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TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2012

## 08/21/2012 - The Rhythm of Guitar and Wine from Italy - Peppino D'Agostino and the Sicilian Harvest

To listen to this show, go to - <http://crntalk.com/podcast/slr/2012/slr-08-21-2012.mp3>

This week we celebrate the start of the Sicilian wine harvest that launched with a midnight harvest at Donnafugato Winery. Our guest, Alessandro Sblendola, MS, who owns Alex Italian Restaurant in Rutherford will enlighten us on the wonderful wines of Sicily.

As Donnafugata have a special place in their hearts for music and wine, or "Tasting in Jazz", what better than to bring to the show an Italian musician who likens his music to the culinary artistry of Italy. We are very excited to welcome Peppino D'Agostino, the coveted Italian Acoustic Guitarist who now brings his Italian musical sense of "passion" to the US where he resides. Hear his story and his music with us.

**Peppino D'Agostino**  
<http://peppinodagostino.com/>

*"The music Peppino Creates is like him: generous, lyrical and abundant." ~ Pierre Bensusan.*

Peppino D'Agostino doesn't just play the guitar. He composes, arranges, collaborates, improvises and has even been known to sing a song here and there in both English and Italian. But what he does create on the guitar makes the difference between simply playing and truly making music apparent in the most wonderful ways.

D'Agostino has been hailed as "a guitarist's guitarist" by Acoustic Guitar magazine as well as "a giant of the acoustic guitar" (San Diego Reader), and holds many top guitar awards, but the San Francisco Chronicle encapsulated the essential difference that distinguishes D'Agostino's music when it dubbed him "a poet."



A native of Italy, D'Agostino has made his considerable international mark as a musical artist on the guitar since he arrived in America a little over 25 years ago. The readers of Guitar Player voted him Best Acoustic Guitarist in 2007, and the following year in Acoustic Guitar's People's Choice Awards he won a Bronze medal for Best Acoustic Album of All Time for his 2002 release Every Step of The Way (tying with Leo Kottke, one of his prime inspirations) and another Bronze award as Fingerstyle Guitarist of the Year. But as said above, it's not just his talent that makes D'Agostino so notable, but also what he does with it.

How has D'Agostino earned such high praise and honors? "Music is not only what you know musically, but also what you experience in life, because it is a reflection of our personalities and spirit," he explains. In his playing and writing one feels his heart, spirit, soul and essence as well as your own.

He began playing guitar at the age of 10 when he heard his cousin play in church. After D'Agostino got a few lessons from the cousin, he embarked on a journey of self-study and further exploration on the guitar and in music that continues today. So in addition to his "technical prowess" (Guitar One), he displays a stunning stylistic range in his work that spans classical to

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  - ▶ September (3)
  - ▼ August (4)
    - 08/28/2012 - Behind "The French Laundry" Doors - C...
    - 08/21/2012 - The Rhythm of Guitar and Wine from It...
    - 08/14/2012 - International Scottish Jazz Performer...
    - 08/07/2012 - The Spirit of Italy Comes Alive in Sa...
  - ▶ July (5)
  - ▶ June (4)
  - ▶ May (3)
  - ▶ April (3)
  - ▶ March (5)
  - ▶ February (4)
  - ▶ January (5)
- ▶ 2011 (45)
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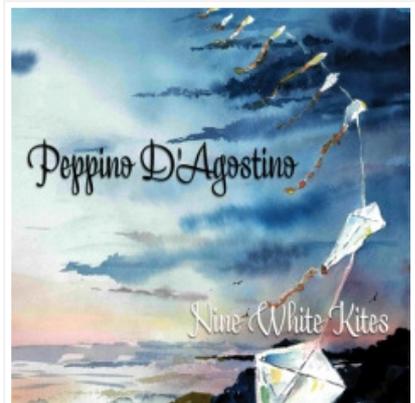


pop music and incorporates a spectrum of folk, ethnic and world styles. From his teens into his twenties, D'Agostino learned about and absorbed many musical colors and flavors, being so enthralled with all to know about music and his chosen instrument that he went AWOL one night from the Italian Army to catch a concert by some acoustic guitarists he admired.

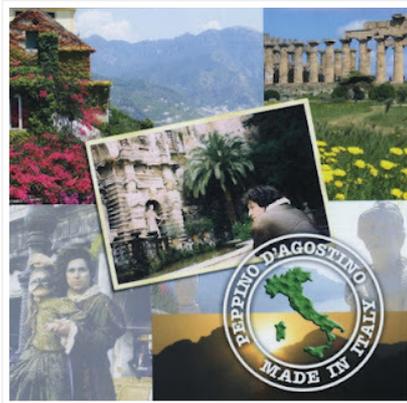
After making his recorded mark in his homeland with his first album *Bluerba* in 1981 and *Silk and Steel* two years later, he moved to America in 1985. Starting out by performing in the streets and on Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, he graduated to playing in restaurants and then clubs and concerts after a fellow musician introduced D'Agostino to a booking agent.

He made his American recording debut in 1987 with *Acoustic Spirit* on Shanachie Records, and has since issued six more albums prior to *Nine White Kites*, the most recent being *Made in Italy*, a musical travelogue through the songs and composers of the country where he was born and came of age.

