

A Wine Lover's Diary, part 344: Viva Sicilia (May 30, 2011)

Monday, May 16: Wrote up my wine reviews for *Tidings* magazine and then down to The Fine Wine Reserve to taste **The Little Grape That Could** wines that the LCBO will carry in late September. A white and a red from Argentina's Mendoza Valley that will sell for \$10.95-\$11.20 and proceeds to charity.

- **The Little Grape That Could Torrontes 2010:** pale straw colour with a fragrant nose of honeysuckle and orange; exotic orange and cardamom flavours; full on the palate with lively acidity. Finishes dry with a grapey, Muscat taste (87).
- **The Little Grape That Could Cabernet Sauvignon 2010:** deep ruby colour; cedar, redcurrant, plum nose; mouth-filling blackcurrant and redcurrant flavours; soft and round on the palate with a dry finish; medium-bodied with good acidity and a firm tannic finish (87).

For dinner, pork loin with **Castello di Neive Barbaresco 2008**.

Tuesday, May 17: The German Wine fair this year is called Riesling & Co. and it's held at the Horizons Lounge atop the CN Tower. The weather is terrible, rain without end, so the view isn't great.

Old friends Rainer Lingenfelder, Nik Weis and Fritz Hasselbach are here to pour their wines. Twenty-seven wineries pouring. Not the best venue for a table-top tasting since the room was hot and crowded. But what a pleasure to taste a range of wines of 8.5% alcohol for a change.

Best wines tasted:

- **Weingüter Weigler Bernkastel Doctor Riesling Spätlese 2009**
- **St. Urbans-Hof Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese 2009**
- **Weingut Studert-Prüm Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese 2007**

Enjoyed **Dr. Loosen Villa Wolf Pinot Noir 2007**. Two fascinatingly seductive wines from Weinhaus Jean Buscher: Sleeping Beauty Muskateller und Gewürztraminer and Sleeping Beauty Dornfelder und Rosenmuskateller. Then over to Forte's restaurant for a corporate tasting. Passed hors d'oeuvres matched with the following wines:

- **Tawse Echos Riesling 2009**
- **Waterford Chardonnay 2009**
- **Villa Maria Sauvignon Blanc 2010**
- **Te Wairira Pinot Noir**
- **Porta Cabernet Sauvignon 2006**

Wednesday, May 18: Today Deborah and I fly to Rome, then on to Palermo for an 11-day wine tour with 21 wine lovers. But first a quick trip down to La Maquette to see Mario Schwenn and his series of Dolcettos. Three hundred and fifty families own some 1500 acres, 90% of which are planted with Dolcetto. They work co-operatively. The wines are made by Roberto Boeri.

The wines have a dry cherry flavour with a characteristic bitterness. Well-priced and food-friendly. While I was tasting, Deborah dropped Pinot the Wonder Dog off at our former dog walker's house in Burlington, where she will stay till our return.

To the airport to catch the Alitalia flight to Rome. We meet up with Stephen Pauwels, whose company, Pauwels Travel, arranged the logistics of our wine trip to Sicily. On the flight the stewards run out of wine and we eat a bizarre meal – smoked fish salad, followed by halibut with potatoes and ravioli. No salt and pepper on my tray.

Thursday, May 19: Arrive in Rome, and then have to connect to Palermo. We meet up with the rest of the group, who have spent time in Rome. At Palermo airport they put our luggage through a scanner on the way out although we are arriving here on a domestic flight.



The three-legged Medusa symbol of Sicily

A bus is waiting to drive us to our hotel, the Centrale Palace Hotel on Corso Vittorio Emanuele in the heart of Palermo. En route we pick up our guide, Francesca. We take a short walking tour around the city to visit the north gate and the Palace.

