



Food Travel Wine · November 26, 2018 · 7 min read

# Turning Sicilian Winemaking into an Art Form

## Wines of Sicily

Wines of Sicily. Wine is the passion for 5 generations of the Rallo family, starting in 1851 in western Sicily. The brand Donnafugata though was created in 1983 by the parents of José and Antonio Rallo. Today, the brother and sister team continue the family's winemaking traditions while elevating the Donnafugata name to the next level.

José received the Premio Bellisario 2002 for her entrepreneurial efforts of the business while Antonio focused his strategic vision on the company as well as outside it with his efforts to safeguard the DOC Sicilia denomination. The Rallos' parents, Giacomo, who sadly passed away in 2016, and Gabriella, created the name Donnafugata as a nod to the novel *Il Gattopardo*, meaning "The Leopard," by Tomasi di Lampedusa. The name "Donnafugata" comes from "donna in fuga" or "woman in flight." It's from the story of a queen who found a safe place in the rolling lands of the vineyards of Sicily. It is Gabriella who oversees the designs of the splendidly beautiful labels you see on each of the wines, all of them inspired by her love for art and literature and created by the incredibly talented artist, Stefano Vitale.

While one should never judge a wine simply by its cover, you can and should make an exception for the Donnafugata wines. Each bottle is a masterpiece on the outside and a stroke of beautiful genius corked on the inside. They're complex and captivating, and are a shining example of Sicily's best wines that showcase the similarities of art and wine, as well as those of sustainability.



Jose Rallo

## Wines of Sicily

The eclectic range of wines that come from Donnafugata are expertly crafted in their own styles. You'll find sparkling wines, white wines, rose, red wines, naturally sweet wines, and grappa. You'll even find some of the best olive oil in Sicily. Among those types, Donnafugata features collections that make them irresistible. Iconic Wines, Mediterranean Elegance, and Surprising Wines are just some of the unique collections you'll want to sample.

## Wines of Sicily: Pantelleria & Marsala

Donnafugata is always about growing new roots while melding steep traditions. An example of this is how Donnafugata expanded to the volcanic island known as Pantelleria, found between Sicily and Africa. Taking advantage of the rich volcanic soils to bring about a new viticulture that matches their passion for both wine and sustainability, the Wines of Sicily from this region are purely immaculate.

Meanwhile, the Marsala winery has been with the family since 1851. It's in the typical baglio Mediterranean style with a spacious enclosed courtyard of olive and citrus trees, and stunning serenity that gives the illusion of time standing still. Wines from both Pantelleria and Contessa Entellina come here to be aged and bottled.



Antonio Rallo, Donnafugata, talking Winemaking on Pantelleria

## Wines of Sicily: Sustainability

Along with all their viticulture, the Rallo family has a deep commitment to sustainability. Herbicides and chemical fertilizers aren't used, and they take great pains to integrate control techniques to prevent pests with pheromone traps. Green manure is employed as well as organic fertilization techniques. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) are something the winery upholds with absolute enthusiasm, citing it as indispensable for healthy and exquisitely ripe grapes without making a big impact on the environment.

For example, at the Contessa Entellina estate, Chardonnay grapes are harvested at night. The interesting night-time ritual allows the conservation of energy as the grapes are cooler at night. Harvesting them after the sun goes down means there is less effort needed to cool them down before crushing them.



Wines of Donnafugata

Donnafugata also puts things in writing by displaying the certification of the carbon footprint on every bottle produced. This certification quantifies the CO2 emissions that come about from the entire production cycle from beginning to end. Lighter bottles are also used which saves the environment from added emissions, and the corks are made with Select Bio synthetics that are completely recyclable. The transparency of the winery makes it a viable choice for wine connoisseurs the world over that wish to better the environment.

## Wines of Sicily: Visit Donnafugata



Elephant Rock

The Rallo family happily welcomes those that wish to visit the territories that surround the Donnafugata wineries. Should you have the opportunity to visit Sicily, you can sample the rich, flavorful wines produced here along with Sicilian cuisine in stunning Marsala and along the beautiful backdrops found in Pantelleria on the Mediterranean. The historic wine cellars at Marsala are open year-round, while the Khamma winery in Pantelleria is only open in the summer. On August 10th, the Donnafugata Estate welcomes visitors for one very special night to partake in the Night Harvest under the moonlight. There's a grape tasting, a tour of the cellar and a most exquisite sampling in the gorgeous estate garden.

If you're unable to visit Donnafugata though, you can easily find it near you. The medium-bodied white Anthilla is a lovely choice with a well-balanced profile that lends a

hint of lemon. Sedara is a fruity yet spicy red that is highly-adored. Sherazade features a wonderfully silky feel and a flavor melded with lemon rind and rose petals. Mille e una Notte is perhaps one of the most coveted. This ripe berry-flavored red has a full body that's ripe and juicy and a touch of black tea for a truly memorable experience.