



SICILIA



Some say that today, Sicilians have less Italian blood in their veins than Phoenician, Greek, Arabic, Norman, Spanish, or French. Because Sicilia is on a crossroads between Europe and Africa, it has been overrun by many different cultures, which have left their traces on this beautiful island, the largest in the Mediterranean. The Greek cities of Sicily flourished during the 6th and 5th centuries BC, and their ruins are some of the most impressive outside of Greece, especially the Valley of the Temples near Agrigento. The Romans took over in the 3rd century BC, followed by the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Byzantines. The Arabs ruled from the 8th to the 11th century, although not much has survived from their rule. The Norman era began in 1060, and the cathedrals of Monreale and Cefalu are their brilliant achievements as is Santi Peitro e Paulo outside Taormina. The 17th and 18th centuries saw the accomplishments of the Spanish Viceregal court, especially the palaces and churches of Palermo. Nature also has its achievements in Sicilia, its magnificent beaches, remote hill

towns and plains, its mountain ranges, and spectacular Mount Etna, one of three active volcanoes, which has rendered the land immensely fertile. In fact, Sicilia has more vineyards than any other region. The western province of Trapani alone produces more wine than the entire regions of Toscana or Piemonte. But much of this wine is either shipped north as blending wine or distilled into industrial alcohol. The proportion of DOC wine is only 2.5%, most of which is Marsala, Sicilia's proudest wine despite decades of degradation when it was flavored with various sweeteners. The English created Marsala in the late 18th century and made Sicilia its prime source. Marsala, as well as Moscato and Malvasia, rank with the best fortified wines of Europe.

But Sicilia has now switched its emphasis to lighter, dryer wines, both whites and reds. The pale white, dry Bianco d'Alcamo is the only DOC wine made in significant quality. The dry white and red wines of Etna, whose vines drape over the lower slopes of the volcano show notable class as does the pale red Cerasuolo di Vittoria. Increasingly prominent are the fruity aromatic whites, Inzolia, Cataratto, and Grecanico. Native reds have also achieved prominence, such as Nero d'Avola, Nerello Mascalese, and Perricone. The newly introduced French varieties, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah are also producing exciting results. ■

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Mt. Etna erupting in Sicily on July 20, 2001



Italian Wineries of the Month

Cottanera

Cottanera is located in Sicilia at the northern side of the Etna volcano. Starting from an altitude of about 700 meters and descending to the river Alcantara, Cottanera is located in the town of Castiglione di Sicilia. The business was acquired 40 years ago by Francisco Cottanera, the father of the present owners. The winery now has 30 hectares under cultivation, planted to the international varieties such as Merlot, Syrah, and Mondeuse, and to the indigenous varieties Nerello Mascalese and Nero d'Avola. Professor Leonardo Valenti from the agricultural department at the University of Milano is the agronomic and enologic consultant for the winery. The winemaker is Giulio Vecchio.



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Spadini

Spadina produces only Nero d'Avola, the principal red wine of Sicilia although the grape is indigenous to Calabria. Spadina vineyards are located in two different areas, one near Marsala and the other in central Sicilia. The grapes from the former region, normally an area regarded as being cool for Nero d'Avola, have given vibrancy and an aromatic dimension to the wines, while the later, a hotter, drier zone, provides the color, weight, and structure. The winemaker is Alberto Antonini.

Colosi

This small winery is located on Salina, one of the islands off the Eolies archipelago, north of Sicilia. In this beautiful Mediterranean setting, the Colosi family planted a vineyard of about four hectares on a hilly slope at 180 meters above sea level. Here they grow mainly Malvasia and small quantities of Inzolia and black Corinto grapes. They purchase red varieties from high-quality, local growers. Continuous sunshine, scarce rain, and the volcanic nature of the soil contribute to the perfect ripening of the grapes. The cellar equipment is technologically advanced and includes temperature controlled stainless steel tanks.