Lunch in Piazza Boligni a few metres from our hotel at Trattoria Primavera. Over a couple of bottles of **Sallier de la Tour Inzolio 2009** (they spell Inzolio here interchangeably with Insolio), I demolish a plate of the local vegetable dish – a mix of eggplant, celery, zucchini, olives and capers in a tomato sauce served warm (they call it caponeta and we are destined to have it at every meal) and a plate of spaghetti vongole, with two of our group and the guide Francesca. I manage to spill olive oil on my pale blue T-shirt and Francesca gets some talcum powder from the waiter and sprinkles it liberally over the spot. It miraculously disappears in a few minutes. The manager of the restaurant appears with four glasses of a local liqueur made with cinnamon made by Fiasconnaro.



Palermo's north gate



Sicilian desserts

After lunch the group walks to the Palazzo Normanni to see the lovely mosaics in the chapel and then to the Cathedral. Crossing the roads in Palermo, I have found, is an extreme sport, akin to the running of the bulls. Scooters and cars come at you from every direction. Francesca tells us that the insurance rates for scooters are even higher than those for small cars. To pay less, male scooter owners have their insurance registered in small towns outside Palermo under their grandfather's name.

We all meet before dinner in the reception room for a glass of **Valdo Prosecco**. Stephen Pauwels had arranged for a buffet dinner in the hotel's restaurant at 7:30 pm. When we go upstairs they tell us the restaurant doesn't open until 8 pm and the dinner will be a sit-down affair. The wines I had chosen for the meal a couple of weeks before by email didn't appear. But it is a fun evening notwithstanding.

The wines: **Abbazia Santa Anastasia Baccante 2008** (Grillo and Chardonnay) and **Regaleali Nero d'Avola 2008**.

The menu: an antipasto of pumpkin, onion and mint, eggplant, radicchio and zucchini and olives followed by pasta in tomato sauce and then lamb. A dessert of cannoli.



The Square of Shame

Friday, May 20: After breakfast many of us walked over to the Four Corners, where Francesca explained the symbolism of the statuary representing the four seasons and the four kings of Sicily. Then to the Tuscan fountain in the Square of Shame, so named, apparently, because of the nudity of the 36 statues representing the Greek and Roman gods. Then we drove to the local fruit, vegetable and fish market, where I bought a couple of packs of capers in salt. Then to the opera house. The last time I was here was 46 years ago, when I attended a performance of *Andrea Chenier*.



Aubergines in Palermo's market



Fresh tuna in the market

The bus took us up to Monreale to see the church of Santa Maria La Nuova, said to house the second largest expanse of mosaics after the Saint Sofia mosque in Istanbul. The mosaics here are truly amazing. There was a wedding in progress and outside a man waited to release a flock of doves for the couple as they left the church. Unfortunately, we couldn't wait to see this, as we were destined to drive to the seaside town of Modello for lunch.



Mosaics in Monreale

The sea here has incredible shades of blue and aquamarine colours. We chose a restaurant recommended to us by Francesca called Da Sariduu. We ordered fish balls in tomato sauce and octopus to start with a bottle of **Feudi del Pisciotto Grillo 2008**. I ordered spaghetti marinara, then we had another bottle of the same. At the next table a couple on our tour were celebrating their anniversary and they ordered a whole fish for the four of them. So we partook of that too.

Drove back to Palermo and shopped with Deborah at a department store called La Rinascente. Deborah bought a dress and I a linen shirt. I returned to the hotel to write up my notes and she continued shopping and has not returned yet – which does not bode well.

Dinner in a restaurant across the road from our hotel – *Officina del Gusto*. We had invited one of the owners of Cusumano, Diego Cusumano, to have dinner with us and show us his wines. We started with **Cusumano Angimbé 2010** (a blend of Inzolia and Chardonnay) with antipasti of smoked red snapper with basil sauce, eggplant, onion and potato and octopus salad. With the vegetable risotto, **Cusumano Jalé Chardonnay 2010**, followed by pasta with fish, pine nuts and tomato with **Cusumano Cubía Insolia 2009**. Then Tuna with **Cusumano Pinot Nero 2008** and **Cusumano Sàgana Nero d'Avola 2008**. I wanted to taste Diego's Nero d'Avola and Syrah blend called *Denuara* and Diego obliged. Dessert: **Cusumano Moscato dello Zucco** with pistachio semi-freddo. Then back to the hotel for a grappa before bed.



