

WINES | with George Kassianos

Imported and distributed by French Depot, Tel: 25 732007,
26 100555, 96 441436, frenchdepot@cytanet.com.cy

Donna is in Cyprus

A fine collection of wines that reflect the development of the industry in Sicily is now available on the island

It is a fact that wine has been part of Sicily's agricultural and cultural heritage for millennia, from the Greeks and Romans to the feudal systems of the nobles, a spark of entrepreneurial spirit in the late 1800s followed by mass emigration and a decimation of workers to a new renaissance on the slopes of Etna and beyond, wine spanned the ages.

Like Cyprus, for ages Sicily had rustic table wines, or bulk 'sfuso' wine, and of course fortified wine. Drunk locally, these heavy and high alcoholic wines were eventually recognised and found a market in France, offering body, depth and colour to French wines after their devastating bout with the phylloxera disease. Even wines in Northern Italy relied on Sicily's heartier wine to refine their own. Time and evolution, education, support, promotion and even some regulation has given rise to a growing interest in the refined wine segment in Sicily. We now have wines that compete for space in the best restaurants and stores worldwide. Smaller wine production is resulting in wine of a much higher quality than ever in its history and it is now often associated with words like elegant, meditative, structured and refined.

For what is emerging today, Sicilian winemakers took chances, risked fortunes working to improve production of Sicily's indigenous red and white grapes and taking a leap to import other types of grapes to blend. Typically, the results of their efforts and experiments took years to assess. But as the fruits of their labours settle, we are seeing incredible results today. What has been secured for Sicilian wine producers is respect for the wines and an exploding and appreciative following. All of this translates to an exciting market for wine lovers and consumers.

Donnafugata

In Italian, Donnafugata means 'fleeing woman'. The story goes that in the late 19th century after her flight from the court of Naples Queen Maria Carolina took refuge in the heart of Belice Valley in Sicily. This event inspired the image of the head of a woman, her hair tossed about by the wind, and the Estate name.

Donnafugata grew out of the commitment of a family in Sicily that has always believed in the extraordinary enological potential of its land and has 150 years of experience in producing premium wines. Convinced that it is always necessary to be open to change in order to grow and improve, Giacomo Rallo and his wife Gabriella launched a new production project in 1983: Donnafugata. Their adventure took wing from the family's historic cellars in Marsala and the vineyards at Contessa Entellina in the heart of western Sicily and soared as far as the island of Pantelleria.

Their children, José and Antonio, joined them and the house accelerated its march along the path of Extreme Quality: a project that focused on attention to detail, which clears the way for entrepreneurial decisions that ever more advanced objectives. As for the future, the young Gabriella and Ferdinando are already "fully immersed" in the family's activities.

2017 Donnafugata Prio Sicilia Cataratto, Sicily, Italy, Abv 12.5%

Prio is a modern, intense and fragrant white wine that gives joy from the first sip. It is the perfect Sicilian wine to share with friends or to sip when looking for a moment of leisure and lightness all by yourself. Joy, happiness is the meaning of Prio in the Sicilian dialect. It is the unexpected and authentic joy of a woman sitting on a beach at sunset in early



summer, gently kissed by a butterfly lying on her face.

It is a mono-varietal wine made of aromatic Catarratto grapes, grown in the estate of Contessa Entellina (south-western Sicily). Donnafugata Prio is a sensual and characteristic wine with a bright straw yellow colour. The nose offers a delicate and subtle bouquet characterised by hints of white flowers (elderberry in the foreground). The mouth is broad and fragrant with pleasant citrus scents that highlight, above all, the cedar and bergamot. The closure is long and persistent. Great to combine with hot and cold appetizers of seafood, shellfish and vegetable-based pasta dishes. €21

2016 Donnafugata, Floramundi, Carasuolo di Vittoria DOCG, Abv 13.5%, Sicily, Italy

This red is produced from Nero d'Avola 70% and Frappato 30% grapes. It represents the fruit of Donnafugata's production commitment in eastern Sicily. A project aimed at producing wines under the prestigious Carasuolo di Vittoria DOCG and Frappato di Vittoria DOC, Etna DOC denominations.

