pale yellow in colour and still showing the pear drop aromas of cool fermentation but the zesty, citrusy flavours promise that this wine will be just as attractive as its more mature sisters.

Flight Two:

Chiarandà, Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC



Originally named Chiarandà del Merlo from the names of the two vineyards where the Chardonnay and Ansonica grapes were grown, the name was simplified to Chiarandà ten years after its 1992 debut, and the label enriched with a female figure suggesting complexity and refinement.

Yield per ha: c. 4 tons

Winemaking: controlled-temperature fermentation in stainless steel, followed by lees maturation in Burgundian oak *barrisques* and *tonneaux* for 5-6 months, with part of the wine matured in cement vats; followed by fining before bottling. Released after a further 24 months in bottle.

Price ex-cellars: 12.70 euros

Chiarandà del Merlo 2001, Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC

A 50/50 blend of Chardonnay and Ansonica

Alcohol: 13.5 %

Total acidity: 4.7 g/l

pH: 3.53

Mid-gold in colour with great freshness, the lemoniness of the Ansonia blending well with the rich, waxy, nutty tones of the Chardonnay.

Chiarandà 2004, Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC

A 50/50 blend of Chardonnay and Ansonica

Alcohol: 14.08 %

Total acidity: 5.82 g/l

pH: 3.45

Surprisingly deep gold in colour, with notes of honey and buttered toast on the nose, and crisp acidity on the palate.

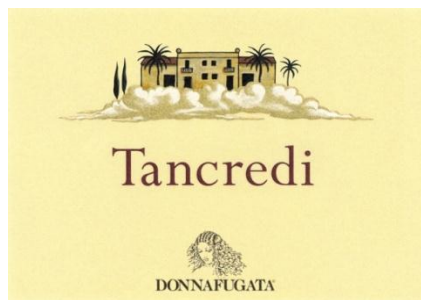
Chiarandà 2009, Bianco Contessa Entellina DOC

100% Chardonnay

Alcohol: 13.39 %
Total acidity: 6.6 g/l
pH: 3.35

Mid-gold colour, dominated mainly by orange and lemon aromas and flavours, quite full but finishing clean on the palate. Still in its infancy, it will be interesting to watch this wine develop.

Flight Three: Tancredi



The wine's name reflects the elegance and ambition of the 'revolutionary' Tancredi, nephew of Count Salina in *The Leopard*.

Yield per hectare: c. 5 tons

Winemaking: fermentation in stainless steel at temperature of 26-30°C, with 12 days skin maceration; following MLF, maturation from 12-14 months in new and old French oak *barrisques* and *tonneaux* before fining and bottling.

First vintage: 1990

Price ex-cellars: 10.70 euros

Tancredi 2001, Contessa Entellina DOC

70% Nero d'Avola, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon from 15-20 year old vines.

Alcohol: 13.70%
Total acidity: 6.1 g/l
pH: 3.64

Opaque ruby colour with a salmon rim. Dark fruits and cedar evident on the nose, while the palate offers fresh, juicy dark fruit flavours, medium ripe tannin and a long finish. Still youthful, this wine should age and become more complex over the next five years, possibly much longer.

Tancredi 2005, Contessa Entellina DOC

Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon from 15-20 year old vines.

Alcohol: 13.93%
Total acidity: 6.03 g/l
pH: 3.57

Very deep colour again with a hint of orange at the rim. Sweet dark fruit pastilles dominated the nose, and the palate is wonderfully juicy and fresh with no rough edges. A very appealing wine.

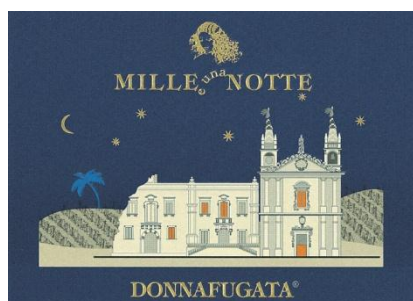
Tancredi 2010 (not yet released), Rosso Sicilia IGT

Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon from 15-20 year old vines plus some Tannat and other red varieties.

Alcohol: 13.74%
Total acidity: 6.3 g/l
pH: 3.52

Very deeply coloured with youthful purple and pink rim. Ripe, juicy, dark fruits on the nose, with crisp acidity, quite firm tannin and juicy, velvet-textured fruit on the palate. In its infancy but promising to evolve into a great wine.

Flight Four Mille e una Notte



The label features the palace to which Queen Maria Carolina fled, also being the favourite house of novelist Tomasi di

Lampedusa, with a sky from 'The Arabian Nights' full of stars and promise. The wine itself has a strong and passionate character.

Yield per ha: c. 4 tons

Winemaking: Fermentation in stainless steel at 26-30 C and 12 days of skin maceration; following MLF, the wine matures from 14-16 months in new and old French oak *barrisques* and *tonneaux* before fining and bottling.

First vintage: 1995

Price ex-cellars: 23.80 euros

Mille e una Notte 1999, Contessa EteUina DOC

Mainly Nero d'Avola

Alcohol: 14.9%

Total acidity: 5.6 g/l

pH: 3.85

Deep ruby in colour with a salmon/brick rim. Ripe blackcurrent pastilles on the nose followed by crisp acidity and concentrated, lush blackcurrant fruit flavours. A big but balanced wine with excellent length.

Mille e una Notte 2003, Contessa EteUina DOC

Mainly Nero d'Avola

Alcohol: 14.21%

Total acidity: 5.67 g/l

pH: 3.72

Opaque garnet core with a brick rim. Aromas of ripe dark fruits, with medium acidity and rather harsh drying tannin, which overwhelms the fruit on the finish.