Piero Colosi, winemaker at the Colosi estate

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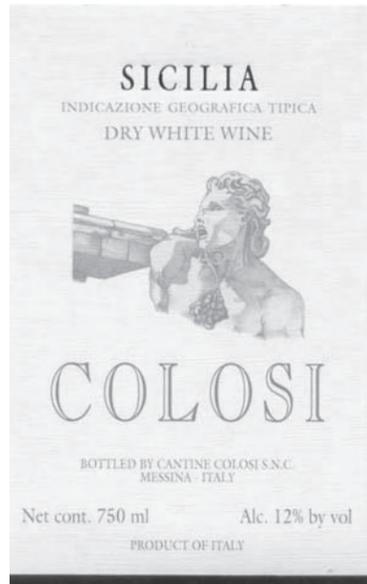
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WINES OF THE MONTH



ARTISAN SERIES

Colosi 2002 Bianco



The grapes for the Colosi Bianco are 75% Inzolia, native to Sicily, and 25% Catarratto from estate vineyards. These varietals also comprise the famous Sicilian fortified wine, Marsala, but the process for vinifying Marsala renders it dramatically different from Colosi Bianco, which is wonderfully crisp and fresh. Pale yellow, clean, and light in color, and the nose is persistent and intense with floral and aromatic herbal notes and hints of exotic fruit. This aromatic wine is complex with a finish that is pleasantly persistent. Before release from the winery, the wine was aged in stainless steel tanks for six months. Serve chilled.

Spadina 2001 Nero d'Avola

This wine is 100% Nero d'Avola from estate vineyards, one near the western coast of Sicily in Marsala and the other in central Sicily. The wine shows good balance with a deep garnet color. On the palate, the wine shows ripe, dark cherry and plum fruit with soft oak overtones and a velvety texture. Serve at cool room temperature with roasted and grilled meats and hard cheeses and with pasta and polenta with flavorful tomato sauces.

WINEMAKER SERIES

Cottanera 2000 Fatagione



This wine is 80% Nerello Mascalese and 20% Nero d'Avola from estate vineyards. Ruby colored, this wine is aromatic and intensely flavored with fruit, oak, tannins, and acid in balance. The wine was aged in French Tronçais barrels with medium toasting, 70% new and 30% two years old. The wine was aged from 15 months in barrel before release from the winery.

Cottanera 2002 Barbazzale

This wine is 90% Nerello Mascalese and 10% Nero d'Avola. Densely ruby-violet in color, the nose shows aromas of plum and wild fruits. On the palate, the wine is dry and warm with soft tannins, good body, and a persistent finish. For four months, 50% of the wine was aged in stainless steel tanks and 50% in oak barrels. This wine and the Fatagione provide an interesting contrast. The Barbazzale has very little oak influence, so its fruit flavors are fresh and bold, whereas the Fatagione has aged and modified in barrel. The two differing styles each have their enthusiastic proponents, those who prefer bold varietal flavors and those who prefer the addition of flavors that the oak produces.

COLLECTOR SERIES

Cottanera 2001 Sole di Sesta



This wine is 100% Syrah from estate vineyards. Intense ruby red in color with violet reflections, the wine has intense Syrah aromas with notes of fruit and vanilla. The finish is long and aromatic. The wine was aged in French Allier barrels for 18 months before release from the winery.

WINES OF THE MONTH

Cottanera 2000 l'Ardenza



This wine is 100% Mondeuse from estate vineyards, a grape variety that comes from French Haute Savoie but is similar if not identical to Refosco in Friuli. The wine is intense ruby red in color with purple reflections, and the nose reveals peppery fruit and vanilla notes. With a full, rich and savory body, the wine is balanced with a long aromatic finish. Aged in French Tronçais oak barrels, the wine remained in barrel for 18 months before release from the winery.



Spadini estates in Marsala and in central Sicily

Cottanera estate on the northeastern slope of the Etna volcano near the town of Castiglione

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