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Explore the rich palette of wine from Donnafugata of Sicily



Mary Ross

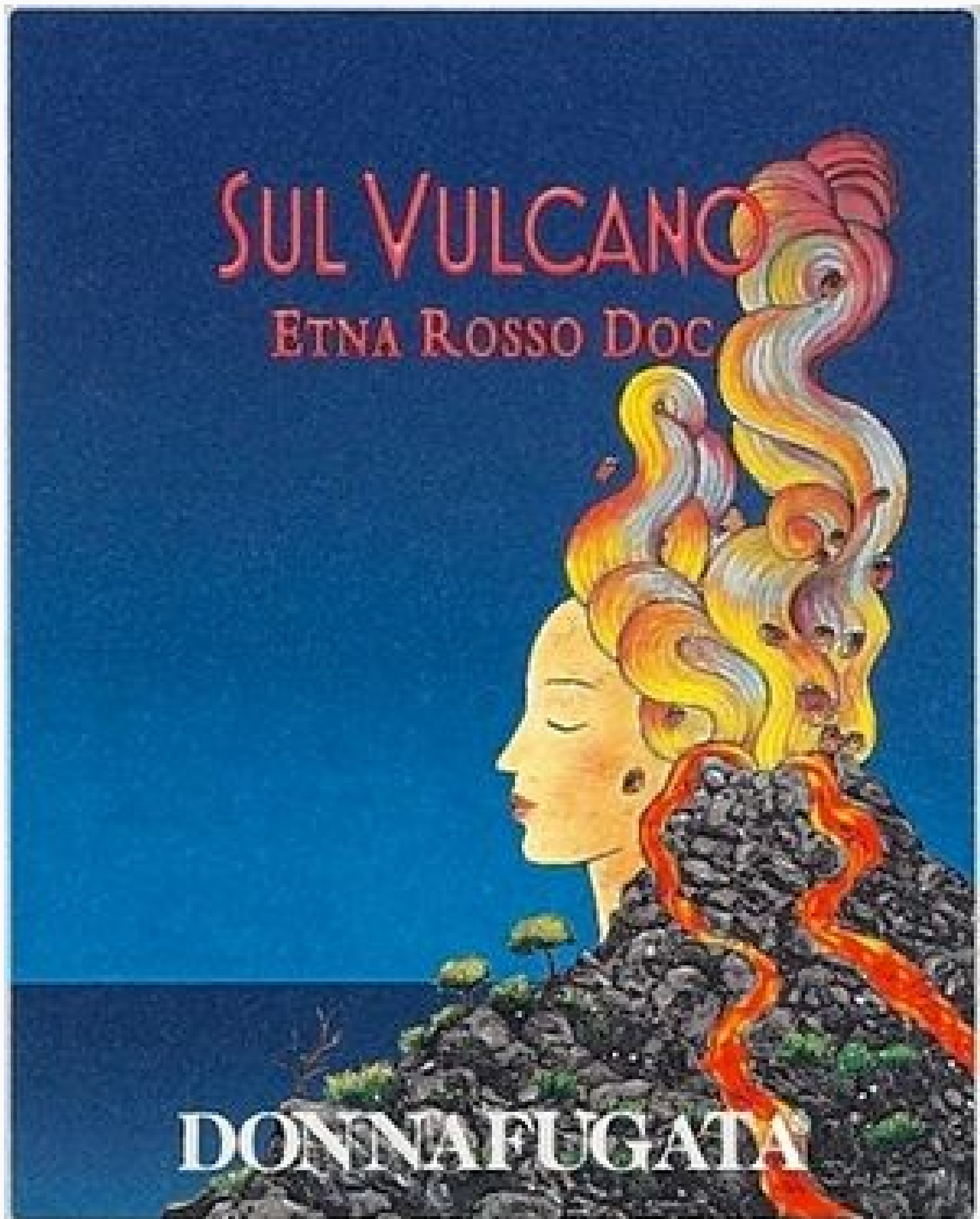
Posted 12/1/2021 6:00 AM

People tell me all the time that they pick out wine by its label. There are worse things, I tell them, like picking out wine by its price. The thing is, experience has taught me that a label's shelf appeal is generally in inverse proportion to quality; the more eye-catching the label, the worse the wine.