Mille e una Notte 2010, Rosso Sicilia IGP

30% Petit Verdot was added to the Nero d'Avola in this vintage

Alcohol: 13.83%

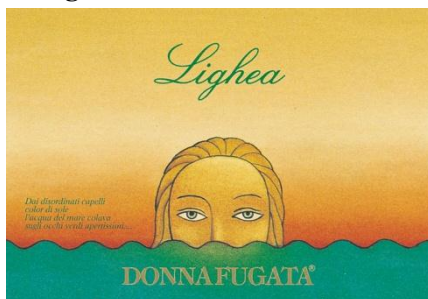
Total acidity: 5.8 g/l

pH: 3.62

Opaque, youthful colour, followed by ripe aromas of dark fruits, plums and cherries. The palate is fresh as well as fleshy with big tannins, all beautifully balanced and lingering. This wine was a personal favourite.

We then tasted 5 wines from Pantelleria, all whites made from 100% Zibbibo:

1. Lighea 2011, Bianco Zibbibo Sicilia IGT



Yield per ha: c. 6 tons

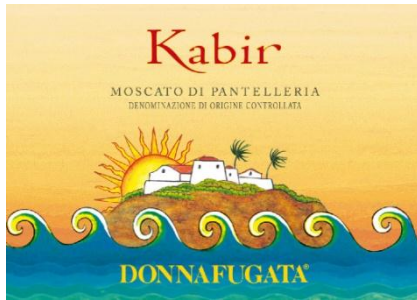
Temperature-controlled fermentation in stainless steel and early bottling

First vintage: 1990

Price ex-cellars: 6.10 euros

An intense grapey nose, light colour, and dry zesty palate, quite lovely with good length.

2. Kabir 2010, Moscato di Pantelleria DOP



Ex-cellars price: 10.50 euros

The name comes from the Arabic term 'The Great', chosen because this extremely delicate Moscato constantly surprises and enchants.

Yield per ha: c. 4 tons

Winemaking: fermented in stainless steel at controlled temperature and aged a further few months in stainless before bottling and a further 4 months in bottle.

First vintage: 1990

Made from fresh Zibbibo grapes harvested at 17% potential alcohol and fermentation stopped at 11% by cooling down to 2-3 C, leaving residual sugar.

Alcohol: 11.64%

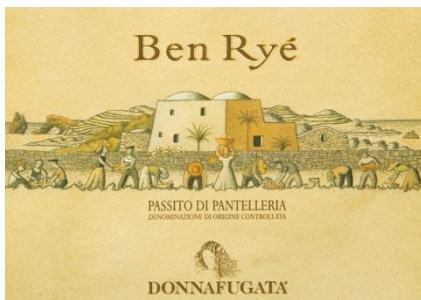
Total acidity: 7.5 g/l

pH: 3.36

RS: 117 g/l

Pale golden colour, fresh and grapey on the nose, very sweet but balanced by a crisp acidity, minerally with hints of rose petals and fresh Muscat grapes.

Ben Ryé



The name derives from the Arabic for 'son of the wind' referring to the constant winds sweeping the island, bringing fragrances so powerful you can almost touch them.

Yield per ha: c. 4 tons

Winemaking: controlled-temperature fermentation in stainless steel for the freshly harvested must, with dried grapes added in several batches. Ageing in stainless for 4-5 months and up to a maximum total of 18 months in bottle before release.

First vintage: 1989

Price ex-cellars: 24.25 euros

Ben Ryé 2002, Passito di Pantelleria DOC

Alcohol: 14.30%

Total acidity: 7.6 g/l

pH: 4.10

RS: 171 g/l

Medium to deep amber colour with notes of marmalade and caramel on the nose. Intensely sweet but refreshing acidity balances, and flavours of caramel with a hint of mint carry through to a long finish.

Ben Ryé 2005, Passito di Pantelleria DOC

Alcohol: 14.11%

Total acidity: 7.61 g/l

pH: 4.10

RS: 194 g/l

Deep amber colour, with a more subdued nose showing aromas of orange zest, unctuous and very sweet on the palate yet very fresh and with orange and caramel flavours lasting through a very long finish.

Ben Ryé 2009, Passito di Pantelleria DOP

Alcohol: 14.36%

Total acidity: 7.5 g/l

pH: 3.83

RS: 201 g/l

Medium amber colour with lovely marmalade and orange zest aromas, sweet, orangey flavours balanced by zingy acidity and lingering on the finish.

TASTING IN THE BARRIQUE CELLAR

A memorable part of the cellar visit was José bursting into a lively song before we began our extensive tasting. This is a list of the wines or separate cuvees we tasted.

Territories and grape varieties

Contessa Entellina - Mazzaporro

Sapidity, structure, longevity; it enhances varietal notes.

Soil: Limestone-clayey with sub-alkaline reaction (pH 7.6) Total limestone 25%

Altitude: 250 m AMSL

Exposure: 30% flatland, 70% W

- Ansonica, Catarratto, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc
- Nero d'Avola, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah

Contessa Entellina - Duchessa

Sapidity and elegance

Soil: clayey with sub-alkaline reaction (pH 7.7)

Total limestone 20%

Altitude: 200 m AMSL

Exposure: 100% W

- Chardonnay
- Cabernet Sauvignon

Contessa Entellina - Miccina

Freshness, moderate body; varietal notes

Soil: Limestone-clayey with sub-alkaline reaction (pH 7.5) Total limestone 30%

Altitude: 352 m AMSL

Exposure: nearly all flatland

- Ansonica, Grecanico, Viognier
- Nero d'Avola, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot

Contessa Entellina - Casale Bianco

Great body and elegance; aptitude for lengthy refinement

Soil: Limestone-clayey with sub-alkaline reaction (pH 7.7) Total limestone > 35%

Altitude: 370 m AMSL

- Catarratto
- Nero d'Avola, Cabernet

Exposure: 70% W (Cabernet, Syrah e NdA)
30% S (Merlot)

Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah

Contessa Entellina - Arcera

Freshness, delicacy, medium structure

Soil: Limestone-clayey with sub-alkaline reaction
(pH 7.6)

Total limestone > 35%

Altitude: 360 m AMSL

Exposure: 50% SW (Arcera bassa) 50% NW
(Arcera alta)

- Ansonica

Sambuca di Sicilia – Pandolfina

Great body, elegance and complexity

Soil: clayey-muddy with sub-alkaline reaction
(pH 8) Total limestone 35%

Altitude: 300 m AMSL E

Exposure: 20% flatlands, 80% on a small rise
with several exposures

- Chardonnay
- Alicante Bouchet, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Tannant.