Lunch wine



Diego Cusumano

Saturday, May 21: Today the world is going to end, according to Harold Egbert, president of Family Radio, a California-based Christian broadcasting network. We are off to Regaleali in Valledlunga, a two-hour drive into the interior on windy roads. We are met at Regaleali ("Ali's farm" – from the Arabic) by the hospitality director, Sacha Stancampiano, who has given up his Saturday to be with us rather than spending time in Palermo with his girlfriend. He explains as he tours us around the winery that the Tasca family had half their lands confiscated without compensation after World War II and given to the poor. They now farm 500 hectares on which fifty varieties are planted, as well as wheat, olives, vegetables, etc. Fabrizia Tasca runs a famous cooking school here and all the food we are served at lunch was grown on the estate.

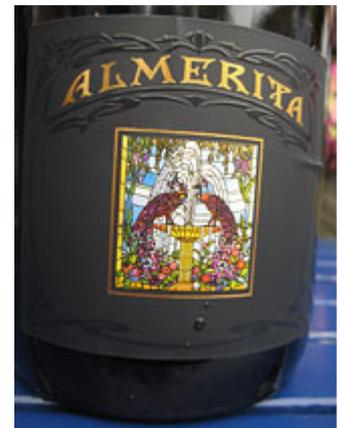


The courtyard at Regaleali

In the cellar we have a sit-down tasting of four wines:

- **Regaleali White 2010** (Cattaratto, Inzolia, Grecanico)
- **Regaleali Nozze d'Oro 2009** (Inzolia, Sauvignon Tasca – Sauvignon Blanc that has been planted on the estate for over 100 years). This wine was created by Giuseppe Tasca as a surprise for his wife to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary and was so popular they continued to produce it.
- **Regaleali Sallier de la Tour Syrah La Monaca 2008**
- **Regaleali Rosso del Conte 2006** (Nero d'Avola and 20% of the best red variety that vintage)

In the cobbled courtyard we had a pre-lunch glass of **Almerita Spumante 2007** (made from Chardonnay), served with panella made from chick pea flour, croquettes of béchamel and ham and deep-fried vinegar-cured sardines. Lunch in the dining room: sardine pasta with pine nuts with **Tasca d'Almeria Leone d'Almerita 2010** (Cattaratto and Chardonnay). Then into the dining room for a series of courses: pasta with eggplant, tomato and ricotta with **Tasca d'Almerita Lauri Nero d'Avola 2009**; lamb, sausage, potatoes, eggplant, and olives and cheese with **Tenuta Regaleali Cygnus 2008** (Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon), followed by cannoli.



Regaleali's Almerita

Back to the hotel in time to change for dinner. A free evening. Five of us opt to walk over to a restaurant called Tinto, which proves to be much further than we thought. Eventually we find it after passing a square where a rock concert is in progress (it turns out it's a celebration of Gay Pride, according to the taxi driver who drives us back to the hotel after dinner). We order antipasti and pizzas. We ask the owner how large the pizzas are and he draws a small circle with his hands which suggests we should order one each. When they arrive they are big enough to satisfy three appetites each. I order a bottle of **Spatafora Cor di Leone Fiano Chardonnay 2009** and **Spatafora Cor di Leone Rubinia 2008** (Nero d'Avola). We manage to consume these plus an extra bottle of **Villa dell'Acate Il Frappato 2008**. Mercifully, the world did not end today.

Sunday, May 22: We leave the hotel at 8:30 am en route to Trapani and Erice. It's raining heavily and lasts most of the day with a brief respite after lunch. En route we visit the remains of the Greek temple at Segesta, which was built in 5th century BC by Athenians but never finished. We trek up to the temple in the rain and stand while our guide explains the history of the structure.