Not so with Donnafugata. Since its founding in 1983, this family-owned property of Sicily has embodied the culture of wine, in the words of wine author Hugh Johnson, the "union of Man, plant and planet."

The "Man" is the familia Rallo, beginning with Giacomo and Gabriella, pioneers and innovators of fine Sicilian wine for four generations, currently co-CEO's daughter Josè (pronounced with a hard J, like Josephine) and son Antonio.

The plant is the wine vine, including international varieties Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, well-known Sicilian varieties Nero d'Avola and Nerello Mascalese and indigenous grapes with such fanciful names as Grillo, Frappato and Zibibbo, prompting this student of wine to think "C'mon, now you're just making it up!"

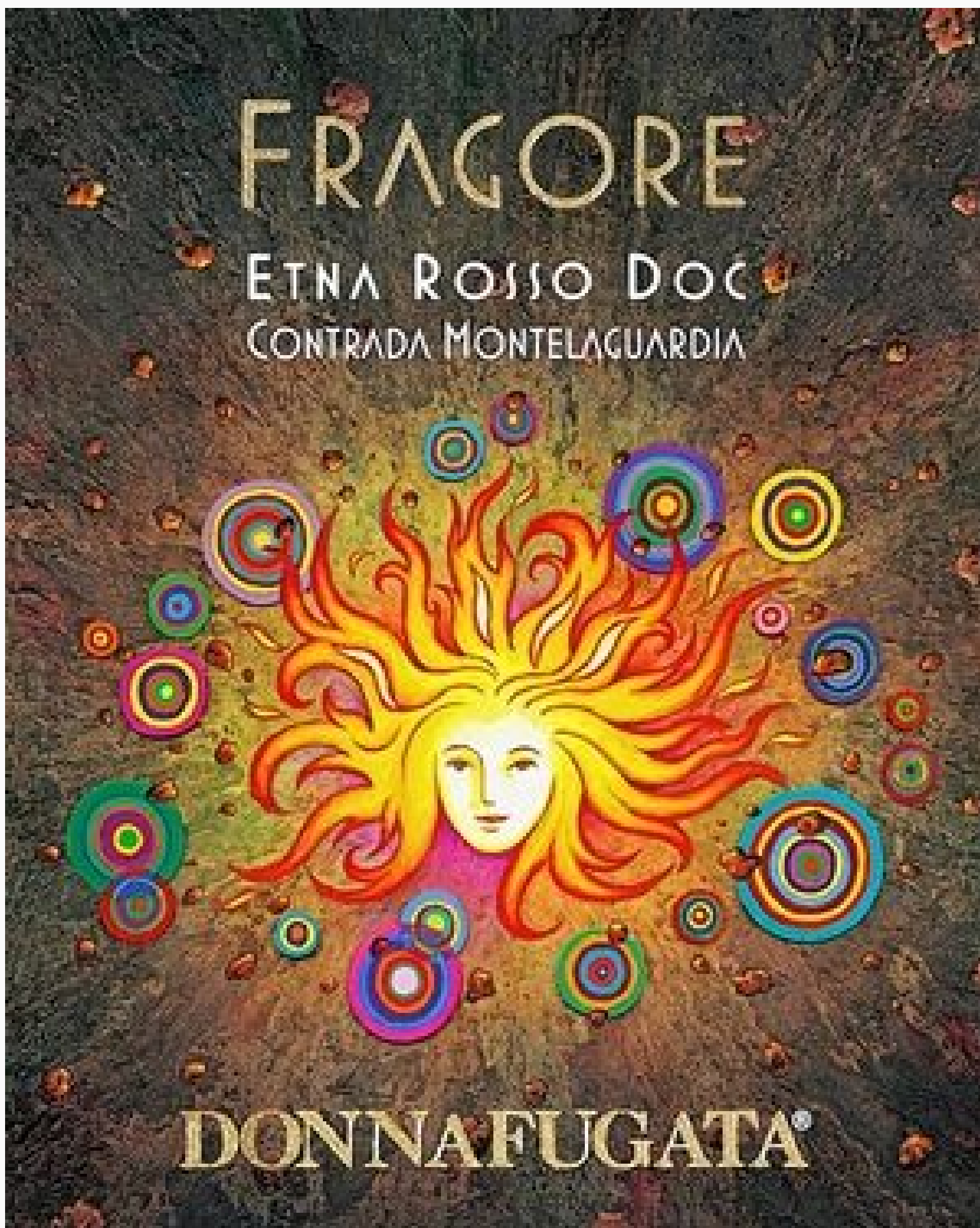


- Courtesy of Donnafugata Wines

The piece of the planet is Sicily, with a focus on the slopes of Mount Etna, one of the world's most active volcanoes, with daily lava flows, a spring 2021 eruption and a major eruption in 2008 accompanied by a violent seismic swarm of more than 230 events. Friends told Antonio, "Your family has reached its goal of bringing fine Sicilian wine to the world. Now take some nice pictures and sell. Fast."

Instead, Antonio and Josè show Etna's energy in their wines, with labels expressing the force of this decidedly female deity.

Note: Due to disruptions in wine supply, check with your local wine merchant and online to purchase the wines below, with nationally suggested retail prices. In Illinois and other states, wines are distributed by Breakthru Beverage.

