

Wine insider tip No. 1: Check the flip side of the bottle when shopping for wine



Anthilia



Mary Ross

Updated

8/14/2020 11:06 AM

While wine shopping, you might flip the bottle to the back label, scanning tidbits including alcohol content, winery mission and tasting notes.

Wine pros do it too. But if the wine is not U.S.-grown, wine insiders are checking the back label, for one thing, the statement "Imported by ..."

An importer is the federally licensed agent representing a foreign-grown wine within the U.S. Along with sales and navigating the maze of international alcohol regulations, the importer develops a portfolio of products to reflect a pattern of style, price, quality, regional specialty and availability. In the industry, we learn these patterns to guide our purchases. You can do it too.

Nowadays, the importer I look for is Folio Fine Wine Partners.

Folio Fine Wine Partners was founded in 2004 by Michael Mondavi, third-generation winegrower, the Mondavi name a cornerstone of American wine, including historic Napa Valley properties Charles Krug Winery and Robert Mondavi Winery. Michael first learned wine at his grandparents' table; when I asked him what Cesare and Rosa might have

thought of today's wine scene, he laughed, "They would have been amazed at all the glasses, how fancy it's all become. To them, wine was an everyday thing, to enjoy with food along with family and friends."

How times have changed since then. Michael's scope has broadened from his grandparents' half-gallon California jug wine to fine expressions of the world vineyard; now, he leads the family with son Rob Michael Jr. and daughter Dina. But Folio's mission sustains wine's long-held culture of healthful, convivial enjoyment with delicious wines representing each property's unique qualities.

Folio builds on Michael's understanding of family business, representing family-owned-and-operated wineries from around the world. Those include Charles Heidsieck (Champagne, France), Italians Bruno Giacosa (Piedmont) and Donnafugata (Sicily), Quinto do Crasto (Duoro, Portugal) and Tinto Pesquera (Ribera del Duero, Spain).

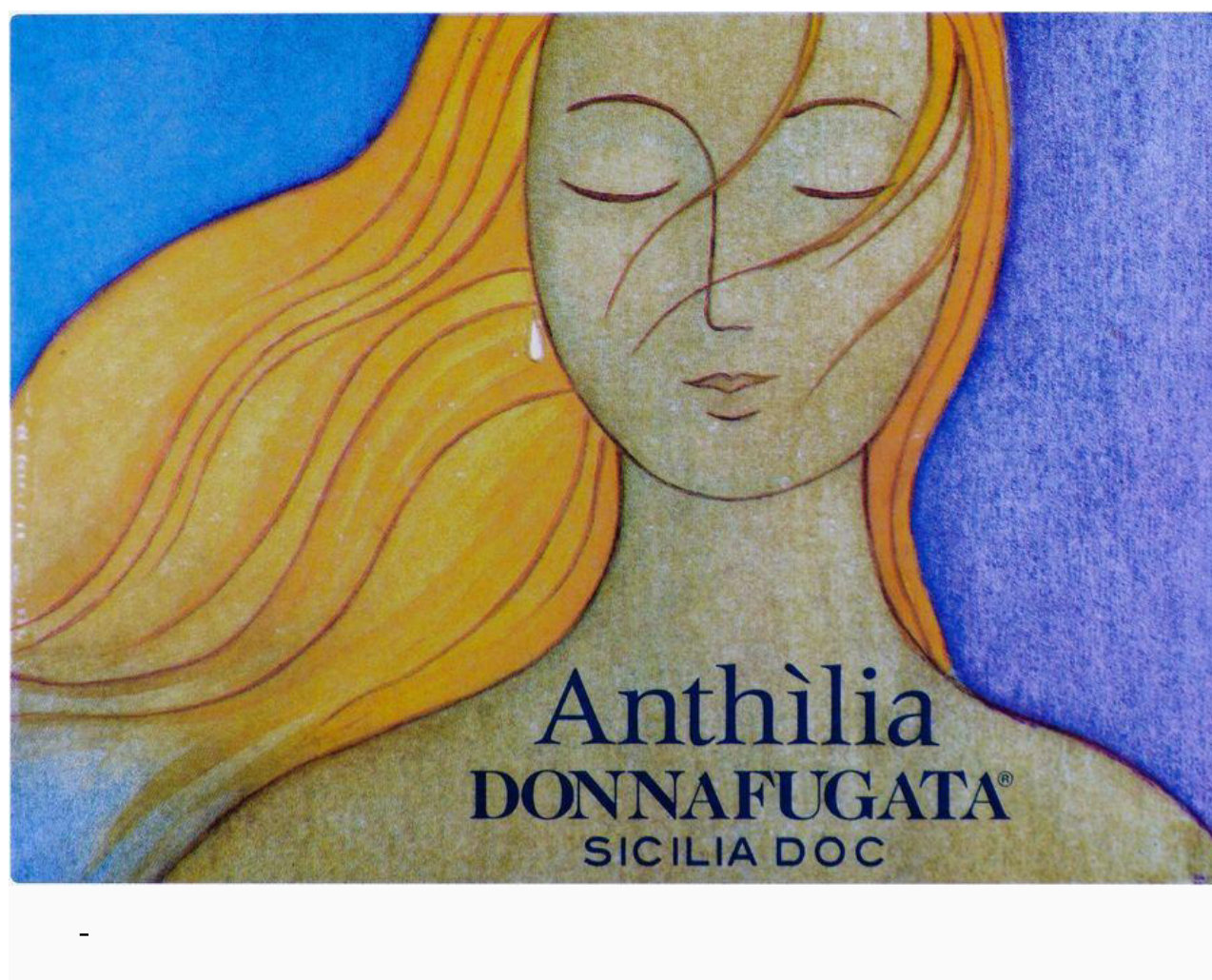
A sensitivity to family business challenges is at Folio's core. When asked about working with his famous and infamously-demanding father Robert, Michael responds, "We see farther when we can stand on someone else's shoulders." Still, individuality combines with mutual goals at Folio. "We run on family values," Michael explains. "We support creativity; we expect accountability. We encourage each employee and partner to pursue their highest goals. If an employee moves on, I always leave the door open for their return." Here he laughs, "I usually get a call from them in about a year."