Greek temple at Segesta

Thoroughly wet, we return to the bus for a tour of the port city of Trapani. There is a promontory at the western end of the city that is the dividing point between the Tyrrhenian and Mediterranean seas. The city is famous for its salt pans. We drive up a tortuous road 750 metres to the hilltop town of Erice, where there used to be a shrine to Aphrodite, the fertility goddess, and a cult of priestess-prostitutes who serviced the sailors who arrived at the port below.

We lunch at Ristorante Monte S. Giuliano. I order **Planeta Segreta 2010** (Grecanico, Chardonnay and Viognier) and **Donnafugata Angheli Merlot Nero d'Avola 2006** for the couscous with red snapper with caponeta and a spicy tomato and fish sauce and a plate of swordfish, cuttlefish and prawns. Dessert: cassata and semi-freddo.

The rain has mercifully stopped as we walk around the cobbled streets of Erice and visit the pasticceria di Maria Grammatico, famous for its dolce. Stephen Pauwels buys a bottle of **Carlo Horner Malvasia di Lipari** and **Pelegriano Marsala Rubino Fine Dolce** (a red Marsala made from Nero d'Avola) which we sample of the bus to Kempinski Hotel in Mazara del Vallo, where we will stay for two nights. We meet for a glass of **Lanzara Costanza Spumante Extra Dry** (Grecanico) in the bar before dinner. A set meal of Parma ham and Robinola cheese with Ennese cheese and balsamic sauce on arugula (which they call rocket), risotto with mushrooms and truffle oil, homemade bustiatino pasta with eggplant and pork ragout, roasted Angus beef with sautéed potatoes and oregano cherry tomatoes, followed by tiramisù. The wines: **Spatafora Cor di Leone Fiano 2010** and **Cusumano Syrah 2009**.



Erice street

Monday, May 23: Awoke to sunshine, blessed relief. After breakfast two-thirds of the group left in the bus for a tour, tasting and lunch at Donnafugata in the town of Marsala. The rest stayed in the hotel to take advantage of the spa. Our guide at Donnafugata is Laura, a young woman who looks like Steffi Graf and is marrying a Sicilian drink a glass of **Donnafugata Sherazade Nero Beaujolais**, as Laura tells us the history of the



Poppies (not roses) at the end of the vine row

The Rallo family used to be in the Marsala sales in the early 1980s they sold the brand and business. The name of the winery and many of its Giuseppe Lampadusa novel *The Leopard*. woman, is the Hapsburg queen who fled settled on the island. Anthilia, their bend of Inzolio calls it) and Catarratto and Tancredi (Nero d'Avola characters in the Lampadusa novel.

After a tour of the facility we sit down to lunch – a Ricotta cheese with anchovies, smoked tuna and and capers, served with **Donnafugata Anthilia 2010**, followed by fish couscous with prawns and vegetable couscous, with **Donnafugata La Fuga Contessa Entellina 2009** (Chardonnay) and **Donnafugata Sedara 2009** (Nero d'Avola, Merlot and Syrah). Laura tells us that the town of Avola near Ragusa, where the Nero d'Avola grape was first propagated, no longer grows this variety.

woman from Heidelberg who colleague in a week's time. We **d'Avola 2010**, somewhat like a house.

business, but with declining went into the table wine products are tied into the Donnafugata, the fleeing Napoleon's army in 1807 and (or Ansonica as the rest of Italy and Cabernet Sauvignon) are

buffet of olives, pecorino, swordfish with cherry tomatoes

Next course, a selection of Sicilian cheeses with salami S. Angelo, served with two delicious reds, **Donnafugata Tancredi 2007** (Nero d'Avola and Cabernet Sauvignon) and **Donnafugata Mille e una Notte Contessa Entellina 2006** (90% Nero d'Avola and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon).