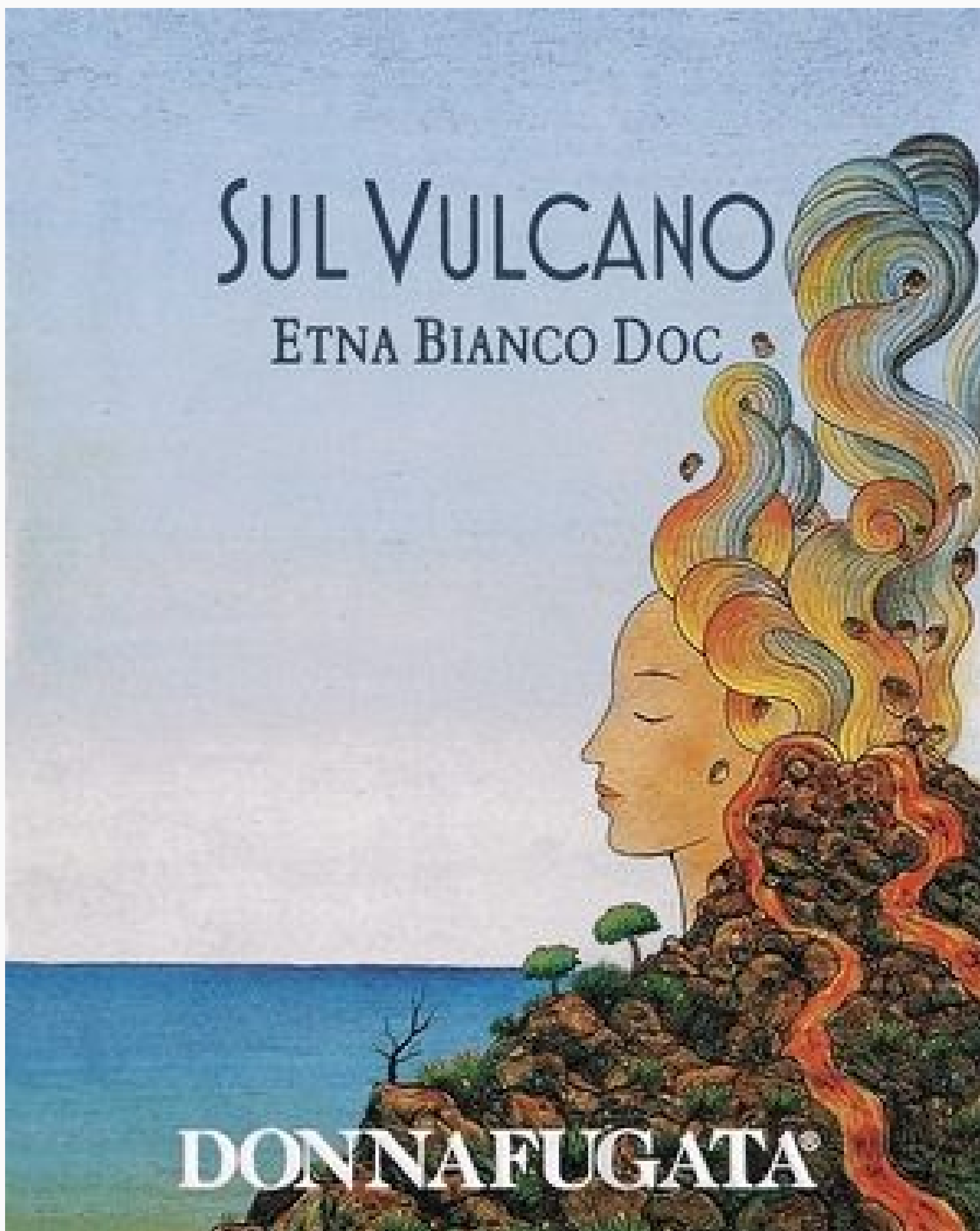


- Courtesy of Donnafugata Wines

- "Fragore" is Etna's roar, a sound familiar to all Sicilians. Donnafugata's "Fragore" Etna DOC Rosso, Contrada Montelaguardia synthesizes the soil of century's old lava flows and the daily temperature swing at 750 meters above the sea with Etna's unique grape -- Nerello Mascalese. It's a

red wine exploding in flavor, combining blackberry, mountain herb and stony flavors with black and brown spice nuances and pleasing tannin. It's perfect for embracing red meats such as Sicilian Beef Filet with Tomato-Anchovy Sauce (Filetto al sugo di pomodoro e acciughe), the richest poultry and vegetarian dishes. (About \$85) To experience the Fragore label coming to life, visit Fragore -- Etna Rosso Donnafugata -- Cru red wine and scroll to One Minute Wine Tale.

- Nerello Mascalese is a grape ready for its moment on the world stage. Pinot Noir is its first comparison with wild berry flavors, herbal accents and sleek tannin, but with added depth and rusticity, like Zinfandel or Brunello. Also, like Pinot Noir, Nerello Mascalese is a reluctant traveler and clings exclusively to its Etna homeland, as Pinot once clung to France's Burgundy.



- Courtesy of Donnafugata Wines

- Donnafugata's Sul Vulcano Etna DOC Rosso expresses Nerello Macsalese's evocative violet aroma, raspberries and sour cherry flavors, with brown spice accents, firm acidity and fine acidity tannin. Serve with rich poultry, especially

