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Marsala and the wines of Donnafugata

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by Mary Arnold

Donnafugata: one of Sicily's largest and most successful wineries. While headquartered in Marsala, they do not produce Marsala wine. Instead, they boast an extensive portfolio of white, red and dessert wines at all price points and quality levels.



They own two properties: Contessa Entellina with 270 hectares of vines and Pantelleria on the island of Pantelleria just off the coast where another 68 hectares are planted. The facility in Marsala is where ageing and bottling take place. Donnafugata uses stainless steel, concrete and/or barrels to age their wines. The concrete tanks are huge with a capacity of 40,000 litres! They have 1000 250

litre barriques and another 50 tonneaux at 500 litres each. With volumes like this it comes as no surprise that their bottling line has a throughput of 7000 bottles/hour. This is clearly no small operation - last year they produced a total of 2.3 million bottles! After the tour we sat down for a vertical tasting of their signature red Tancredi.



Tancredi is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Nero d'Avola, and sometimes Tannat depending on the vintage. We tasted the 1998, 2005 and 2011 vintages. The 2011 was lovely but has great ageing potential, the 2005 could be enjoyed now or stored for up to another 2-3 years and the 1998 was definitely ready to drink. After the vertical, we sampled their Mille e una Notte, a blend of Nero d'Avola, Petit Verdot, and Syrah. This was a bold wine. As a topper to our tasting, we enjoyed Ben Ryé, Passito di Panetelleria DOC made with Zibibbo grapes (also known as Muscat of Alexandria).





Not only was it absolutely delicious, it was the perfect way to end a perfect tour!

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