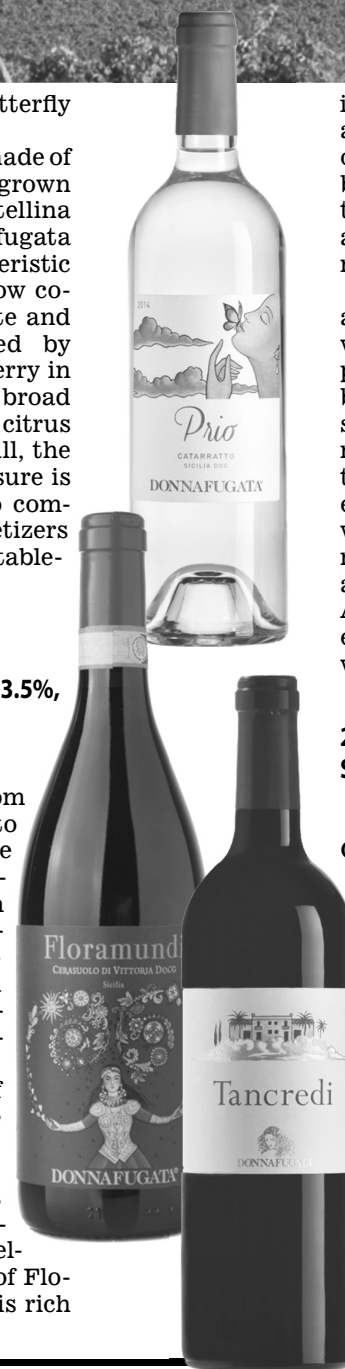
Concerning the name of the wine, it is a fantastic figure of a woman who is giving the gift of wonderful interlacements of flowers and fruits with velvety tones. It is a dialogue between two souls, the elegant and sophisticated one of Floral Liberty, of which Vittoria is rich

in testimonies, and the fascinating and suggestive one of the tradition of the Sicilian Puppets. A dialogue between Nero d'Avola and Frappato to listen to with pleasure; a refined artistic label for a prestigious denomination.

Purple in colour, this wine offers a spicy and fruity nose perfumed with carob, bergamot and orange peel. The compact ripe fruit and balsamic notes on the palate dissolve in a sweet and vigorous manner to accompany tannins of dense texture. Traces of graphite confer elements of a high tasting lineage while cleverly elicited wild blackberry and cherry maintain the wine on a register of rigorous style and taste. A wine that has no fear of the riskiest pairings such as pork marinated with chili or fish dishes. €29

2015 Donnafugata Tancredi Terre Siciliane IGT Rosso, Sicily, Italy, Abv 14%

The 2015 Tancredi is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Nero d'Avola and Tannat. Creamy and dense with an excellent concentration, it has a deep ruby red colour and is characterised by a fragrant bouquet with notes of red fruit (cherry and cranberry), floral scents (violet) and delicate tertiary scents of forest floor, scorched earth, grilled herb, sweet tobacco, cacao and spices, cloves and black pepper. On the palate it shows good structure and it delivers cassis, mature plum, toast and star anise framed in taut, fine-grained tannins and it has a persistent finish. Great with T-bone steak, gourmet burgers and game. €47



Ageing Singapore: 90-yr-old vendor helps keep foodie culture alive

Leong Yuet Meng cannot walk more than 10 metres without assistance. Yet, the frail 90-year-old still runs a wonton noodle stall in downtown Singapore, selling at least 200 bowls on any given day.

Leong rises around 4am to do some accounting and prayers before her son drives her to the local market to buy ingredients for the day ahead.

From 8am to 5pm she is hunched over a pot of simmering noodles, slicing char siu – barbecued pork belly – or serving bowls of bargain-price hot food.

"I try to do this as long as I

can, but I am old," said Leong, one of many older food vendors or 'hawkers' in the Asian city-state.

"I am afraid that all the experience that I have accumulated over the years will be lost. None of my children can take over."

The city has about 110 hawker centres – open-air food courts set up to house former street vendors in an effort to clean up the island in the 1970s – and their over 6,000 stalls are mostly packed.

Celebrity chefs Anthony Bourdain and Gordon Ramsay have effused over national dishes like chicken rice; some stalls



Hawker Leong Yuet Meng, 90

serve up the cheapest Michelin star meals at \$2; and last year's Hollywood hit film *Crazy Rich Asians* showed its stars tucking into heaped plates at a famous Singapore night market.

But the enthusiasm cannot mask one underlying problem – Singapore's hawkers are getting older and their better-educated sons and daughters are increasingly shunning cramped, sweaty kitchens for office jobs.

The average age of hawkers is 59, according to a government report, well above the national workforce average of 43.

One hawker, 38 year-old Lance Ngo, said that finding

hawkers in their 20s "is more difficult than finding gold".

Lee Sah Bah, a hawker in his late 60s who sells Chwee Kueh rice cakes at less than S\$2 a portion, says he also faces the prospect of his legacy dying out.

His two daughters – one a lecturer at a university in Melbourne and the other an accountant in Singapore – won't take over his business.

"I don't think hawker centres will exist in the next 50 years," Lee said. "It's too much hard work, we have to put in 16 hours a day sometimes. It's hot. Kids nowadays wouldn't want to work here."