



# The International Wine Review

June/July 2013

## Report #37: The Wines of Sicily

### Introduction



Sicily is one of the most exciting wine regions in Italy. In recent decades, Sicilian wines have greatly improved in quality. While Sicily is renown for its outstanding dessert wines

such as the world-famous Marsala, today there are a growing number of wineries throughout Sicily, large and small, producing world class premium wines from unique indigenous varieties like Nero d'Avola, Nerello Mascalese, Frapatto, Grillo, Caricante, and others.

In our previous 2007 report *The Wines of Southern Italy: from Quantity to Quality*, we noted that most of southern Italy including Sicily had a long history of wine production focused on quantity. Instead of producing wines of quality for the international market, the south of Italy became a producer of cheap bulk wine, and Sicily was the leading producer. Indeed, the structure of the wine industry in Sicily was built on the production of cheap wine by cooperatives, which in turn stifled private investment and innovation in the wine industry. While Sicily's cooperatives and private companies continue producing a vast quantity of innocuous wine, there are today many outstanding family and commercial wineries producing world class wines that deserve the attention of the trade and serious wine consumers. These wines are the focus of this report.

In this report we provide a brief history of Sicily's wine industry and identify its major wine growing regions and their different soils and climate. We then identify the improvements which have taken place in the vineyards and the wineries throughout the island that help explain the emergence of Sicily as a producer of premium wine. A unique characteristic of Sicilian wine is its indigenous grapes, so we focus the next section on the different varieties

### In this Issue

A Brief Wine History .....	3
Geography .....	4
Improvements in Viticulture and Winemaking .....	7
The Vineyard .....	7
The Winery .....	9
The Grapes and Wines .....	10
Sicilian Food and Wine Pairing .....	12
The Market for Sicilian Wine .....	14
Tasting Notes and Ratings.....	16

ies and styles of wines being produced and identify the best producers. We also take a close look at the special cuisine of Sicily and make recommendations on the pairing of Sicilian wines and food. Lastly, we examine the global market for Sicilian wines and recommend measures for promotion of Sicilian wines in the United States. In the final section we provide tasting notes and ratings on more than 200 wines tasted for this report. Some of the artisanal wines we review are produced in small quantities and are difficult to find outside Sicily, but the persistent consumer who seeks out these wines will be amply rewarded.

The current market for Sicilian wines in the US should grow in the coming years. The quality of the wines is excellent and the prices are competitive for most wines. The big challenge for the Sicilian wine industry and its importers is to educate the public about the quality and uniqueness of Sicilian wines. This is one of the missions of Assovini Sicilia, the trade organization which represents most of the quality wine producers of Sicily in international markets.

**Acknowledgements.** The preparation of this report was made possible by the generous support and collaboration of Assovini Sicilia and its member wineries. We are especially appreciative of the encouragement and support given to us by Antonio Rallo and Alessio Planeta. We also want to thank Giuseppe Longo, Assovini's Director, for his outstanding assistance in organizing our visit to Sicily. We were warmly welcomed by all of the wineries we visited and were extended special hospitality by the following: Caruso & Minini, Donnafugata, Planeta, Tasca d'Almerita, COS, Valle dell'Acate, Zisola, Setteporte and Tenuta delle Terre Nere. We also appreciate the wine samples and information provided by the many US importers of Sicilian wines. We also owe a great deal of gratitude to Bill Nesto MW and Frances di Savino for their superb book, *The World of Sicilian Wine*, which was published just prior to our visit to Sicily. The book is a tour de force on Sicilian wine and was extremely helpful to us during our visit to Sicily and in writing our report. We are most indebted to Bill and Frances. Finally, many thanks to Dana Rubsam Penso, our Italy correspondent, who contacted wineries on our behalf

Mike Potashnik and Don Winkler with Joel Butler,  
Contributing Editor

The i-WineReview is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, VA 22101. Our email is: [info@iwinereview.com](mailto:info@iwinereview.com) Rates for one-year subscriptions are \$69 for the online edition and \$89 for the print edition. Combined online and print subscriptions are \$99 for 1 year. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of [iwinereview.com](http://iwinereview.com). Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at [www.iwinereview.com](http://www.iwinereview.com) Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law. Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

## Previous Wine Reports

Issue 1	California Petite Sirah
Issue 2	Red Table Wines of Portugal
Issue 3	Grenache Wines
Issue 4	Syrah
Issue 5	Malbec: Argentina's Magnificent Malbec
Issue 6	The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality
Special Report	Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha
Issue 7	New Zealand's Exciting Pinot Noirs
Issue 8	The Wines of Ribera del Duero
Issue 9	Champagne
Issue 10	Unoaked Chardonnay: It's More Than Wood
Issue 11	2005 Bordeaux Crus Bourgeois
Issue 12	California Petite Sirah - Syrah Update
Issue 13	The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave
Special Report	Introduction to Sherry
Issue 14	The World of Sparkling Wines and Champagne
Issue 15	The Wines of Chianti Classico
Issue 16	Oregon Pinot Noir
Issue 17	Sauvignon of the Loire
Issue 18	Wines of Navarra
Issue 19	Wines of Greece: Assyrtiko and Santorini
Issue 20	The Santa Lucia Highlands
Issue 21	The Chilean Wine Revolution
Issue 22	Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire
Issue 23	Ribera del Duero Revisited
Issue 24	The New Wines of Portugal Double Issue
Issue 25	The Wines of Austria
Issue 26	The Diverse Wines of Argentina Double Issue
Issue 27	Sweet and Dessert Wines of the World
Issue 28	The Wines of Priorat
Issue 29	The Wines of Monterey County
Issue 30	The Wines of South Africa Double Issue
Issue 31	Brunello di Montalcino
Issue 32	The New Wines of Israel
Issue 33	The Wines of Paso Robles
Issue 34	Champagne Revisited
Issue 35	The Wines of Soave
Special Report	South African Chenin Blanc
Issue 36	The Wines of Santa Barbara
Issue 37	The Wines of Sicily



**These reports are available online at [www.iwinereview.com](http://www.iwinereview.com)**