He has also released three instructional/performance DVDs as well as the book *New Acoustic Guitar* (Warner Bros. Publications), and also designed his signature Seagull guitar with innovative guitar maker Robert Godin that won a Silver People's Choice Award for Acoustic Guitar of the Year from *Acoustic Guitar* magazine in 2008. A hot ticket live performer in North and South America and Europe, he charms audiences with performances that are captivating and full-blooded musical experiences.



"I play Brazilian music, Irish music, country music, blues, ragtime, classical," he says of just some of the many styles heard within what he creates. Inspired by such diverse players as Paco de Lucia, Leo Kottke and Carlos Santana, among many others, his influences also include the progressive rockers like Genesis, Emerson Lake & Palmer, Gentle Giant and Mike Oldfield he listened to in his teens and early adulthood.



D'Agostino likens his musical approach to the culinary artistry of his native Italy. "If you only know about tomatoes, garlic and basil, you will only make a certain kind of sauce. But if you know about maybe thyme, parsley, onions and olives, you make a different kind of recipe. But you have to know how to mix those elements with discretion and elegance." The results provide a delectable and nutritious listening experience for music lovers of all tastes that brings D'Agostino satisfaction that radiates throughout his self-dubbed "Minestrone music". For as he says, "Our job as musicians is to try to do what we love.

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### Donnafugata: Sicilian Wine Producer

<http://www.donnafugata.it>



Donnafugata was founded in Sicily by an enterprising family with 150 years experience in premium wines. Giacomo Rallo and wife Gabriella, daughter José and son Antonio are engaged in an entrepreneurial project with a focus on attention to detail and synchronizing people

and nature to make wines that correspond increasingly more to the potential of this area.

The Donnafugata adventure began in the Rallo family's historic cellars in Marsala in 1983 and at its Contessa Entellina vineyards in the heart of western Sicily. In 1989, Donnafugata arrived on the island of Pantelleria, commencing its production of naturally sweet wines.

Donnafugata believes that great wine reflects the land of its origin. nature of the soil, exposure, altitude, climate and vines are the principle variables for producing wines which express their belonging to unique terroirs.



Donnafugata has supported for many years a range of projects for promoting both culture and the territory: archaeological excavations, literary prize, solidarity and micro credit projects



#### ***The Midnight Harvest.***

To watch the night harvest begin click on <http://donnafugatalive.com/>

Nocturnal harvesting takes exploits the difference in temperature between day and night typical of the micro climate of the Contessa Entellina area: a technique involving targeted and precision oenology that aims to protect the environment and grape quality

Nocturnal harvesting at Contessa Entellina is a technique involving targeted viticulture and precision oenology, adopted in **1998** for the following reasons:

1. **Chardonnay** is the first variety to ripen in August, in Sicily. During the day, the temperature is high - sometimes reaching 35 °C. This increases the risk of undesirable fermentation of the grapes during transport from the vineyard to the cellar, as well as the loss of some aromas during grape pressing. At night, however, the temperature drops to 16-18 °C, **preserving the full aromatic content of the grapes.**
2. At Donnafugata the white grapes are cooled and pressed at a temperature of about 10 °C. Harvesting at night **reduces the energy used** for cooling the grapes **by 70%.**
3. Nocturnal harvesting is also **less tiring for the grape pickers.**

**Did you know?** The Chardonnay harvest at Donnafugata often coincides with the earliest grape

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picking in the northern hemisphere.

#### Alessandro Sbrendola

Alex Italian Restaurant, Rutherford, CA  
[www.alexitalianrestaurant.com](http://www.alexitalianrestaurant.com)

A native of Forlì in Emilia-Romagna (60 miles from Florence), Alessandro Sbrendola has always had a "big passion" for restaurants and hospitality. Everything started when he saw a picture of "La Tour d'Argent" in the prestigious magazine "Wine Spectator". He was only 12 years old when he fell in love with that restaurant and decided he had to go there. Since then he started working hard and attending the best Restaurant Management and Hospitality School in Italy becoming soon one of the best students, and a Master Sommelier by the age of 25. While studying for his diploma, Alessandro started working in several Michelin-starred restaurants in Italy such as "L'Albereta" with Gualtiero Marchesi in Franciacorta, "La Frasca" in Castrocaro, "Enoteca Pinchiorri" in Florence without forgetting "La Tour d'Argent" in Paris.



In January 1997 following his passion for food and wine, Alessandro decided to move to California. Summoned by Piero Selvaggio he started working at the prestigious "Valentino Restaurant" in Santa Monica where every year he achieved the Wine Spectator's Grand Award and from 2000 to 2002 he brought the titles of "Best Wine List in America" and "Best Wine Cellar in America" to Valentino. His work has also been honored with the "Wine Spectator Award of Excellence" at such notable restaurants as "Enoteca Drago", "Dolce Group" (which he opened in 2003 for Ashton Kutcher) and "L'Orangerie". In addition to training professional sommeliers through his Wine Street operation, Sbrendola also served as wine manager at two of Steve Wynn's hotels in Las Vegas for two years. Just prior to coming to Napa, he opened an Italian Restaurant in one of the properties of Mr. Rick Caruso one of the most important developers and retail operators in Southern California.

With nearly 25 years of experience, he wanted to bring his passion for fine food and wine to the Napa Valley, and the beautiful space in the heart of Rutherford has finally given him that opportunity.

"Napa Valley is where you find equal expression of both wine and food and people come here to enjoy both", says Alessandro.

Posted by [Simply Sal](#) at 3:19 PM

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