Santa Margherita Belice - Predicatore

Good body, considerable finesse and elegance

Soil: clayey with sub-alkaline reaction (pH 8).
Total limestone 25%.

Altitude: 300 m AMSL

Exposure: 30% flatland, 70% E

- Chardonnay Viognier
- Nero d'Avola, Merlot, Tannant

*TASTING IN THE BARRIQUE CELLAR
VINTAGE 2011*

Nero d'Avola _ Territory of Miccina

Nero d'Avola – Territory of Mazzaporro

Syrah – Territory of Mazzaporro

Syrah – Territory of Casale Bianco

Cabernet Sauvignon – Territory of Casale Bianco

Cabernet Sauvignon – Territory Miccina

Tannat – Territory of Predicatore

Petit Verdot – Territory of Pandolfina

17th May

IRVOS research centre, Marsala – Angela Muir MW

The Sicilian Institute of viticultural, wine and olive oil research encompasses far more than the title suggests. It was kind enough to organise and offer the substantial help we had enabling us to make this utterly fascinating trip and we owe the people involved the most enormous debt of thanks.

Our all too fleeting visit allowed us to see just one tiny corner of a vast operation closely connected to every aspect of vine production, marketing and sales throughout Sicily. It was no coincidence that the onus of presenting IRVOS and its work fell on a biologist and member of their research team: Dott. Daniele Oliva. He was watched closely by his colleagues, including Dott. Dario Cartabellotta who is Director General of this Institute and Sicilian Minister for Agriculture, a useful combination. Some of the recent research papers whose production Dott. Oliva has either helped or led are attached to this report for the Masters of Wine archives.

In the less than two hours that was all the time we had, he first gave us a slide show using photographs from the Institute's archive about the evolution and activities of the Institute. During most of this time it was known as the IRVV (ie not including olive production). It was set up in 1950 and, today, its activities include:

- Collecting, processing and disseminating wine industry data
- Control and certification of DOC/DOCG wines
- Research into all aspects of Sicilian wine production with a clear brief to apply its results to improve the industry. Facilities include a micro-vinification cellar where up to 120 different ferments of 100 litres can be run.
- Training at all levels from vineyard workers onwards
- Legal consulting support for member producers
- Promotional support and image building activities for Sicilian wines under the logo Vini di Sicilia, both nationally and internationally. This includes participation at wine trade fairs, conferences, seminars and tutored tastings.
- Laboratory services to the wineries from four centres: Palermo, Marsala, Alcamo and Milazzo.
- A student bursary scheme allowing overseas travel for a Sicilian student or recent graduate to further their studies and a similar bursary for a student/graduate to come to Sicily.
- And, of course, a website: www.irvos.it where all this and more, including a short piece about our visit, is already posted.

RESEARCH

Dott. Oliva made it clear that research does not include any work on genetic modification.

We were then given some very brief tastings to illustrate some of the work the research sector is doing.

First were three wines made from the same neutral white Grillo grape juice and then three wines made from the same Nero d'Avola to give a quick overview of how work is being done to help producers reduce their use of sulphites.

Sample 1: 50mg/l SO₂ added to must; 30mg/l added post ferment; 15mg/l added before bottling. These figures were taken as Sicilian industry norms for large volume production using healthy, ripe grapes.

Result: Nero d'Avola: light, lean, very fresh but sharp.

Grillo: very pale, quite sharp, almost neutral but clearly fresh wine.

Sample 2: 15mg/l SO₂ added pre-bottling:

Result: Nero d'Avola: much better, richer fruit expression, although still a bit tired on the finish and collapsed fairly quickly in the glass.

Grillo: still neutral and quite green, a little hard but more expressive.

Sample 3: zero additions of SO₂; wine bottled.

Result: Nero d'Avola: falling away and noticeably duller colour and flavours.

Grillo: very tired, old, bruised pear oxidation. More flavour than sample 1 but not good.

This was a crude, but salutary, reminder of the part sulphur can play in winemaking and enough to make any imaginative producer consider how they want to use it. It also demonstrated how the researchers can start interaction with the producers to help them decide a more subtle, interesting way to work. Interestingly, Dott Oliva made a comment that sales might grow by as much as 30% if they could find a way of avoiding the use of sulphites in the wines. Sadly, we didn't have time to learn more about this point of view.

Second were some very interesting tastings to show :

- The research and selection of a commercial yeast strain (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* originally isolated as A1-21), NDA21, now marketed under licence to the Institute by Springer since 2008. Some of the attached papers show the full published research details of this long, painstaking work. This continues into at least two of the other more successful yeasts isolated during this process, as well as strains used for Grillo, Inzolia and Catarratto which may be well on their way to being licensed too.
- The further research recently resulting in publication into native Sicilian non-*Saccharomyces* yeasts with a view to seeing whether any strain could be harnessed for commercial use. This has thrown up a strain of *Candida Zemplinina*, the most promising of which is Cz3. Microvinification trials using this yeast on its own, co-inoculated with NDA21 and sequentially inoculated with NDA21 are complete.

We only had time to taste trios of Frappato, Nero d'Avola and Merlot each with a control sample either spontaneously fermented or using ARO6 (Merlot only), a sample fermented with NDA21 and a sample fermented purely with Cz3. We did not see the combination that is most likely to be of interest if Cz3 turns out to have a commercial future: the sequentially inoculated ferments using Cz3 initially with NDA21 added later once Cz3 had had time to multiply. Cz3 on its own produces slightly lower alcohol levels than most commercial yeast strains. It also favours the production of glycerol. This characteristic comes through on the sequentially inoculated ferments but not on co-inoculations as the *Saccharomyces* kills the Cz3 too quickly.