While not on the label, Folio also represents California producers, including Michael Mondavi Family Estate, Piper-Sonoma and Dutton-Goldfield.

To my palate, each Dutton-Goldfield wine tastes like a great novel reads, with a vivid opening, richly-developing middle and thrilling, evocative conclusion. From silky Rose of Pinot Noir to buxom Chardonnay brimming with orchard fruits, to nuanced and succulent Pinot Noir, Dutton-Goldfield brings to life wine's union of man, plant and planet. Wines marrying each grape with eighty specific vineyards within Sonoma's Russian River and Green Valleys. Production is small and availability limited, so Dutton-Goldfield's online shopping is a boon to Chicagoland. To experience Dutton-Goldfield and their mouthwatering wines visit: <https://www.duttongoldfield.com/>.

This just in: In July, Folio announced a partnership with EPI, the French family-owned private investment company and owner of Charles Heidsieck. With Michael remaining as Folio Chairman, this partnership promises to strengthen existing partnerships while generating new relationships with the world's best winegrowing families. Stay tuned for further developments at Folio Fine Wine Partners.

- Mary Ross is an Advanced Sommelier (Court of Master Sommeliers), a Certified Wine Educator (Society of Wine Educators) and recipient of the Wine Spectator's "Grand Award of Excellence." Write to her at food@dailyherald.com.



Ross' choice

Wine: Name: Anthilia

Producer: Donnafugata

Region: Sicily, Italy

Vintage: 2019

Availability: Major wine & spirits chains, about \$15 (local pricing)

Distributed by: Breakthru Beverage of IL, Cicero

Tasting Notes: "This woman is crazy," smirked Sicilian neighbors as fourth-generation winegrower Gabriella Rallo, instituted modern techniques researched in New Zealand into her family's property, Donnafugata. But since Sicily had been largely ignored by Italian and E.U. wine laws, "We were free to find our own style, to have open minds not bound by tradition," recounts daughter Josè. Today, that style celebrates Sicily's unique, vivacious and elegant wines throughout the world. Anthilia shines like the early summer sun, brimming with lemon, stone fruit and crushed rock flavors and dry, lively finish. Enjoy chilled as a unique pinot grigio alternative for cocktails, with antipasto, light seafood and -- according to the Rallo family -- "when you desire joy."