with fruit sauce, rich seafood and vegetarian dishes, including fried ricotta balls. (About \$35)

- On first tasting, Sul Vulcano Etna DOC Bianco offered tree fruit flavors but, after a night in the fridge, became more earth than fruit, with invigorating minerality and taut acidity that reminded this palate of French Chablis. Serve with lighter dishes that call for a squeeze of lemon, including oysters, shrimp and Sicilian favorite Lemon Crab Linguini with Chili and Mint (Linguine con granchio limone, peperoncino e menta). (About \$40)



- Courtesy of Donnafugata Wines

- Mille a una Notte Sicilia DOC provided this palate with one of the culinary world's rarest and most exciting pairings: red wine with chocolate. Based on Nero d'Avola, the wine offers dark fruits, earthiness and pleasingly firm tannin, a traditional pairing with red meats. But with dark-chocolate covered cranberries (produced by Wisconsin's Lake Nokomis Cranberries Inc.), there's a new melody of flavor, as dolce amaro (bittersweet) as Jose's rendition of "An Older Man is Like An Elegant Wine." See it at [youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10THziVMVNo&list=PLenr1BaBotoriFGiF-UScLPW8ppaK28ci&index=2) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10THziVMVNo&list=PLenr1BaBotoriFGiF-UScLPW8ppaK28ci&index=2>).

For more expressions of the Rallo family's commitment to wine, art and Sicily, visit Donnafugata (<https://www.donnafugata.it/en/>) -- Fine Italian Wines from Sicily.

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