Various opinions were expressed about the tastings we did of these trios. Among them was a concern about volatile acidity. This appears to be borne out by some of the research analyses. However, the NDA21 wines certainly showed some smoother, more interesting fruit character than the control sample, especially for the Nero d'Avola itself. It should also be borne in mind that these were micro-vinifications where no early control was exercised to discourage VA formation.

Dott. Oliva is continuing his research looking for "unspoilt" traditional wineries...ie those where no commercial yeast or bacteria have ever been used. The small island of Limosa is his next target. Not a packet of yeast has ever been there. His goal is to isolate and test more Sicilian organisms as these are a part of the island's heritage. He will continue to range across the whole gamut of this micro-life hunting useful, possibly commercially viable

organisms. One such avenue under consideration is an organism that has an enzyme that digests poly-saccharides and might be of interest for white wine lees aging.

Watch this space.

Firriato vineyards, Favignana – Susan Hulme MW

Part of the thrill of our visit to Firriato was of course the chance to stay on the beautiful island of Favignana, with an overnight stay at the distinctive Cave Bianche hotel, a hotel carved out of an old limestone quarry. It also meant a trip to the beach and a swim in the sea for some of us and a little time to relax around the hotel pool.

Favignana is the largest of the three main Egadi Islands, just off the coast of Sicily, between Marsala and Trapani. It was used by the Phoenicians as a stopping point on their trans-Mediterranean trading routes.

Firriato own 320 hectares of vines but most of their vineyards are near Trapani on Sicily where the company is based. They have 15 ha of vines on the slopes of Etna and 5 ha on Favignana, the latter being especially distinctive because of their proximity to the beach. As a company they concentrate on native varieties and here on Favignana they grow the white grapes Grillo and Zibibbo, as well as some of the interesting red variety Perricone. Until the arrival of Firriato, vines had not been grown on the island for a hundred years; our hosts were unsure sure what would have been grown then but they think it might have been Grillo.

We were first greeted with an excellent seafood lunch accompanied by several of Firriato's wines, which were generally stylish and well made. After lunch we had a very comprehensive tasting of their wines before being transported to the vineyard by the sort of fun toy train you get at seaside resorts.

The vineyard on Favignana is five years old, planted on a limestone and red sand soil, heavy with marine fossils (in the distant past it had been under the sea). The vines are trained in the Alberello (bush) style to protect them from the very strong winds that come off the sea, only a few metres away. A surrounding wall provides an additional windbreak. The sea brings another problem - that of protecting the vines from salt; as the waves hit the rocks the sea salt is nebulised.

The soil also makes it difficult for the vine to extract the iron it needs so there are some issues with chlorosis. Our hosts explained that this tended to give more elegant wines but it was a challenging environment for them to work in. To compensate a little they use Fercal, a lime-resistant rootstock that helps the plant to get iron. Birds can be a problem here too – this is the only vineyard on the island and it is a very attractive source of food.

They only get 350-400mm of rainfall each year, so irrigation is used when necessary but it is directed at the roots of the vine rather than at the leaves which could cause rot. They believe the wines from this vineyard have a salty, mineral flavour that comes from the close proximity to the sea. Once harvested, the grapes are even transported by boat to the winery at Trapani. The wine made here hasn't yet got a label but it will be IGT quality status.

Tasting with Erice Doc – Jane Boyce MW

I can definitely say this is the first time I have travelled to a wine tasting in, first, a “ noddy” train, then a hydrofoil and then a coach! The Fazio winery team had kindly agreed to host the tasting of wines from various Cantine within the Erice DOC. We were greeted by Vincenzo Fazio, Presidente of the Strada del Vino Erice and his wife Roberta. Then Dott. Lilly Ferro Fazio gave us an interesting summary of the history and geography of the DOC Erice. Historical evidence shows that wine has been produced in the area for over 1,000 years. The DOC is situated in the top north western corner of Sicily just inland from Trapani and the vineyards are generally located on the hillsides at up to 500m. The Strada takes in Erice, Segesta (famous also for its ancient temple), Mozia, Scopello and San Vito lo Capo. The area has a rainfall of around 600 – 700 mm per annum so they don't need to irrigate (except in emergency situations). The whole focus is on the vineyard where they take great care in tending the vines.

The Fazio family own 100 hectares of vineyards and produce some IGPs (such as the Muller Thurgau) as well as DOC wines. Their UK agent is Vinissimo and their sales are split 60% domestic market, 40% export market. Japan is their biggest market.

Tasting

We tasted a wide range of wines from the DOC Erice producers. I have picked out a range of tasting notes to give a broad idea of the region.

Fazio winery

Wines I particularly liked:

- Muller Thurgau Vino Spumante Brut IGT Sicilia 2011 (10.5%Alc) – made from 100% Muller Thurgau grapes using the Charmat Method. The wine had a delightfully aromatic nose of ripe apple and peach. On the palate it was bone dry, lively with crisp acidity and a light, citrus finish. Well made, very clean, lean style – ideal as an aperitif.
- Calebianche DOC Erice 2011 (12.5% Alc) – 100% Cataratto Primary fruit on the nose with an aroma of creamy, Golden Delicious apples. Good balance on the palate, dry with a silky texture and fair concentration. Zesty, slightly pithy finish. A modern style white wine to be enjoyed young.
- Aegades DOC Erice 2011 (13% Alc) – 100% Grillo. An intense nose of greengages and gooseberry shows off the varietal characteristics of the native Grillo grape. Touch of CO₂ lends freshness to the palate which is broad with mouthfilling fruit. Fine texture, well integrated acidity gives it a softness yet the finish is clean, crisp, dry and long.
- Gabal IGT Sicilia 2010 (Gabal is the Arabic word for Erice) (13%Alc) – 100% Nero d'Avola. Intense chocolate and cherry on the nose with some vanilla notes. Very silky palate with good concentration of pure, ripe black fruit. Medium bodied, well balanced with good intensity. Modern style, well priced for export.