With the dessert of fresh fruit and Cappelletti di ricotta we are treated to a vertical tasting of **Donnafugata Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria 2004, 2006** (the best balanced) and **2008**. These wines are made from Muscat of Alexandria, locally known as Zibibbo. Ben Ryé is an Arabic phrase meaning "son of the wind" and refers to the strong winds that blow across the island of Pantelleria, located 60 kilometres off the Tunisian coast and a 5-hour ferry ride from Marsala.

Back to the hotel for rest before busing out to Planeta. Planetas Estate's La Foresteria is a resort hotel with 14 rooms set in a sea of vines. We are met by Chiara Planeta, who leads us through a tasting of five wines. She tells us that this spring has been the wettest in her grandfather's memory.

- **Planeta Alastro 2009** (Grecanico) – Alastro means gorse, a drawing of which graces the label
- **Planeta Cometa 2009** (Fiano)
- **Planeta Plumbago 2009** (Nero d'Avola)
- **Planeta Santa Cecilia 2007** (Nero d'Avola)
- **Planeta Syrah 2007**

The tasting took place at a table that can accommodate 32, made from a single piece of wood. While it was being reset for dinner we went upstairs for an olive oil tasting (3 oils grown on the estate) and an aperitif of **Planeta Rosé 2010** (Syrah) and hors d'oeuvres.

Dinner began with Ricotta cannolo with zucchini cream, served with **Planeta Carricante 2010** and **Planeta La Segreta 2010**, followed by capellini pasta "timballo" with vastedda cheese and vegetables, with **Planeta La Segreta Rosso 2010** and **Planeta Alastro 2006** (50% Chardonnay, 50% Grecanico). Then glazed amberjack (white tuna) with oil mashed celeriac, with **Planeta Cerasuolo di Vittoria 2009** (60% Nero d'Avola, 40% Frappato) and **Planeta Chardonnay 2008**. Dessert: chocolate cake with apricot sauce, with **Planeta Passito di Noto 2009**. Got back to the hotel at 11:40 pm.

Wednesday, May 24: After breakfast we drove out to Porto Palo de Menfi to have lunch at Da Vittoria, a restaurant and small hotel on the beach. Great food here that just kept coming: a first course of fish croquettes, octopus and potato salad, marinated crayfish, deep fried spatula followed by rotini pasta with shrimps, deep-fried stuffed cuttlefish, shrimps and calamari. This washed down with bottle after bottle of **Regaleali Rosé 2010**. Amazing dessert of lemon sorbet over wild strawberries and lemon sponge cake and biscotti.



Lunch at Da Vittoria

Drove on to Agrigento to visit the Valley of the Temples, a 1300-hectare UNESCO Heritage site. In the 6th century BC Greeks settled this area and built three temples. They are now in ruins, the best of which is the one dedicated to Hercules. Several large, thought-provoking bronze sculptures by Igor Mitoraj are placed adjacent to the temples.



Igor Mitoraj's sculpture

On the bus to our hotel we opened **Regaleali Bianco 2010**, a Swiss wine **Gantenbein Pinot Noir 2009**, and **Donnafugata Tancredi 2007**. Our hotel, Falconara, near Licata, is set on the beach. At the end of a promontory stands the Castello di Falconara, which is owned by a family from Palermo. Our room has a king-sized four-poster bed.



Castello di Falconara

Dinner was a set meal, a tasting menu that was the only disappointment so far. The first dish was a combination of julienne of vegetables, red mullet stuffed with herbs and breadcrumbs and served with **d'Almerita "Leone" Catarratto e Chardonnay 2010**. Next course, white zucchini soup with zucchini sprouts, followed by spaghetti with anchovies and wild fennel and rice with sliced zucchini. A glass of **Cava di Grazia Emiryan Syrah 2008** with spatula breaded with herbs and saddle of suckling pigs with herbs and vegetables. The meal was almost rescued by the dessert – Sicilian cassata and mini cannola with pistachios. Dessert wine on the house: **Cantine Paolini Malvasia**. Erased the memory of the meal with a Nero d'Avola grappa at the bar.

