

[Donnafugata: Sicily On the Mind](#)

by [Daniel Rogov](#) » Sun Feb 20, 2011 8:27 pm

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The families of Giacomo and Gabriella Rallo are no strangers to the wines of Sicily, their oenological history going back 150 years. With historic cellars in the city of Marsala and vineyards in the heart of western Sicily at Contesse Entellina and on the island of Pantelleria, the more modern wine history of the family started in 1983 with the opening of the Donnafugata winery.

For their white wines the winery relies on indigenous varieties such as Catarratto, Zibibo and Ansonica Bianca (also known as Inzolia) as well as on classic varieties such as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. For their reds, the indigenous variety most often found in the Donnafugata wines is Nero d'Avola and French varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon. The combination makes for wines that are uniquely Sicilian in what might be thought of as a thoroughly modern old-world fashion. Not striving to produce huge wines that are overloaded with oak and tannins gives the winery the freedom to produce wines that some will describe as "feminine" – that is to say, round, soft, well structured but not at all aggressive.

The wines of Sicilian producer Donnafugata made an entry into Israel in 2002 and then, even though they received good reviews, vanished as quickly as they had appeared. This afternoon I had a most pleasant tasting in the company of Fabio Genovese of Donnafugata and the representatives from the importer-distributors of the wines HaDoosh and The Scottish Company. In addition to providing interesting wines, the labels of Donnafugata have interesting stories to tell, some mythological, some historical and nearly all relating to women. One can see the labels and read about their background on the winery's internet site at www.donnafugata.it

If I have any reservations at all about recommending these wines it is their prices – those ranging from 60-100% higher than the equivalent prices in the United States. Considering the nearby location of Sicily and Israel I simply do not understand why such a mark-up is called for. To order wines or to find the store nearest you carrying these wines phone the Scottish Company at 03 5462414 or The Doosh at 054 7538377.

Whatever, my sincere thanks to Signore Genovese as well as to Galia and Oded for a fine tasting and their good company.

Best
Rogov

The White Wines

Donnafugata, Chiarandà, Sicily, 2009: A bright gold, full-bodied blend of 50% each Ansonica and Chardonnay, reflecting its partial development in barriques with a gentle note of white chocolate. Opens in the glass to reveal fresh summer fruits, apples and a light note of citrus. A full-flavored wine with fine balance between wood, acidity and fruits, all lingering nicely on the finish. Drink now-2013. NIS 275. Score 92.

Donnafugata, Lighea, Sicily, 2009: A dry white blend of 75% Zibibo (a synonym for Muscat of Alexandria) , 20% Chardonnay and 5% Sauvignon Blanc. The color of damp straw with orange and green tints, opens with a floral nose (think red rose petals), goes on in the glass to reveal aromas and flavors of summer fruits, citrus peel and, perhaps reflecting the volcanic soil on which the grapes were raised, hints of minerals and salt water. On the finish an enchanting note of eucalyptus honey. Drink now-2013. NIS 125. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Vigna di Gabri, Sicily, 2009: Indigenous Ansonica grapes blended with 20% Chardonnay, showing pale golden straw, a mineral-rich wine with aromas and flavors of green apples, citrus peel and flinty minerals. Long, refreshing and mouth-filling. Drink now or in the next year or so. NIS 144. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Anthilia, Sicily, 2010: Light golden straw in color, a blend of Cattarratto and Ansonica Bianco grapes. Light- to medium-bodied, with a floral nose but crisply dry opens in the glass to reveal an appealing array of citrus, yellow peaches and tropical fruits, those on a background that hints of citronella and flinty minerals. Soft, round and easy to drink with just enough complexity to capture the attention. Drink now or in the next year or so. NIS 90. Score 88.

Donnafugata, Polena, Sicily, 2010: Unoaked, medium-bodied, a blend of Cattarratto and Viognier grapes, opening to reveal a gently floral and fruity nose. In the glass showing tropical fruits, citrus and minerals, all on a background that hints at one moment of flinty minerals and at another of honeydew melon. Well balanced, crisply dry with fruit5s and minerals that linger nicely. Drink now or in the next year or so. NIS 96. Score 88.

The Red Wines

Donnafugata, Sedàra, Sicily, 2009: Ruby towards garnet an unoaked, soft, round and medium-bodied blend of 65% Nero d'Avola that fleshed out with Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. A generously black-fruit nose makes way for flavors of black cherries, black currants and blackberries, those complemented by notes of freshly picked Mediterranean herbs, cigar tobacco and earthy minerals. Drink now-2012, perhaps somewhat longer. NIS 90. Score 89.

Donnafugata, Sherazade, Sicily, 2009: Ruby towards garnet, made entirely from indigenous Nero d'Avola grapes a round, gentle wine, medium- to full-bodied with soft tannins and a red fruit nose. Opens in the glass to reveal a generous array of currants, black cherries and blueberries, those on a background of freshly turned earth and, on the long finish an appealing note of mocha. Not a complex wine but a delicious one. Drink now-2012. NIS 105. Score 89.

Donnafugata, Angheli, Sicily, 2007: Super dark garnet, a full-bodied blend of 70% Merlot and 30% Nero d'Avola. Reflecting its development in French barriques for about 12 months with gently gripping tannins, opens to reveal aromas and flavors of black fruits, crushed berries and earthy minerals. On the long finish appealing note of cherries and loam. Drink now-2013. NIS 182. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Tancredi, Sicily, 2006: An oak aged blend of 70% Nero d'Avola and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. Dark garnet with orange reflections, full-bodied with tannins that start out firm and then meld nicely into the wine. Look blackberries, black cherries and crushed berries, those on a background that hints nicely of mocha and green olives. Long and mouth-filling. Drink now-2014, perhaps longer. NIS 227. Score 90.

Donnafugata, Mille e Una Notte, Sicily, 2006: The flagship wine of the winery, the name (A Thousand and One Nights) bringing a first smile to the eyes. A blend of 90% Nero d'Avola and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in mostly new French oak barrels for 24 months, opens with a nose rich in black fruits, smoky oak and melted chocolate. Goes on to reveal a rich array of aromas and flavors, those including blackcurrants, blackberries, raspberries, the fruits on a background generous in chocolate, spices and earthy minerals. Tannins and fruits rise on the long finish together with a note of freshly hung tobacco leaves. A well balanced wine with the structure to age. Drink now-2018. NIS 496. Score 93.

Dessert Wines

Donnafugata, Kabir, Sicily, 2009: Made from Zibibbo grapes (better known perhaps as Moscato de Pantelleria, a generously sweet wine with fine balancing acidity. Developed entirely in stainless steel tanks, an elegant dessert wine with notes of fresh apricots, dried white peaches, honeyed apples, and candied citrus peel. Medium-bodied, a lively and well balanced wine, perhaps at its best as an aperitif. Drink now-2015. Score 89.

Donnafugata, Ben Ryé, Sicily, 2008: It seems fully appropriate that Ben Ryé, translates into "son of the wind" for here is a deeply rich dessert wine with distinct hints of a fresh Mediterranean breeze. Dark burnished copper in color, the wine is made by the passito method, that involving a first harvest in August, letting those Zibibbo grapes dry in the sun and then a second harvest in September, chilling those to prevent premature fermentation and only when the first harvest grapes are reduced to raisins of blending the must of the two together. Deep sweetness here, that thankfully matched by fine acidity to keep the wine lively. On first attack a compote of summer fruits, that followed by aromas and flavors of orange marmalade, salt water taffy and hints of roasted Brazil nuts. Not so much to serve with dessert but as dessert. Drink now-2022. Score 94.