Not so keen on:

- Shiraz IGT Sicilia 2005 (14% Alc) – 100% Shiraz. Oxidised on the nose. Palate was dominated by dry tannins and oak. Black fruit was fading from mid palate leaving a spicy, yet dried out feel to the wine.

Cantine Fondo Antico

- Grillo Parlante 2011 IGT (13.5% Alc) – 100% Grillo grape. Well presented wine – good labels. Zesty aroma of gooseberries and pink grapefruit. A lively mouthfilling style with crisp acidity, fair concentration and a clean, if slightly phenolic finish. Good value
- Chardonnay 2011 IGT (13.5% Alc) – 100% Chardonnay. Attractive, apple and citrus nose. Fine textured palate, balanced acidity, medium bodied with good typicity. Finish again a bit phenolic.

Cantine Terre di Bruca

- Chimirici (Zibibbo/Moscato 50/50) 2011 (11%) – orange blossom, aromatic, typical Muscat nose. Crisp, clean palate but lacks texture. The wine is a bit dilute and with such low acid grapes the wine needs either more mid palate concentration or higher natural acidity (vary picking times?)

Cantina Ericina

- Nativo Siciliano 2011 (13.5% Alc) – 100% Grillo – screwcap closure (good!) Lively, fresh gooseberry and citrus aroma. Pleasant, mouthfilling fruit, good balance but does not really develop on the palate. Short finish.

Custonaci lunch – Christy Canterbury MW

When our bus finally arrived at Grotta Mangiapane, we had all worked up an appetite. We began the day very early, leaving our quarry hotel on Favignana for the mini-train to the hydrofoil to Trapani, to a marathon tasting at Fazio and a touristic trek up and through Erice.

And, it is a very good thing we arrived hungry. A vertiable feast of olives, fresh breads, salads, sausage, bottarga and cheese lay waiting on picnic tables covered by shade. This was nothing more than an accompaniment to our aperitivi!

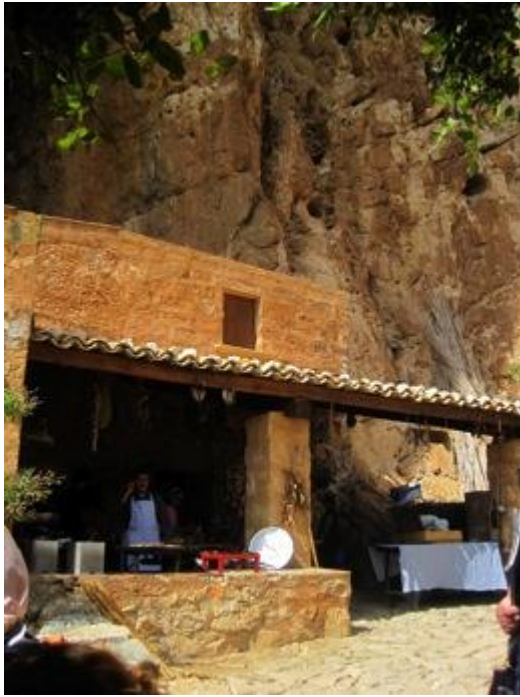




A selection of wines – some in very creative packaging – from Fondo Antico, Cantine Sicilione Riunite, Cantina Ericina and Duca di Salaparuta were available in a casual walk-around setting at one end of the table. During the lunch, fountains of rosato Aprile 2011 from Fondo Antico and the Grillo “Nativo Siciliano” 2011 from Cantina Ericina poured into glasses. Both were perfect for the setting and the food.



All the food was - impressively – cooked entirely over open flame.



First, there was fresh cheese.



Then, as we'd learned to expect, were two pasta courses. One in particular was beautifully handcrafted.



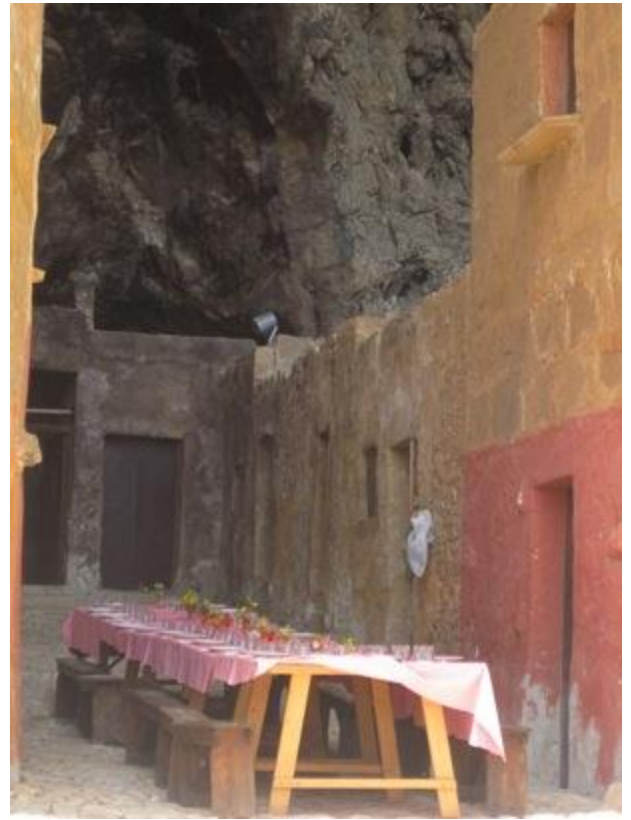
Then, at last, arrived the main course.



And, what is more appropriate to enjoy for dessert in Sicily than cannoli?



