

COS Frappato 2008 IGT Sicilia

9 Feb 2010 by Julia Harding MW

Sometimes you taste a wine and you want to do two things at once: (a) clear the room, sit down, and focus all your attention on the pleasure this wine gives and (b) invite all your friends round to share the pleasure with them. **Cos Frappato 2008 IGT Sicilia** is one of those wines.

The colour is like a warm ruby, not especially dense but bright and truly red, without blue or purple tones, even though it is still a young wine. The aromas are charming: fragrant wild strawberries and the merest hint of candied orange peel and light spice, maybe nutmeg or cinnamon. The polished texture is silky but definite, with a fine balance of clear fruit and structure (tannins and acidity) to give it depth and length. It has that lovely sweetness of fruit that you get from the best examples of Pinot Noir (though it doesn't taste like Pinot) and the same apparent lightness and freshness even though it fills the mouth with flavour and scent, and just 12.5% alcohol. It is unoaked, complex and layered, juicy but not simple. Simply delicious.

The grape variety Frappato has been around on the island of Sicily quite a while and it is often blended with Nero d'Avola, today frequently disappearing into Cerasuolo di Vittoria, Sicily's first DOCG wine. In 2008 there were 846 ha (2,091 acres) of this small-berried, thin-skinned variety planted on Sicily (photo courtesy of Gal Zohar, who helped with the Frappato harvest last year). It was first mentioned in 1760 in Vittoria (one of its synonyms is Frappato di Vittoria), where it is said to have originated, and the grapes for this wine come from that region, in

the province of Ragusa in the south of the island. According to ampelographer and DNA expert Dr José Vouillamoz, our co-author on the new grape book currently under construction, recent DNA studies have suggested a parent-offspring relationship between Frappato and Sangiovese, though this wine tastes nothing like Sangiovese.



Giusto Occhipinti started the COS winery with two classmates back in the early 1980s. Doug Wregg of UK importer [Les Caves de Pyrène](#) tells the story: 'On a shoestring budget, the three friends vinified the grapes from their parents' vineyards. They even bought Angelo Gaja's used French barrels back in 1983 to age the wine. By the late 1980s, they started buying new barriques and felt the influence of California's Napa Valley. Other winemakers in the area were impressed with the results and also began making Cerasuolo di Vittoria, using the two local varieties instead of selling the grape juice from overripe Nero d'Avola. "Then we took a huge step back," Occhipinti recalls. "We tried some of our earliest bottlings, those matured in used barriques, and we were shocked at the difference. With its mineral notes and earthy sensations, the wine was so much more interesting than the later vintages matured in new oak with sensations of vanilla and toast. Just as everyone else in the mid-1990s invested in new French barriques, we began recycling ours. Today we use a combination of different-sized barrels, from barriques to large casks, all of varying ages." [The Frappato, however, is unoaked.] He also notes that COS does not use selected yeasts and has never used chemicals in the vineyards. "Our goal isn't to make wines that impress wine critics, but to make wine that expresses our great terroir".'

COS are also experimenting with clay amphorae and half of this wine was fermented in 400-litre clay jars, the rest in concrete tanks at 28 °C. The vines are just eight years old, planted at 5,000 vines per hectare on limestone/clay soils.