Wednesday, May 25: Left the hotel at 10:45 am to drive to our next winery visit at Valle d'Acate in Ragusa province. We got lost and had to call for an escort. The road down the valley with its corkscrew turns got narrower and narrower until we were on a single lane mud-covered track. A long palm-treed avenue led up to a cluster of stone buildings with brilliant bougainvillea growing up the walls. Valle d'Acate winery has 100 hectares; their vineyards are very close to the sea, varying from 90 metres to 200 metres from the water.



Francesco Ferreri of Valle d'Acate

Francesco Ferreri greeted us and showed us around the wine museum with its stone fermenting vats that fed the fermented wine down by gravity to the wooden foudres in the adjacent barn below. It was here that we had our tasting and lunch.

- **Valle dell'Acate Zagra 2010** (80% Grillo, 20% Insolia)
- **Valle dell'Acate Bidis 2008** (Chardonnay and Insolia)
- **Valle dell'Acate Il Frappato 2010**
- **Valle dell'Acate Cerasuolo de Vittoria 2008** (70% Nero d'Avola, 30% Frappato)
- **Valle d'Acate Il Moro 2008** (Nero d'Avola)

A long table of typical Sicilian dishes had been set out for us: meat balls, rice balls, pasta, foccaccia with tomato and eggplant, sun-dried tomatoes, olives, cheese, followed by crushed cannolis. All the wines we tasted were available for pouring as well as **Valle d'Acate Grappa of Cerasuolo**. Francesco gave us a tour of the winery before we returned to the bus to drive to Taormina.



Taormina

We are staying at the Hotel Imperiale with a commanding view over the town and the bay of Giardini Naxos. A group of six of us dine at Tiramisu Ristorante Pizzeria. The rain drives us inside from our table in the garden. I order octopus in a spicy balsamic sauce followed by grilled branzino – both delicious. The wines: **Barone di Villagrande Bianco 2010** (Carricante) and **Murgo Etna Rosso 2008** (Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Mantellato). We try to order a bottle of Benanti Pietramarina, which is on the list, but they come back with another bottle of the Barone di Villagrande, a producer they offered when I ordered the Murgo Etna Bianco. Obviously the restaurant has an interest in this particular winery. Dessert: wild strawberries, but not as good as the ones we had at Da Vittoria.

Thursday, May 26: In the night there was a violent storm with a thunderclap and lightning. One of the group was

convinced Mount Etna was erupting. After breakfast outdoors by the pool we go for a walking tour of Taormina, principally to see the magnificent Greco-Roman amphitheatre with a view of Mount Etna in the background, and then to gardens of the Parco Duchi di Cesarò.



Greco-Roman amphitheatre with Mt. Etna

This town is the most photogenic place I've visited; every angle is photo-worthy. There are, apparently, 37 shoe shops along Taormina's main street, Corso Umberto, which is about 800 metres long from the old Messina gate to the Catania gate. Can't imagine how many restaurants there are here – all serving basically the same dishes.

Lunch at the hotel next to the swimming pool (which is over the reception area with a glass floor so you can watch the swimmers from below). The menu: potato soup with octopus, penne with broccoli and shrimp and a fruit soup with lemon sorbet which they called minestrone. The wine: **Regaleali Grillo 2009**.