Not only was the food gloriously good, so was the backdrop where we enjoyed it.



The Grotta Mangiapane is named for the family who lived there from 1800 until the end of World War II. The Mangiapane were recent inhabitants; people have populated these caves

since the Paleolithic era. This cave is now a living museum focusing on anthropological and ethnographic exhibition. Our visit here was as delightful as it was unique.



PS I do wonder how they made the sorbetto without electricity....



Master of Wine Biographies

Ed Adams MW



Ed worked in retail (Chelsea Wine Brokers) in the mid-80s before moving to Vinos de España, the generic trade body for Spanish wines. He was a buyer at Co-op, Manchester 1987-94 before moving to Bridgnorth, Shropshire to work for Western Wines for 12 years. During his time there he helped create the South African brand Kumala and became QC and Purchasing director before benefitting from buyout by Canadian company Vincor. Since 2006 he has been working on the Spanish wine range La Báscula with South African winemaker and raconteur Bruce Jack, and they are now selling their wines in many markets.

Tim Atkin MW



Tim Atkin is an award-winning wine writer, photographer, show judge, teacher and lecturer. He is the co-chairman of the International Wine Challenge, publisher of timatkin.com and writes for publications in the UK, USA, Hong Kong and Australia.

Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW



Pedro has a degree in Engineering in the Food Industry from the Universidad Politécnica of Madrid, and a Masters in Viticulture and Oenology at the UPM. He writes in several wine magazines in Belgium, UK and Spain, is senior judge at the International Wine Challenge, the Concours Mondial Bruxelles, Mundus Vini and other international competitions, and acts as wine educator, advisor and prescriptor in several countries. He works in Spanish, English, French and Italian.

He also has a MBA in Energy Business. From 1984 to 1994 he worked as consultant in energy and environmental topics for European and United Nations institutions. He has worked at the European Commission since 1995, and as principal administrator since 2002.

Beverley Blanning MW



An independent wine journalist and author, Beverley is a regular feature writer and taster for Decanter magazine and writes for a number of publications internationally. She is the author of the latest wine guide in the 'Teach Yourself' series, 'Wine Tasting'. She contributed to Tom Stevenson's annual Wine Report and Jancis Robinson's Oxford Companion to Wine on the subject of wine and health, and is the author of 'Biodynamics in Wine'.

Beverley is an experienced competition judge. She also presents and educates about wine for private events, Christie's Wine Course and Decanter Education.

Passing the MW examination at her first attempt in 2001, she won the Villa Maria and Errazuriz awards. Beverley has been involved in education and events for the Institute, and served as a member of Council.

She lives in London with her husband and two young children. To read more, visit www.beverleyblanning.com.

Jane Boyce MW



Jane has 30 years' experience in the wine trade, spanning all sectors. In 2000 she became Ireland's first female Master of Wine and is still the only MW in Northern Ireland. Jane recently re-joined James Nicholson Wine Merchant as Fine Wine Manager after nearly twenty years working in a freelance capacity within the wine trade.

As a freelance, Jane wrote the wine column for the Licensed Catering News, Irish Tatler and Easy Food. She lectures widely on food and wine and has a consultancy and wine training position with the five star Merchant Hotel in Belfast. She runs her own popular wine courses at an art gallery close to her home. She is also wine consultant to Ross's Auction house in Belfast and has organised several highly successful wine auctions for them.

Jane speaks fluent French and can converse in German, Spanish and Russian. She lives in County Down with her husband Quentin and enjoys tennis, cooking and walking.

Christy Canterbury MW



Christy is a Master of Wine, Certified Sommelier, writer, buyer, and educator who lives in Manhattan. She was previously National Wine Director for Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group and Corporate Beverage Director for Culinary Concepts by Jean-Georges, where she opened and managed restaurants from Istanbul and Doha to Vancouver and Bora Bora. She worked as the Wine Acquisitions Director for Italian Wine Merchants, a high-end retail concept catering to wine collectors.

She is now a judge for many wine competitions including the Ultimate Wine Challenge; a contributing taster at vitis.com; an educator at Astor Center and San Francisco Wine Center; a panelist for Wine Enthusiast, TASTED and Wine & Spirits magazines; a contributing writer for Sommelier Journal and Beverage Media; the Wine Editor for the Garrubbo Guide and the Italy Wine Editor for the Professional Wine Reference.

Patrick Farrell MW



Patrick first became seriously interested in wine during the early 1990s, and became a Master of Wine in 1998. Patrick has been active in the Institute as an educator, mentor, examiner and past vice-president of the North American board. He's written chapters in a range of wine books. He's CEO of Inventive Technologies which makes pouring devices that decrease bite and bitterness in a range of beverages that have polyphenols (whiskey, red wine, oaked white wine, coffee, tea, vegetable and fruit juices). He's also a medical doctor board certified in internal medicine, ophthalmology and medical quality assurance. Patrick lives in Huntington Beach, California.

Alison Flemming MW



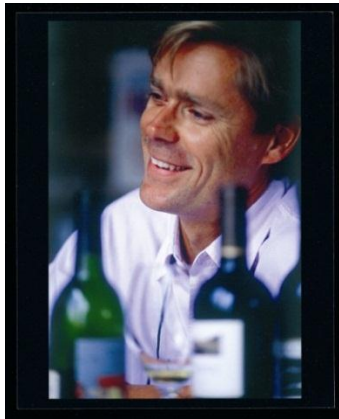
A career in wine came about by chance rather than design, with brief sojourns at Harrods, Mothercare and potato futures trading. Languages degrees (French, German and Italian) helped with wine name pronunciation considerably.

By a circuitous route Ali ended up in Germany having started off in the far north of Scotland, exchanging the charmed life of a buyer for the less respectable life of a salesperson. Penultimate role at Thierry's enhanced knowledge of French cartography, Argentinian barbecues and the meaning of life in relation to the UK supermarket trade.

Romance with a German chef improved Air Miles status and resulted in ultimate relocation to preserve sanity. Contact with the UK continues as Export Sales Director for Reh Kendermann based at the confluence of three German wine-producing regions. Apart from the day job, other involvements include,lecturing WSET Diploma in Germany, holding tastings, seminars and culinary wine events, as well as translating wine and food texts.

Hobbies include eating my way around the Michelin starred restaurants of Europe and ironing.

John Hoskins MW



John Hoskins was born into a family of hoteliers but had no intention of joining his relations, studying English literature instead. He was drawn in by the lure of wine – enticed by the combined requirements of hedonism, academic interest and an understanding of business.

He took over wine-buying for his family’s company and in 1994 became the first person in the restaurant business to pass the notorious “Master of Wine” exams. In the same year he formed his own company, Huntsbridge - a group of Chef-run restaurants offering top quality wine and food within an informal environment. He now owns one hotel-restaurant, The Old Bridge at Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire and a gastro-pub nearby, The Pheasant at Keyston. In 2008 he opened a wine shop at the hotel. For more information see www.huntsbridge.com

Susan Hulme MW



Susan became a Master of Wine in 2005 and runs her own wine training business, Vintuition Ltd. She is also a consultant and wine educator. From 2005 to 2008, Susan was the Chairman of the Association of Wine Educators (AWE). Since 2007 she has been the editor of the AWE newsletter. She is a panel chair judge for the International Wine Challenge and judges for the Decanter World Wine Awards. She is also a regular contributor to Decanter tasting panels. She is a member of the Circle of Wine Writers and in the past has assisted in editing the Hachette Wine Guide. Susan has taught WSET courses for many years and has lectured at Diploma level and been a Diploma examiner.

She has been a member of the Institute's Events Committee since 2007.

Before entering the wine trade, Susan worked for the British Council in Naples, and has also worked in Sicily and Bari. She has a special affinity for the wines of Italy.

Paul Liversedge MW



Paul was first attracted to wine whilst working as a cellar hand in Chateau Loudenne in the Medoc after leaving university. He then trained as an accountant with KPMG before becoming a wine buyer for Thresher. After 7 years with Thresher he moved to Watsons Wine Cellar, Hong Kong's leading wine retailer, where he was promoted to General Manager. Four years later an opportunity to work as fine wine buyer for Watsons' fine wine arm – Badaracco – tempted him to relocate to Switzerland.

In 2008 he set up his own wine business in Zurich, selling premium New World and French wines within Switzerland (Real Wines), and sourcing and selling fine wines internationally (Wine Cellars International). Within the wine industry he specialises in fine wine import/export, New Zealand and Australian premium wine import and distribution and is a specialist in retailing French wines – the less well known the region the better – with a particular passion for natural wines and focus on biodynamic wine producers.

He has a love of most sports, particularly football, tennis and golf, as well as taking on the occasional challenge such as marathon-running in Bordeaux or swimming across Swiss lakes at breathtakingly slow speed.

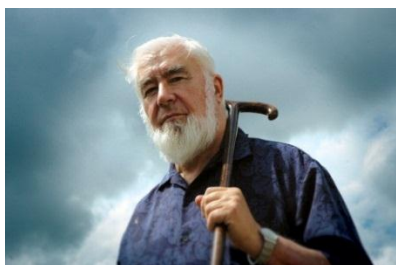
Angela Muir MW



Angela has spent 41 years in the wine business of which eight were spent with John Harvey and Sons wine merchant division in Bristol 1970-1978; Vintners' Scholarship 1977; 10 years senior overseas buyer for Grants of St. James and Victoria Wine (1978-1988) including a directorship of Hatch, Mansfield; MW 1980, subsequent MW education committee member finishing with a year as chairman, past President, Wine and Spirit Association, past Trustee, Wine and Spirit Education Trust.

She has now semi-retired from running Cellarworld International Ltd. whose core business is to help people make their wine more saleable. Until the last 18 months or so, this has kept her working out of the UK for around 9 months of the year mainly in Europe including central and eastern European countries, and South America. She mainly managed winemaking projects but also undertook some more straightforward consulting jobs. Angelas is currently chairing Decanter magazine's DWWA Central and Eastern European and Other Mediterranean panels. She is the director of Oeneo SA and Amphora Design Ltd. Lastly she is still working with a number of friends helping them understand and develop their individual styles of wine.

John Salvi MW



John has spent 42 years in the wine trade and is an active professional taster, wine consultant and wine writer. He is the President of the Wine and Spirit Association of Great Britain and is on the board of Directors of Allan Sichel Ltd and Sales Director Maison Sichel and Mähler-Besse. John took the diploma of Oenology under Emile Peynaud in 1957-9 and became a Master of Wine 1970.

He is a member of the Travellers Club, Fédération Internationale de Journalistes et Ecrivains de Vin (FIJEV), Association Française de la Presse de Gastronomie et Tourisme (AFPGT), Association Professionnelle des Chroniqueurs et Infomateurs de la Gastronomie et du Vin (APCIG), Association de la Presse du Vin (APV), Club des Gastronomes de la France, Circle of Wine Writers, Press Club of Bordeaux.

John represents Great Britain at the International Union of Oenologists and is a member of a Committee of Experts of the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV). He is an Officer of the Commanderie du Bontemps de Médoc et des Graves, Sauternes et Barsac and a member of the Jurade of Saint Emilion. He is also a member of the International Academy of Wine and of the Academie du Vin de Bordeaux.

Mark Savage MW



Mark Savage was born in Uganda in 1949 and educated at Ampleforth College and University College Oxford (MA Classics). He was president of the Oxford University Wine Circle and a member of the Oxford University Blind Wine Tasting Team.

After leaving Oxford, he gained varied experience with Moët & Chandon, Harrods, OW Loeb & Co. and Tanners of Shrewsbury before establishing his own business in 1975 after receiving the Vintners Scholarship in that year. Mark was awarded the inaugural Champagne Ruinart Bursary in order to research the wine industry in the USA Pacific Northwest. Mark became a Master of Wine in 1980.