Lane in Taormina



Traditional puppets in Taormina

In the afternoon, toured the shops and then went for drinks on the terrace of the Metropole Hotel. Tried to order a bottle of Benanti Pietrmarina from the list but they didn't have it (same thing happened at the hotel at lunch). Nor did they have Hansfelder white, so we settled for **Regaleali Leone Bianco 2010**. There were 10 of us so we asked for two bottles. One bottle arrived and was poured. It turned out to be mildly corked but no-one felt like sending it back Twenty minutes later and the second bottle hadn't arrived. Turns out the waiter served our bottle to another table and that was the last one they had. This prompted the following limerick, which has become a tradition on these tours – with the added wrinkle that the last person on the bus in the mornings has to compose a limerick:

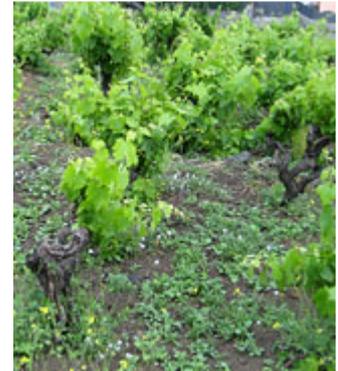
*If you order wine for your table
It turns out to be unavailable
They'll smile and they'll shrug
And give you a hug*

Then sell you their uncle's own label.

Dinner at Mama Rosa's. Again the first wine I ordered from the list was not available (this was a running theme in Taormina). Settled for **Cottanera Barbazzale Inzolio 2009** and **Cottanera Barbazzale Nerello Mascalese 2008** with rocket and parmesan salad and linguine vongole.

Friday, May 27: After breakfast our bus took us up Mount Etna to a point two-thirds from the summit. Lots of cheesy gift shops selling carvings of owls, turtles, bears unicorns and such carved from lava rock; even the Last Supper and bust of Mussolini.

Then on to the Benanti Estate in Viagrande, near Acireale. We were greeted by Lisa Sapienza, the export director, who was born in New Jersey. The estate dates back to 1474 and they have a small parcel of head-trained Carricante vines that date back 100 years. Etna, said, Lisa, is an island in an island. The Etna region, the first DOC in Sicily, gets three times as much rain as the rest of the island. The vineyards owned by Benanti vary in elevation from 450 metres to 1000 metres. After paying our respects to the venerable wine press we sat down for a great tasting before lunch:



100-year-old Carricante vines at Benanti

- **Benanti Pietrmarina 2007** (Carricante)
- **Benanti Rovittello 2005** (Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio – great wine, I bought two bottles)
- **Benanti Serra della Contessa 2006** (Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio)
- **Benanti Il Drappo 2005** (Nero d'Avola)



Seafood risotto

Lunch followed – marinated octopus, celery and apple in a clam shell, seafood risotto, breaded swordfish and strawberries with **Benanti Biancodicaselle 2009** (Carricante), **Benanti Edèlmio 2008** (Carricante and Chardonnay). More shopping and then the group gathered by the hotel pool to consume wines we had acquired along the way but didn't want to ship back in our luggage.

To dinner at La Griglia on Corso Umberto: bruschetta, brasaeola, rocket salad with Jerusalem artichokes, stuffed zucchini flower, spaghetti pomodoro and veal chop with a bottle of **Manadarossa Costadune Nero d'Avola 2009**. After dinner we went for a grappa on the terrace of the Grand Timeo Hotel to enjoy the view of Giardini Naxos harbour.

Saturday, May 28: Up early to pack, have breakfast, and drive to Siracusa. A guided tour of the archaeological zone with its Greek theatre that could seat 14,000, the Roman amphitheatre and the garden of Paradise with its famous echoing cave, carved out by Carthaginian slaves quarrying for limestone. Walked across the bridge to the island of Ortigia for lunch at Don Camillo Ristorante. Almond cream soup with squid-ink-encrusted prawns, pasta with grouper, olives and cherry tomatoes, tuna and lemon cake. The wines: **Terre di Ginestra Catarrato 2009** and **L'Amùri d'Almerita Nero d'Avola 2008**. Then on to the airport in Catania for the flight to Rome, where we will stay in a hotel by the airport for the morning flight back to Toronto. At the Hilton Hotel our group took over the bar for a dinner of beer and pizza.

Sunday, May 29: Our flight back to Toronto.



The echoing cave in Siracusa