He has served as a judge on several occasions for the Enological Society of the Pacific North West, the International Wine Challenge and Decanter World Wine Awards. He was also a director of the first International Pinot Noir Celebration held in Oregon in 1987 and is a regular visitor to the vineyards of that region as well as those of California, Washington State and Idaho.

His special responsibilities in Europe have included UK representation of Chateau Tertre Roteboeuf in St Emilion since 1982. Other specialised areas of interest include Austria, Hungary and Slovenia, Piedmont and South Africa.

As owner and managing director of Savage Selection Ltd he currently works directly with about 50 small family wine estates in a dozen different countries. He has served for 10 years as an advisor to HM Government Hospitality Fund and is consultant to Winefields Auction House in Amsterdam. He is the author of 'The Red Wines of Burgundy' (Octopus Press) and is an occasional contributor to 'The World of Fine Wine' and 'The Drinks Business'.

Peter Scudamore-Smith MW



Peter Scudamore-Smith MW is the founder and director of Uncorked and Cultivated, an Australian wine consultancy delivering tailored vineyard and winery advisory services in the eastern Australian states. It provides wine expertise to several Australian wine exporters who focus on East Asia. His judging experience includes over 66 wine shows where he has held positions as chief judge and panel chair. Peter's expertise relating to Australian wine styles, both pre-and post-millennial, is in high demand. His country specialities are France, Italy, Australia and New Zealand. He has recently extended his firm's business to conducting tours of Italian wine producing regions and plays strong roles in private wine education.

Peter is respected for his critique, presentation, production and journalism of table and sparkling wines of the world. His 1985 award of 'Vin de Champagne', made by the Champagne industry, was not paralleled by another Queensland wine professional until twenty years later. Peter regularly blogs on table and sparkling wines from all continents and regularly visits Europe. He was born in Kingaroy, Queensland, and educated at Toowoomba Grammar School. He graduated as an industrial chemist from the University of Southern Queensland in 1970. He has an oenology degree awarded by Charles Sturt University, New South Wales, in 1983, and Master of Wine in 1991.

Lynne Sherriff MW



Lynne was elected Chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine in 2010, the first South African to hold the post. She is an independent wine consultant based in London who consults to a number of global blue chip companies on production, blending and market requirements.

Having originally trained as a winemaker, from 1991-2000 she was Commercial Director of Vinfruco Ltd, South Africa, and conceived the Arniston Bay lifestyle concept in 1996. From 1990-1991 she served as Director of the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Academy. Lynne is also a respected figure on the international judging circuit.

Jane Skilton MW



Jane Skilton began her wine career over 25 years ago in London and passed her Master of Wine examination in 1993. She is a member of the IMW Council. She moved to Auckland in 2000 and is one of only two female MWs based in New Zealand.

Jane is the Wine Columnist for the Sunday Star Times, NZ's largest selling newspaper, Wine Editor for the Food Magazine and contributes to a number of wine publications both in New Zealand and overseas. She enjoys wine judging and in addition to being Chairman of the Gisborne Regional Wine Show, judges the Hawke's Bay A&P Show, the Spiegelau Wine Competition, The Royal Easter Wine Show and the NZ International Wine Show. In 2003 she was invited to Tokyo to judge the Japan Wine Challenge, Asia's largest wine show, and has been the guest International Judge at the 2004 Australian Small Winemakers Show, 2006 Rutherglen Wine Show and 2008 Margaret River Wine Show. She is a director of the NZ School of Wines and Spirits, teaching both WSET and general wine courses to trade and interested consumers. Her own website is www.mottledoyster.co.nz.

Mai Tjemsland MW



Mai holds a Bachelor degree in Business Economy from Oslo and has worked for over 25 years as a manager with varying roles within the hospitality business, including positions at the Norwegian Embassy in Paris, Marriott Marquis in the US, the QE2, SAS Airlines and has owned a group of restaurants in Oslo for over a decade.

She became certified Sommelier in 1996 WSET Diploma in 2004 and Master of Wine in 2009. She now works as a lecturer teaching WSET Diploma students, Master of Wine students and is a part of the Master of Wine Institute Educational Committee.

Mai consults as wine buyer for Norway's largest brewery, conducts tastings held for international producers and importers and is a frequent speaker at key trade events.

Mai is a born globetrotter, speaks five languages and has travelled to the four corners of the globe including all the main wine producing areas. She is passionate about wine and travel and shares her experiences by feature writing in key consumer publications.

Anne Tupker MW



Anne was born in the United States, but moved to London in 1976. Her wine career began in the late 1980s, following thirteen years at Reader's Digest in New York and London and ten years as a full time mother. She founded Bouquet Wines in 1990 and passed the Master of Wine examination in 1997, winning the Sainsbury Prize for her dissertation on Cool Climate Viticulture and the Madame Bollinger Medal for wine tasting.

Anne acted as wine consultant for Sally Clarke's restaurant in London from 1998 – 2005, in addition to other consulting activities, and has sat on the wine committee of the Hurlingham Club since 1997. She is also involved in wine education and organising wine tastings and trips for small groups to classic wine regions. As a member of the Institute of Masters of Wine's events committee since 1998, she has organised the annual Burgundy and Rhône tastings since 2003 and in 2008 helped organise a two-week trip for Masters of Wine to both these regions.

Jean-Michel Valette MW



Jean-Michel Valette is chairman of San Francisco based Vinfolio which enables fine wine enthusiasts to buy, sell and manage their collections online. In addition he is also chairman of Peet's Coffee & Tea and of Select Comfort as well as a director of Huneus Vintners. When he is not on a phone or in a meeting, Jean-Michel likes mountains, riding his bike and tending to his bread.

Jean-Michel is vice chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine.