

# *Guide to Italian Wines*

*Published by Tom Hyland*

Chicago, IL thwinewriter@comcast.net Summer 2009



**MONTALCINO**  
PHOTO ©TOM HYLAND

## **INSIDE**

**2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO ... PAGE 2**

**IL POGGIONE VERTICAL ... PAGE 11**

**NEW FROM PUGILA ... PAGE 12**

**NEW FROM SICILY ... PAGE 21**

**LEARN ITALIAN WINES/ CAMPANIA ... PAGE 29**

## 2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO

In late February I attended Bevenuto Brunello, an anteprima event that focused on the soon to be released bottlings of the newest vintage of Brunello di Montalcino. This year there was considerable excitement, as these wines are from the celebrated 2004 vintage, which followed two less than impressive harvests: 2002 saw relatively thin wines due to late season rains and very cool temperatures throughout much of the growing season, while the wines from 2003 were a bit alcoholic and bitter, due to the torrential heat of that year.

So a successful growing season would be just the tonic needed for Montalcino in 2004 and thankfully the weather cooperated, yielding beautifully balanced wines with lively acidity, lovely aromatics and very good concentration. These wines most closely resemble those from 1999, while they are a bit lighter than the 2001s. Expect the finest bottlings of Brunello from 2004 to age for 20 years plus – just what you expect from this great wine.

### \*\*\*\*\* OUTSTANDING

#### LE CHIUSE

Lovely bright garnet with aromas of red cherry cedar and red roses. Medium-full excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate, beautiful varietal character and excellent structure. Beautiful length in the finish with excellent fruit persistence, finely tuned acidity and silky tannins. This is a classic Brunello! Le Chiuse, once part of the estate of Biondi-Santi, has quietly become one of the upper tier producers of Brunello di Montalcino. Best in 15-20 years.

#### IL POGGIONE

As this is one of my favorite producers of Brunello di Montalcino, I expected an outstanding wine from the 2004 vintage; I was not let down. Deep bright garnet with aromas of red cherry, wild strawberry and cedar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate and an elegant entry on the palate. Long, long finish with excellent fruit persistence, lively acidity and young, refined tannins. Typical class! Best in 15-20 years.

#### SESTA DI SOPRA

Bright, deep garnet with a lovely nose of red cherry, currant, cinnamon and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Rich mid-palate. A complete wine with a long finish, vibrant acidity and subdued oak (only *botti grandi*). Beautiful complexity, balance and grace- very classy! Best in 15-20 years.

#### CAPRILI

Beautiful young garnet with aromas of red cherry, cedar and paprika. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Beautifully defined mid-palate with layers of flavor. Long, long finish with great balance and style – lovely! This is the finest wine I have ever tried from this estate. Best in 15-20 years.

## 2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)

\*\*\*\*\* **OUTSTANDING**

### **PIAN DELL'ORINO**

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, tobacco, cedar and a hint of marmalade. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Subdued wine with a long finish with graceful tannins, lively acidity and subtle oak. Made by biodynamic practices, this is so refined and graceful, yet has the backbone to age well for 20 years plus. Gorgeous wine!



**Caroline Pobitzer, Co-Owner, Pian dell'Orino**

Photo ©Tom Hyland

### **CIACCI PICCOLOMINI D'ARAGONA**

Deep garnet with textbook aromas of cedar, red cherry and cinnamon. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lovely balance, lively acidity, excellent fruit persistence and nicely integrated oak. Beautiful length in the finish- this is a classy wine and one of the best I have had from this estate in some time. 20 years plus.

### **IL PALAZZONE**

Beautiful deep garnet color with lovely aromas of red currant, paprika, cedar and a hint of cinnamon. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Beautifully styled with pinpoint acidity, excellent fruit persistence and subtle wood notes. Lovely balance and structure. Best in 15-20 years.

## 2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)

### \*\*\*\*\* OUTSTANDING

#### FULIGNI

Gorgeous aromas of cedar, cherry and wild strawberry; nicely defined mid-palate and a lengthy finish with excellent fruit persistence. Lively acidity, subtle oak and polished tannins. This estate is one of the most consistent of the Brunello producers, always styling a classic wine. Impeccable balance; though so tantalizing now, the wine will be at its best in 15-20 years.

#### POGGIO ANTICO “ALTERO”

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla, red plum and red pepper. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big fruit on the mid-palate, excellent persistence, lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. Beautifully structured; this bottling is aged in mid-size French oak known as *tonneau* as opposed to the regular bottling from this estate (reviewed on page 5) that is aged in *botti grandi*. Best in 15-20 years.

#### UCCELLIERA

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of currant, red plum, red cherry and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Layers of fruit on the mid-palate, lively acidity, balanced tannins and nicely integrated oak. Rich with beautiful ripeness and admirable balance. Best in 15-20 years.



**Andrea Cortonesi, Owner/Winemaker, Uccelliera**  
Photo ©Tom Hyland

## **2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)**

### **\*\*\*\*\* OUTSTANDING**

#### **POGGIO DI SOTTO**

Lovely young garnet with aromas of red cherry, cedar, currant and cumin. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate and a rich, beautifully structured finish with excellent persistence, lively acidity and perfectly ingrained tannins. Distinct spicy notes wind up the sensory experience – outstanding complexity. Best in 12-15 years.

#### **TALENTI**

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of cedar, dried cherry, strawberry and a hint of tar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate, beautiful varietal character and excellent structure. Gorgeous wine! Best in 15-20 years.

### **\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

#### **SIRO PACENTI**

Lovely bright garnet with aromas of fresh red cherry and cedar- very appealing! Medium-full with very good concentration. Lovely balance throughout with a nice harmony of all components. Bright fruit, lively acidity and elegantly styled tannins. Best in 12-15 years.

#### **TENIMENTI ANGELINI “VAL DI SUGA”**

Bright garnet with aromas of cedar, dried cherry and thyme. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Ripe, ample oak. Rich fruit persistence, young tannins and lively acidity. Impressive, but definitely needs time to settle down. Best in 15-20 years.

#### **POGGIO ANTICO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, strawberry jam, vanilla and red flowers. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Very good acidity, young, balanced tannins and ample oak. This bottling is aged in the traditional large casks known as *botti grandi*. Another excellent bottling from this estate, one of the most consistent in Montalcino. Best in 15-20 years.

#### **CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE**

Deep bright garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, vanilla, red plum and tar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lengthy finish with young, balanced tannins, lively acidity and a very nice use of oak. Excellent fruit persistence. Though I prefer the traditionally made bottlings of Brunello, I am always impressed by this modern style wine; this is a hidden gem! Big, powerful wine that will be at its best in 20 years plus.

## **2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)**

### **\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT**

#### **STELLA DI CAMPALTO**

Lovely bright garnet with aromas of fresh cherry, thyme and cedar. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Young tannins, lively acidity, subtle oak and excellent persistence. Give this time – very impressively styled with excellent balance throughout. Best in 12-15 years.

#### **CAPANNE RICCI**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, beet, rhubarb and a hint of cinnamon. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lively acidity, ample oak and rich, youthful tannins. Sometimes this wine has too much oak and not enough fruit for me, but with this 2004 bottling, the components are in excellent harmony. Powerful wine – best in 20 years plus.

#### **CAMIGLIANO**

Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of red cherry, vanilla, mint and hints of red pepper. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Very good acidity, nice use of oak and very good persistence. A bit aggressive with slightly bitter tannins, but otherwise quite impressive. Best in 15-20 years – perhaps longer.

#### **CAPARZO**

Beautiful deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, currant and thyme. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Very good acidity, ample oak and rich tannins. A big, gutsy wine that is nicely structured but needs time to settle down. Best in 15-20 years.

#### **LA FORTUNA**

Bright, deep garnet- light ruby red with aromas of ripe red cherry, red plum and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate with lively acidity, youthful tannins and nicely integrated oak. Beautifully balanced throughout. Best in 12-15 years.

#### **MATE**

This relatively new estate is owned by an American couple, Candace and Ferenc Máté. Bright, deep garnet with aromas of cherry, wild strawberry and cedar – just lovely! Elegantly styled with silky tannins, pinpoint acidity and subdued oak. Not a powerhouse, but beautifully balanced. 12-15 years.

#### **VALDICAVA**

Deep, bright ruby red with aromas of black cherry, vanilla and violets. Medium-full with very good concentration. Big, ripe, forward modern style with very good fruit persistence, balanced acidity and young tannins. Nicely structured, but give this time to round out. Best in 12-15 years.

## 2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)

### \*\*\*\* EXCELLENT

#### PIAN DELLE VIGNE

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, cedar and cinnamon. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Round and complete with excellent complexity. Rich finish with excellent fruit persistence and lively acidity. Nicely balanced from start to finish. Best in 12-15 years.

#### SILVIO NARDI

Deep garnet with aromas of dried cherry, currant, rose petals and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Elegant, traditional style with very good acidity, modest wood and young, but subdued tannins. Nicely structured. Best in 12-15 years.

#### LAMBARDI

Light ruby red with a lovely nose featuring aromas of red cherry, cedar, milk chocolate and a hint of tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Light spice in the finish, subtle oak, polished tannins and lively acidity. Beautifully styled – lovely with food now, though it will be at its best in 12-15 years.

#### FONTERENZA

Young, deep garnet with aromas of Queen Anne cherry, strawberry and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Elegant wine with beautiful acidity, bright fruit, youthful tannins and nice use of oak. Excellent fruit persistence. Give this time to settle down – best in 15-20 years.

#### ARGIANO

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, dried brown herbs and dried cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Big persistence of fruit in the finish, very good acidity and nice use of oak. Slightly bitter tannins now, but this will round out and should be at its best in 15-20 years.

#### DONATELLA CINELLI COLOMBINI “PRIME DONNE”

Deep ruby red with aromas of black cherry, vanilla and black plum. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Rich fruit; tightly wound on the mid-palate. Big persistence, very good acidity and ample oak. This is a bit sharp now, but should round out nicely- best in 12-15 years.

### RATINGS

\*\*\*\*\* OUTSTANDING

\*\*\*\* EXCELLENT

\*\*\* VERY GOOD

\*\* GOOD

## **2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)**

### **\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

#### **BANFI**

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, dried herbs, dried cherry and cinnamon. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very good acidity, balanced tannins and ample oak. Light earthiness in the finish. A well made wine, but rather shy, this is lighter than some of the recent Banfi Brunellos I have enjoyed, such as the 1999 and 2001. Best in 12-15 years.

#### **CASTELGIOCONDO**

Bright young garnet with aromas of vanilla, ripe red cherry, roses and a hint of tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich mid-palate and a slightly short finish with a light earthiness. Very good acidity, round tannins and nice use of oak. Best in 12-15 years.

#### **FOSSACOLLE**

Deep young garnet with aromas of cedar, dried cherry, cinnamon and tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very good fruit persistence, nice use of oak and very good acidity. Somewhat subdued, this is a well made wine but not as impressive as I would have expected from this excellent estate. Give some time to round out – best in 12-15 years.

#### **CASTELLO ROMITORIO**

Deep ruby red with aromas of black plum, black currant and vanilla. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Layers of flavor and big fruit persistence, but too much oak with strong tannins. Best in 15-20 years.

#### **MASTROJANNI**

Pale garnet with aromas of red cherry, cumin and currant. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Lively acidity, subtle oak and elegant tannins. The finish is a bit short. Gruppo Illy purchased this estate recently; let's hope that they can improve the overall quality here as the wines are well made but lack depth of fruit. Best in 7-10 years.

#### **MASTROJANNI "VIGNA SCHIENA D'ASINO"**

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, red spice and cedar. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Very good acidity, nice use of oak and moderate tannins. A bit more interesting than the regular bottling, but this still is a bit straightforward and lacks fruit intensity. Best in 10-12 years.

#### **DONATELLA CINELLI COLOMBINI**

Light ruby red with aromas of black cherry, tar and violets. Medium-full with very good concentration. The tannins are a bit sharp and there is ample oak. Give this time – best in 10-12 years.



## **2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)**

### **\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

#### **GIANNI BRUNELLI “LE CHIUSE DI SOTTO”**

Bright, deep garnet- light ruby red with aromas of red plum, vanilla and a hint of paprika. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very ripe with plenty of oak, young tannins and good acidity. Best in 15-20 years.

#### **LISINI**

Beautiful deep garnet with aromas of vanilla, tar and black cherry. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Earthy finish with big fruit persistence and big tannins and ample oak. A bit rough now – 12-15 years.

#### **BARBI**

Deep garnet with aromas of dried brown herbs, dried cherry and sage. Medium-full with good to very good concentration. Elegantly styled with lively acidity. Well made, though a bit simple and short in fruit. Best in 10-12 years.

#### **GREPPONE MAZZI**

Lovely deep bright garnet with aromas of ripe red cherry, red currant, roses and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Round and approachable with lively acidity and ample oak. Best in 10-12 years.

#### **TENUTA DI SESTA**

Light garnet with aromas of cedar, dried herbs and dried cherry. Ripe with very good concentration. Good acidity and nice use of oak, but slightly clumsy on the finish with a notable bitterness. Best in 10-12 years.

#### **TENUTA OLIVETO**

Bright pale garnet with aromas of sweet red cherry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good acidity. Forward and ripe, this has very good fruit persistence and ample oak. Best in 10-12 years – perhaps longer.

#### **SESTI**

Beautiful bright garnet with aromas of dried cherry, cedar and cumin. Medium-full with very good concentration. Earthy finish with slightly bitter tannins, good acidity and very good fruit persistence. Best in 12-15 years.

### **IN THE NEXT ISSUE**

**2006 BARBARESCO**  
**2005 BAROLO**  
**THE LATEST FROM CAMPANIA**

## **2004 BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO (continued)**

### **\*\*\* VERY GOOD**

#### **SAN GIACOMO**

Deep garnet with aromas of ripe cherry, tar, vanilla and red currant. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ample oak, good acidity and young tannins. Slightly aggressive now – best in 10-12 years.

#### **MOCALI**

Bright deep garnet with aromas of tar and ripe black cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Big finish with very good fruit persistence. Ample oak and good acidity. A bit straightforward and simple. Best in 12-15 years.

#### **SAN POLO**

Deep garnet with aromas of vanilla, red cherry and currant. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ample oak and slightly bitter tannins. Modern style. Best in 12-15 years.

### **\*\* GOOD**

#### **ALTESINO**

Deep garnet with earthy, herbal aromas – dried fruit and cedar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rough, lacks finesse. Harsh and bitter with ample oak. This does have richness, but lacks other redeeming qualities. Best in 10-12 years.

#### **TIEZZI**

Pale garnet with earthy aromas of cinnamon and dried cherry. Medium-bodied with good concentration. A bit disjointed, with an earthy finish with good fruit persistence and a distinct herbal edge. Rather dull. Best in 10-12 years.

### **THE AUTHOR'S RATINGS OF RECENT BRUNELLO VINTAGES**

**2004 – OUTSTANDING – Beautiful fruit and concentration**

**2003 – VERY GOOD – Big concentration, but tannic and alcoholic**

**2002 – POOR TO GOOD – Light wines, best for short term**

**2001 – OUTSTANDING – Excellent concentration and structure; great aging potential (20-25 years)**

**2000 – EXCELLENT – Beautiful concentration, round acidity**

**1999 – OUTSTANDING – Excellent concentration, pinpoint acidity**

## IL POGGIONE VERTICAL

One of my favorite Brunello producers for years has been **Il Poggione**, located just below the town of San Angelo in Colle. Owned by Leopoldo Franceschi, the wines are beautifully made by Fabrizio Bindocci, a strict traditionalist. He ages his Brunello only in large casks (*botti grandi*); a few years ago he switched coopers and now uses French oak rather than Slavonian.

Bindocci and his son Alessandro hosted several journalists including myself for a wonderful vertical tasting at the winery this past February. Not only was it a rare opportunity to try several vintages of this great Brunello at once, it was also a chance to taste what Brunello was like more than 40 years ago. As Brunello has become a collector's item, many new estates have sprouted up over the past 10-15 years. When the Il Poggione wine was made in 1966, there were only 26 producers of Brunello. The local wine scene has certainly changed, but the outstanding quality of Il Poggione has not!

### 1997

Deep garnet with a brick edge. Aromas of cedar, orange marmalade and a hint of truffle. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Earthy finish with very good fruit persistence. This should drink well for another 10-12 years. \*\*\*\*\*

### 1991

Deep garnet with aromas of still fresh cherry, a hint of strawberry and cedar. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long finish with beautiful acidity, subtle oak and refined tannins. Gorgeous wine – still with another 12-15 years of life to it. \*\*\*\*\*

### 1988

Deep garnet with aromas of cedar, dried currant, sage and dried truffle. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very good fruit persistence and a long finish with a light herbal note. Lively acidity and subtle tannins. Drinking beautifully now, this should offer pleasure for another 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*\*

### 1970

Pale garnet with a light edge. Aromas of dried currant, truffle and a hint of marmalade. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Quite elegant, this is beautifully balanced with subdued tannins. Nearing peak, this will drink well for another 5-7 years. \*\*\*

### 1966

Pale garnet with a brick edge. Aromas of cedar and truffle. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Lengthy finish with pinpoint acidity. At peak- enjoy over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*\*

## **NEW RELEASES FROM PUGLIA**

I visited Puglia for the first time in over five years this past January. I was excited to be there as admittedly I haven't kept up with the wines from this region. I was fearful that too many wines would taste alike, probably in an international style.

However I have to report that I was pleasantly surprised by the variety of the wines I tasted during my visit. The level of winemaking is quite high and what I like most about the wines overall is that there are regional differences, especially coming out in the wines made from Nero di Troia (also known as Uva di Troia) in the north. More of these wines are to my liking than the ripe, forward examples of Primitivo and Negroamaro from the south, but I found several excellent examples of those bottlings as well.

### **CANDIDO • SAN DONACI**

This is a medium-large producer (two million bottles per year) with several levels of wine. The entry level offerings are clean and well made, while the upper tier offers greater character and complexities. The Duca d'Aragona bottling is quite impressive, as is their dessert Aleatico Passito.

#### **2007 CASCINA CUCCI (IGT Salento)**

100% Chardonnay. Fresh aromas of golden apple and pear. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely balanced with very good acidity, this is a very enjoyable wine to be enjoyed over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

#### **2007 VIGNA VINERA (IGT Salento)**

A blend of 60% Chardonnay and 40% Sauvignon Blanc. Deep yellow-light gold with aromas of baked apples, pear and tropical fruit. Medium-full with good concentration. Rich young fruit, but there is too much oak here. Drink over the next 1-2 years. \*\*

#### **2004 SALICE SALENTINO "RISERVA"**

A blend of 95% Negroamaro and 5% Malvasia Nera. Deep ruby red with aromas of cigar, dried brown herbs and myrtle. Medium-full with good concentration. Moderate tannins, good acidity and notes of tobacco in the finish. Nicely balanced, but a bit straightforward. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*

#### **2004 CAPPELLO DI PRETE (IGT Salento Rosso)**

100% Negroamaro. Deep garnet with lovely aromas of sage, currant, black cherry and a touch of clove. Medium-full with very good concentration. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good length in the finish; rich with very good complexity. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

**Reviews of more Candido wines on the next page**

## **CANDIDO (continued)**

### **2001 DUCA D'ARAGONA (IGT Salento)**

A blend of 80% Negroamaro and 20% Montepulciano. Deep garnet with aromas of dried brown herbs, dried cherry, thyme and a hint of cigar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich tannins, but nicely balanced. Nicely definted mid-palate, subdued oak and good persistence. Tobacco notes in the finish. Nice expression of terroir. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2002 ALEATICO (Salice Salentino DOC)**

100% Aleatico. Aleatico is used by a few producers in Puglia and other parts of southern Italy to make a delicate dessert wine that is less intense than a Recioto, but just as appealing. Deep garnet with a hint of brick. Lovely nose of currant, almond, caramel and orange peel. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Very sexy wine! Lovely complexity and subtlety, very good acidity and moderate sweetness. Hint of toffee in the finish. Enjoy this over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*



**Alessandro Candido**

Photo ©Tom Hyland

## **CASTEL DI SALVE • DEPRESSA DI TRICASSE**

This estate in far southern Puglia was one of the most pleasant surprises for me with a lineup of wines that was among the most impressive of any Puglian estate. The entry level wines display a great deal of character while the best wines offer wonderful balance and complexity.

### **2007 SANTIMEDICI ROSATO (IGT Salento)**

100% Negroamaro. Lovely deep strawberry color with fresh strawberry and cherry aromas. Medium-bodied, this has a big finish and very good acidity. Enjoy over the next 6-8 months. \*\*\*

### **2007 SANTIMEDICI ROSSO (IGT Salento)**

100% Negroamaro. Deep garnet with aromas of black currant, myrtle and cinnamon. Medium-full with good concentration. Light tannins, precise acidity and a rich, elegant finish. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2007 SALICE SALENTINO “ARMECOLO”**

A blend of 80% Negroamaro and 20% Malvasia Nera. Deep garnet with aromas of myrtle, black currant and tobacco. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Moderate tannins, good acidity and a nicely balanced finish with good length. Nice complexity and varietal character, this can be enjoyed now, but will be at its best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2006 IL VOLO DE ALESSANDRO (Sangiovese di Puglia)**

100% Sangiovese. Deep, bright garnet with aromas of cherry, cedar and sage. Medium-full with very good concentration. Very good acidity, moderate tannins and good length in the earthy finish. Nicely balanced and quite distinct. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*

### **2005 PRIANTE (IGT Salento)**

A blend of 50% Negroamaro and 50% Montepulciano aged in 70% French oak and 30% American oak, all of which is used, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> passage. Light purple with aromas of ripe black cherry, cigar, tar, vanilla and a hint of marmalade. Medium-full with very good concentration. Long, long finish with moderate tannins. The finish offers notes of tobacco and dried brown herbs. Excellent complexity and fruit persistence; elegantly styled. This is a beautifully made wine that offers great pleasure now and will be at its best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*\*

### **2005 LAMA DEL TENENTE (IGT Salento)**

Roughly translated as “sword of the new lieutenant,” this is a blend of 35% Primitivo, 30% Montepulciano and 30% Malvasia Nera. 100% new oak. Bright purple with aromas of black cherry, myrtle, vanilla, black plum and sassafras. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Nicely structured with lively acidity, moderate tannins and excellent complexity. Give this time to round out – best in 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*

**Reviews of more Castel di Salve wines on the next page**

## **CASTEL DI SALVE (continued)**

### **2006 CENTO SU CENTO (IGT Salento)**

“Cento su Cento” means 100 percent; this wine is made entirely from Primitivo. Light purple with aromas of black plum, black molasses and blackberry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Ample oak, distinct ripeness, balanced acidity and youthful tannins. More modern than most of the other wines of this producer; the oak is a bit strong. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2004 ALEATICO PASSITO (IGT Salento)**

Deep garnet with gorgeous, intense aromas of toffee, orange peel, caraway, dried plum and herbal tea. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lengthy, moderately sweet finish with very good acidity; buttery notes in the finish. Lovely balance and complexity, this is tantalizingly delicious and a great example of Aleatico. Enjoy this now or over the next 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*\*

**Imported by Sussex Wines, Philadelphia, PA**

## **LI VELI • CELLINO SAN MARCO**

Located in the Salice Salentino zone, this relatively small winery (300,000 bottles per year) produces modern Puglian wines that are fairly priced. The owners are the Falvo family from Avignonesi, the famed Tuscan producer of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano.

### **2007 “PASSAMANTE” (IGT Salento)**

100% Negroamaro. Bright ruby red with aromas of black cherry, vanilla and red licorice. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Soft tannins and tart acidity with notable oak. Ripe and forward, this is for drinking now and over the next 1-2 years. \*\* (\$10)

### **2007 “ORION” (IGT Salento)**

100% Primitivo. Bright garnet with aromas of red cherry, red roses and strawberry. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Soft tannins, good acidity and subtle oak. Fresh and easy to drink. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\* (\$13)

### **2005 SALICE SALENTINO “PEZZO MORGANA”**

Bright ruby red with aromas of red cherry, tobacco, coriander and a hint of strawberry. Medium-full with very good concentration, this has very good fruit persistence, lively acidity and elegant tannins. Approachable now, this will display more complexity in another 3-5 years. \*\*\*\* (\$20)

**Imported by Dalla Terra, Napa, CA**

### **CANTINE DUE PALME • CELLINO SAN MARCO**

This large cooperative winery, located in the Salice Salentino zone, produces a few excellent premium red wines in addition to their lower priced offerings.

#### **2005 SALICE SALENTINO RISERVA “SELVAROSSA”**

A blend of 80% Negroamaro and 20% Malvasia Nera. Deep purple with aromas of black plum. Medium-full with very good concentration. Rich finish with very good fruit persistence, good acidity and youthful tannins. Ripe and a touch alcoholic; highly extracted – quite forward. Impressive; best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

#### **2006 SERRE (IGT Salento)**

This wine is made exclusively from Susumaniello, an indigenous variety seen primarily in the southern reaches of Puglia. Deep purple with aromas of black raspberry, violets and black plum. Medium-full with very good concentration. Moderate acidity, youthful tannins and notable oak. Quite ripe in a modern style. Best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*

### **FEUDI DI SAN MARZANO • SAN MARZANO**

#### **2007 PRIMITIVO (IGT Puglia)**

Bright purple with aromas of black plum and black cherry. Medium-full with very good concentration. Nicely balanced with very good acidity, moderate tannins and a round, flavorful finish. Elegantly styled for enjoyment over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

#### **2007 NEGROAMARO (IGT Puglia)**

Light purple with aromas of freshly baked cherry pie. Red plum and iris. Medium-bodied, this is forward and ripe with tasty fruit and soft tannins. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*

#### **2006 PRIMITIVO DI MANDURIA “SUD”**

Bright purple with aromas of blackberry, myrtle and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe bit balanced with youthful tannins and good acidity. This needs a bit of time to settle down- best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*

#### **2005 PRIMITIVO DI MANDURIA “SESSANTANNI”**

Made from albrello vineyards (small bushes) that average out at 60 years. Bright, deep purple with aromas of licorice, black plum, black raspberry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ultra modern in its approach- very ripe with ample oak. Balanced tannins and acidity. Impressive in its concentration, but too ripe for my tastes. Best in 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*

#### **2007 ALEATICO DI PUGLIA “LIATICO”**

Light purple with aromas of herbal tea, currant, caramel and balsamic. Medium-full with very good concentration. Moderately sweet with good acidity and a lengthy finish. A bit unsettled now- give time. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*



## **CANTELE • GUAGNANO**

### **2008 CHARDONNAY (IGT Salento)**

Straw with aromas of pineapple and lemon peel. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Round finish with tart acidity- clean with no oak. 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2008 ROSATO NEGROAMARO (IGT Salento)**

Bright pink with attractive aromas of fresh strawberry and red cherry. Medium-bodied with very good acidity and a lengthy finish. 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2004 SALICE SALENTINO RISERVA**

A blend of Negroamaro and 10% Malvasia Nera. Bright ruby red with aromas of red cherry, red plum, cumin and licorice. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Ripe, but nicely balanced. Lovely acidity, subtle oak and soft tannins. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2006 AMATIVO (IGT Salento)**

A blend of 60% Primitivo and 40% Negroamaro. Deep purple with black plum and black cherry aromas. Medium-full with excellent concentration, this is ripe with balanced oak and tannins and good acidity. A modern styled red that needs time to settle down; best in 7-10 years.

**Imported by Vias, New York, NY**

## **TORRE VENTO • CORATO**

### **2008 ROSATO (DOC Castel del Monte)**

A blend of 80% Bombino and 20% Montepulciano. Bright cherry, strawberry with notes of fresh strawberry. Very, very fresh- quite tasty. Very good acidity and a light earthiness in the finish. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2006 TORRE DEL FALCO (IGT Murgia)**

100% Nero di Troia. Deep ruby red-light purple with aromas of black plum, black raspberry and purple iris. Medium-full with very good concentration. Bright fruit- very good acidity. Good length in the finish. Very pleasant wine that is quite approachable. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*

### **2006 VIGNA PEDALE RISERVA (DOC Castel del Monte)**

Light purple with aromas of black plum, black raspberry, crème de cassis and violets. Medium-full with very good concentration. Youthful, balanced tannins, lively acidity and nicely integrated oak. Nicely structured; the finish has notes of tar and black spice. Best in 5-7 years and perhaps longer. \*\*\*\*

### **2006 MOSCATO DI TRANI "DULCIS IN FUNDO"**

Light yellow with a lovely nose of pineapple, musk oil and guava. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Moderate sweetness with a light bitterness in the finish. Good acidity. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

## **ALBERTO LONGO • LUCERA**

This relatively new estate (founded in 2000) offered several of the most beautifully made wines I tasted during my visit to Puglia. Longo, an accountant, is an innovator in Puglia, making not only a rarely seen DOC wine such as Cacc'e Mmitte but also a wonderful Falanghina.

### **2007 LE FOSSETTE (IGT Puglia)**

100% Falanghina. Straw color with appealing aromas of melon and white flowers. Medium-full, this has lively acidity, nice freshness and very good fruit persistence. This can stand with several of the best examples of this variety from Campania, where it is better known. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2005 CACC'E MMITTE DI LUCERA (DOC)**

Cacc'e Mmitte is one of the mosr rarely seen DOC wines from anywhere in Italy. Produced from grapes grown near the town of Lucera in northern Puglia where the Longo winery is located, the wine is a blend of several grapes, the most notable being Uva di Troia (Nero di Troia), Montepulciano and Bombino Bianco in this instance. Light ruby red with pleasing aromas of red plum, currant and strawberry. Medium-bodied, this has lively tart acidity, light tannins and spicy red fruit. This is like a cross between a Dolcetto (fruitiness) and a Cotes du Rhone (earthiness). Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. A big thank you to Alberto Longo for producing this wine, as the DOC was reportedly being threatened with extinction, as no one was making the wine. Longo with his efforts, literally saved this wine. \*\*\*\*

### **2005 CALCARA VECCHIA (IGT Puglia)**

A blend of 50% Cabernet Franc and 50% Merlot. Light ruby red with aromas of dried cherry, thyme, sage and cedar. Medium-bodied with good concentration, good acidity, moderate oak and tannins. Earthy, spicy finish with notes of pink peppercorn. More fruit persistence would help. Best in 2-3 years. \*\*\* (\$27)

### **2007 PRIMITIVO (IGT Puglia)**

Bright, deep ruby red with aromas of black cherry, vanilla and clove. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Nice ripeness and balance- never too forward. Clean finish with moderate tannins, good acidity and ample oak. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\* (\$24)

### **2005 CAPOPOSTO (IGT Puglia)**

100% Negroamaro. Light ruby red with aromas of rhubarb, sage, dried cherry and cedar. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Earthy finish with slightly bitter tannins, good acidity and balanced oak. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\* (\$24)

**Imported by Clyde Thomas Wines, New York, NY**

## **RIVERA • ANDRIA**

This estate in the Castel del Monte DOC is making some very impressive wines. The Falcone is a beautiful traditionally styled wine, while the Puer Apuliae is a more modern styled offering.

### **2008 BOMBINO BIANCO “MARESE” (DOC Castel del Monte)**

Bombino Bianco is an indigenous variety of the area usually seen in blends; here is a rendering *in purezza*. Straw-light yellow with aromas of melon and pear, Medium-bodied with good concentration. Lively acidity and a lengthy finish, this is very appealing and offers nice texture as well as a lovely delicacy. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2008 ROSATO “PUNGIROSA” (DOC Castel del Monte)**

100% Bombino Rosso. Bright pink with fresh strawberry aromas. Medium-bodied with tart acidity and a clean finish. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2004 FALCONE RISERVA (DOC Castel del Monte)**

A blend of 70% Nero di Troia and 30% Montepulciano. Deep ruby red with aromas of red plum, red cherry, vanilla and thyme. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lively acidity, moderate tannins, with the oak perhaps a touch strong. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*

### **2005 PUER APULIAE (DOC Castel del Monte)**

100% Nero di Troia “*ad acino piccolo*” (small berry) from old clones. Bright purple with aromas of black plum, blackberry, vanilla and a hint of dark chocolate. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Youthful tannins, but balanced. Lively acidity and very nice complexity. Give this some time – best in 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*\*

## **Imported by Wines from Bedford, Larchmont, NY**



**Carlo de Corato, proprietor, Rivera**  
**Photo ©Tom Hyland**

## **TORMARESCA • MINERVINO MURGE**

Tormaresca is Antinori's wine project in Puglia; currently there are two estates, with the one in Minervino being the showcase winery. As you might expect with Antinori, this is a first-class venture with beautifully sited vineyards and an ultra modern cellar. Tormaresca offers value wines as well as premium Puglian reds that are excellent examples of modern viticulture.

### **2007 CHARDONNAY (IGT Puglia)**

Light yellow with aromas of vanilla, apple and cinnamon. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Tart acidity- nicely balanced. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\* (\$14)

### **2007 NEPRICA (IGT Puglia)**

The name Neprica comes from the first two letters of the varieties used to make this wine; Negroamaro (50%), Primitivo (30%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (20%). Light purple with aromas of black plum, red currant and cocoa powder. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Soft tannins and good acidity – nicely balanced and styled for drinking now and over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\* (\$14)

### **2005 MAIME (IGT Salento)**

100% Negroamaro. Light purple with aromas of ripe black cherry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and forward with ample oak and balanced acidity. Best in 3-5 years – perhaps longer. \*\*\*

### **2006 TORCICODA (IGT Salento)**

100% Primitivo – Torcicoda means “tail twister.” Deep purple with rich aromas of myrtle, blackberry, black raspberry and vanilla. Medium-full with very good concentration. Ripe and rugged with big tannins. Give this time to settle down. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*

### **2004 BOCCA DI LUPO (DOC Castel del Monte)**

100% Aglianico. Deep ruby red-light purple with aromas of menthol, tobacco, black cherry and bitter chocolate. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lively acidity, refined tannins and well integrated oak. Beautiful complexity and structure with excellent fruit persistence. This is one of the finest examples of Aglianico from Puglia I've tasted. This is styled for enjoyment down the road, though it is showing well now. Best in 12-15 years. \*\*\*\*\*

## **Imported by Antinori/Chateau Ste. Michelle**

Puglia has 25 different DOC designations, among them Castel del Monte in the north and Salice Salentino in the south. There are six IGT designations including Daunia in the north and Salento in the south as well as Puglia for the entire region. There are no DOCG wines in Puglia.

## **THE LATEST FROM SICILY**

In late March, I attended Sicilia en Primeur, a four day event of winery visits and tastings throughout Sicily. After meeting dozens of producers and tasting several dozen new wines, I came away with the thought that Sicily is advancing rapidly in quality. Even just a few years ago, many of the red wines from here tasted too much alike, as they were quite ripe – perhaps a bit overripe – and very deep in color. But it seems that today, the vintners have toned it down a bit and the wines are more subdued with slightly lower levels of alcohol. This is a good sign – let's hope this trend continues!

### **TERRE DI GIURFO • VITTORIA**

This medium-sized estate has a nice quality/price relationship for most of their wines. The Cerasuolo “Maskeria” is a particularly good example of this wine, while the Uniko is a dessert treat!

### **2008 INSOLIA (IGT Sicilia)**

Bright straw-light yellow with fresh pear and lemon aromas. Medium-bodied, this has very good acidity with a pleasant freshness of fruit. Enjoy now. \*\*

### **2008 BELSITO (IGT Sicilia)**

This is an unusual wine, a 100% Frappato, a grape normally only seen as part of the blend for Cerasulolo di Vittoria. Bright, deep garnet with aromas of Queen Anne cherry and caraway. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Very light tannins, very good acidity and nice balance in the finish. Drink over the next 12-15 months. \*\*\*

### **2007 KUDYAH (IGT Sicilia)**

100% Nero d'Avola. Deep garnet-light ruby red with aromas of marascino cherry and a hint of pink peppercorn. Medium-bodied, this has soft tannins and is round, elegant and quite approachable now. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*

### **2006 CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA “MAKSERIA” (DOCG)**

Cerasuolo di Vittoria became a DOCG wine recently; the new DOCG bottlings can now have a different blend than the traditional 60% Nero d'Avola, 40% Frappato mix; this one is 50/50. Bright ruby red with aromas of red cherry and red plum. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Generous mid-palate, tart acidity, moderate tannins and nice balance throughout. Enjoy this over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2008 UNIKO (IGT Sicilia)**

This is a very unusual wine, a Frappato made according to the passito method. Light garnet with aromas of cherry cough syrup and dried brown herbs. Medium-bodied with soft tannins, moderate sweetness and a light herbal character in the finish. Quite delicious! Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*\*

## **SANTA TRESA • CONTRADA SANTA TERESA VITTORIA**

The name Santa Tresa comes from the local Sicilian pronunciation, which shortens Teresa to Tresa.

### **2005 CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA (DOCG)**

A blend of 50% Nero d'Avola and 50% Frappato. Bright purple with aromas of black cherry and black plum. Medium-full with very good concentration. Light tannins, subtle oak, good acidity and an earthy finish. Best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*

### **2006 NIVURO (Sicilia IGT)**

A blend of 70% Nero d'Avola and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. Bright purple with aromas of blackcurrant, black cherry, vanilla and licorice. Ripe, nicely balanced with moderate tannins. Best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*

### **2006 AVULISI (Sicilia IGT)**

A selection of the best Nero d'Avola grapes. Bright purple with aromas of black cherry, vanilla and licorice. Medium-full with good concentration. Quite ripe with moderate tannins; very good fruit persistence. Best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*

## **RUDINI • PACHINO**

This is a medium-large producer that makes well-crafted wines of moderate prices. The Sitaré blend is quite good for the price of 6 Euro at the winery.

### **2008 CHARDONNAY**

Straw-light yellow with aromas of lemon and apple. Medium-bodied, this is clean and a bit simple, but tasty. Drink over the next 1-2 years. \*\*

### **2008 ROSATO (Eloro Pachino DOC)**

A blend of 90% Nero d'Avola and 10% Frappato. Strawberry color and aromas. Medium-bodied with tart acidity, this is simple, but nicely balanced. Dry finish. Drink over the next 10-12 months. \*\*

### **2008 NERO D'AVOLA (Sicilia IGT)**

Bright, deep garnet with aromas of marascino cherry and red flowers. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Nicely balanced with good acidity and moderate tannins. Finish is a bit short, but otherwise nicely made. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2008 SITARE (Sicilia IGT)**

A blend of Nero d'Avola, Syrah, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep, right ruby red with aromas of red cherry, red licorice and allspice. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Earthy finish – nicely balanced. Very good acidity, moderate tannins and subtle oak. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*

## **TENUTA DI FESSINA • ETNA**

This is a brand new estate in Etna owned by Silvia Maestrelli of Villa Petriolo of Tuscany; the winemaker is Federico Curtaz. There are two Etna reds, produced from existing vines, which were planted by former owners more than 80 years ago. There is also an excellent Chardonnay from a vineyard in western Sicily.

### **2007 NAKONE (IGT Sicilia)**

100% Chardonnay from a vineyard at 600 meters elevation in western Sicily. Light yellow with lovely aromas of pear and quince – no oak. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Long finish with very good acidity and a light touch of minerality. Excellent complexity throughout. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years.

••••

### **2008 ERSE (Etna DOC)**

A blend of Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio. Lovely deep garnet color with aromas of wild strawberry, red currant and thyme. Medium-bodied with lively acidity and moderate tannins. Styled for early consumption – charming and well made. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*

### **2008 MUSMECI (Etna DOC)**

A blend of Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio. Deep garnet with aromas of morel cherry and red flowers. Medium-bodied with excellent concentration. Generous mid-palate and a long, long finish with moderate tannins and lively acidity. Half aged in oak, the other half in stainless steel. Very impressive now (a pre-release sample); this could be outstanding in a few years. \*\*\*\*



**Silvia Maestrelli, Owner, Tenuta di Fessina**  
**Photo ©Tom Hyland**

## **COS • VITTORIA**

COS is one of Sicily's most famous wine estates. Owners Giusto Occhipinti and Giambattista Cilia are ardent traditionalists, as they make several of their wines in *amphorae*. These are varietally pure wines with no flavors of new oak. The wines age beautifully, as we tried a 1995 Cerasuolo di Vittoria that displayed beautiful dried strawberry fruit and excellent length in the finish. Cerasuolo di Vittoria is supposed to drink well for 5 or 7 years in a great vintage, but here was a 14 year-old bottling that was incredible!

## **2007 FRAPPATO**

Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, currant and a light touch of oregano. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Beautiful acidity, bright fruit and moderate tannins. Charming, elegant wine with a long finish and excellent varietal character. Drink now and over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*\*

## **2006 CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA**

Deep garnet with aromas of strawberry, rose petals and a touch of red pepper flakes. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Moderate tannins with very good acidity. Drinkable now, this should be at its best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

## **2007 CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA "PITHOS"**

Bright garnet with aromas of morel cherry, wild strawberry and a touch of heather. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Long finish with excellent fruit persistence. Moderate tannins, precise acidity and beautiful complexity. Best in 5-7 years – this should drink well for 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*\*

**Imported by Domaine Select, New York, NY**



**Giusto Occhipinti, co-owner, COS**  
**Photo ©Tom Hyland**



## **PLANETA • NOTO**

One of the great estates of Sicilian viticulture, Planeta has several wineries on the island, including a small, ultramodern one in Noto, on the far southeastern reaches. This area had become one of the best in Sicily for Nero d'Avola and the winery's bottling, Santa Cecilia, is now produced from grapes grown in this area. They also produce a lovely dessert wine from this area as well.

### **2008 COMETA (Sicilia IGT)**

100% Fiano. Light golden yellow with aromas of kiwi, banana, Meyer lemon and a hint of almond. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Layers of flavor on the mid-palate, excellent fruit persistence and very good acidity. Rich and complex – quite a statement! This should drink well for 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*\*

### **2007 CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA (DOCG)**

Deep ruby red color with aromas of raspberry, plum and Queen Anne cherries. Medium-bodied with very good concentration. Very good ripeness, nicely balanced and good acidity. This is oakier than in the past, which takes away some of the charm of this wine. Still, a very good example. 2-3 years. \*\*\*

### **2006 SYRAH (Sicilia IGT)**

Light purple with lovely aromas of blackberry, black plum and sage. Medium-full with very good concentration. Beautiful complexity with a long finish, moderate tannins and good acidity. Impressive! Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2008 PASSITO DI NOTO (DOC)**

100% Moscato. Through the 2007 vintage, this DOC wine was called Moscato di Noto; starting in 2008, the new DOC is Passito di Noto. Light yellow with lovely aromas of honey, apricot, lilac and perfume. Medium-full with very good concentration. Lovely wine with light sweetness and cleansing acidity. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*\*



**Planeta Moscato di Noto (2007) with Ragusano Cheese from Sicily  
Photo ©Tom Hyland**

**See next page for notes on Planeta Santa Cecilia**

## **PLANETA – SANTA CECILIA VERTICAL**

Santa Cecilia is the signature red of Planeta, a 100% Nero d'Avola from grapes grown on their estate in Noto. The wine was first made in 1997 (with a small percentage of Syrah in the blend) and contained grapes from western Sicily; early releases such as this year and the 1999 display a more rustic quality. Beginning with the 2003 vintage, the wine has been produced entirely from Noto area Nero d'Avola.

Here are notes on several vintages I tried at the Noto winery in March:

### **2008** (barrel sample)

Bright purple with a slightly closed nose of plum and marascino cherry; medium-full with soft, young tannins, very good acidity and excellent fruit persistence. 2008 was less rainy than several previous years in Sicily, which is important for Nero d'Avola as the variety suffers from rain and excessive humidity. I love the structure of this wine; combined with the rich aromatics and depth of fruit, this has the potential to be an outstanding wine. (Note: The 2008 will be the first Santa Cecilia labeled as Noto DOC.)

### **2007**

Bright purple with aromas of black plum and black licorice- deep fruit. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Big extract and still a bit tannic with very good balance and acidity. Notes of menthol in the finish. Give this time to round out; should be at its best in 10-12 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2006**

Light purple with gorgeous aromas of blackberry, marmalade and black cherry. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lovely balance with pinpoint acidity, subtle tannins and subdued oak. Excellent fruit persistence- this should hold for 12-15 years. My favorite wine of the tasting. \*\*\*\*\*



**More notes on Santa Cecilia on the next page**

## **PLANETA SANTA CECILIA VERTICAL (continued)**

### **2005**

Deep ruby red-light purple with aromas of blackberry, mint, dried red flowers and a hint of nutmeg. Very good length in the finish with round tannins and very good acidity. Light herbal notes in the finish. Enjoy over the next 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2001**

This is Nero d'Avola from both Noto and Menfi. Deep ruby red with aromas of dried brown herbs, dried strawberry and a hint of tobacco. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good acidity, subtle oak and still firm tannins. This has a definite rustic quality and it quite different from the younger wines. Enjoy over the next 3-5 years. \*\*\*

### **1997**

This is the first bottling of Santa Cecilia and contains 15% Syrah. Light ruby red with aromas of dried cherry and cigar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Big fruit persistence, good acidity and restrained oak with rich tannins. This wine tastes much fresher than the 2001 (this could be due to bottle variation). Excellent complexity- enjoy over the next 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*

**Planeta wines are imported by Palm Bay Imports, Boca Raton, FL**

## **FEUDO ARANCIO • SAMBUCA DI SICILIA**

This large estate is owned by Mezzacorona from Trentino and produces good wines at fair prices. The best are the Greco and Nero d'Avola, which retail in the United States for about \$10.

### **2008 GRECO (IGT Sicilia)**

Straw-light yellow with aromas of lemon and goldnan apple. Medium-bodied with balanced acidity. Clean and straightforward- enjoy over the next 10-12 months. \*\*

### **2007 NERO D'AVOLA (Sicilia IGT)**

Bright ruby red with aromas of fresh marascino cherries and red licorice. Medium-bodied, this has soft tannins, good acidity and is simple and straightforward. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*

**Imported by Prestige Wine Imports, New York, NY**

There is currently one wine designated as DOCG in Sicily; it is Cerasulo di Vittoria. Traditionally a blend of 60% Nero d'Avola and 40% Frappato, many DOCG bottlings are now a 50/50 blend.

## **BENANTI • VIAGRANDE**

Located in the heart of the Etna district, Benanti is one of the premier producers in this zone. Led by Giuseppe Benanti, the winery is known both for its classically styled Etna reds as well as its white wine known as Pietramarina, produced entirely from the Carricante grape.

### **2006 ROSSO DI VERZELLA (Etna DOC)**

A blend of 80% Nerello Mascalese and 20% Nerello Cappuccio. Deep garnet with aromas of red cherry, mint and a hint of clove. Medium-bodied with good fruit persistence, tart acidity, moderate tannins and an earthy finish. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*

### **2004 BENANTI SERRA DELLA CONTESSA (Etna DOC)**

A blend of 80% Nerello Mascalese and 20% Nerello Cappuccio. Deep garnet with aromas of wild cherry, strawberry and dried red flowers. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lively acidity, moderate tannins and wood. Big fruit persistence. Best in 7-10 years. \*\*\*\*\*

### **2004 NERELLO CAPPUCCIO (Sicilia IGT)**

Deep garnet with aromas of dried rose petals and a hint of nutmeg. Medium-bodied with good concentration. Very good acidity, moderate tannins and wood. Interesting on its own and a fine wine, but clearly lacks the complexity of the above wines, as you might expect. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. \*\*\*

## **BAGLIO DI PIANETTO \* SANTA CRISTINA GELA**

This impressive estate, not far from Palermo, is owned by Count Paolo Marzotto, the former general manager of Santa Margherita. The wines, from Viognier to Petit Verdot are flavorful and very well made.

### **2008 GINOLFO (Sicilia IGT)**

100% Viognier. Light yellow with aromas of pineapple, honeysuckle and pear. Medium-full with very good concentration. Good length in the finish with a slight hint of bitterness. Enjoy over the next 1-2 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2005 CARDUNI (Sicilia IGT)**

100% Petit Verdot. Bright purple with aromas of black plum, violets and tar. Medium-full with very good concentration. Excellent fruit persistence, nicely balanced tannins and acidity along with nice use of wood. Quite stylish – best in 3-5 years. \*\*\*\*

### **2005 CEMBALI (Sicilia IGT)**

100% Nero d'Avola. Deep ruby red with aromas of red cherry, red plum and myrtle. Medium-full with excellent concentration. Lengthy finish with finely tuned acidity, moderate tannins and subtle wood. It is so nice to taste a well made Nero d'Avola that is not superripe. Best in 5-7 years. \*\*\*\*\*

**Imported by Terlato Wine Group, Lake Bluff, IL**

## LEARN ITALIAN WINES – CAMPANIA

Campania, in the southwestern reaches of Italy, is a wine region that remains a mystery to many. Napoli and the Amalfi Coast may be a tourist mecca to millions, but few of those travelers know that there are great wine zones located less than one hour away.

The most famous wine area in Campania is in the province of **Avellino**, named for the city, located some 30 miles east of Napoli. This province is also known by its historical name of **Irpinia** in a tribute to the first vines planred by Greek colonists here over 2000 years ago. There are three grapes grown here that produce the most famous wines. Two are white – **Greco** and **Fiano** and one red – **Aglianico**.

**Greco di Tufo** is a medium-full, dry white wine made from the Greco grape (named for the Greeks) with flavors of citrus and pear with a distinct almond note. **Fiano di Avellino**, made from the Fiano grape, is richer with flavors of pear, melon and notes of honey. Both wines tend to be aged only in stainless steel – oak might overwhelm the lovely aromatics – and are best consumed fairly young, although a well made single vineyard bottling of Fiano di Avellino can drink well for 5-7 years from the best vintages.

The Aglianico grape is used to produce Avellino's most famous red, **Taurasi**. While this wine can also be made with small percentages of a red variety known as **Piedirosso**, today most producers make Taurasi solely from Aglianico. Taurasi must be aged for three years before release; the wine features firm tannins and flavors of black cherry and bitter chocolate. Taurasi ages well; even a lighter style will drink well for 5-7 years, while the best bottlings can be consumed 30-40 years after the vintage date.

Aglianico is also used to produce the wine **Aglianico del Taburno** from the Caserta province to the north of Avellino. This wine does not have the acidity of Taurasi, so it does not age as long, but it still delivers rich fruit and a powerful finish.

A third white variety that has become popular over the past decade is **Falanghina**. The variety is known for its vibrant acidity and is often planted near the coast. But even when the grape is planted inland, as in the Sannio DOC zone in Benevento, Falanghina maintains its good acidity.

For years, Falanghina was one-dimensional wine that featured simple green apple fruit with the trademark high acidity. But now that vintners in several areas of Campania are making serious versions of Falanghina (often by lowering the yield in the vineyard), the wines have much more complex aromatics with notes of quince, kiwi and pear backed by the usual lively acidity.

**Continued on next page**

## **LEARN ITALIAN WINES – CAMPANIA**

There is also a wine zone near Napoli called **Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio**. This unique name - “the tears of Christ” – is used for white, red and rosato versions of this wine. The red is usually made from Piediroso while the white is produced from **Coda di Volpe** (and perhaps one or two other varieties).

The Amalfi Coast features some gorgeous white and red wines (**Costa d’Amalfi DOC**). White varieties here include **Biancolella**, **Fenile** and **Ginestra**, while the reds are made from **Tintore**, **Sciasinoso**, Aglianico and Piediroso.

I will review a few dozen wines from Campania in the next issue. Here is a short list of some of the best producers of these wines in Campania:

### **GRECO DI TUFO/ FIANO DI AVELLINO**

Mastroberardino  
Feudi di San Gregorio  
Terredora  
Macchialupa

### **TAURASI**

Mastroberardino  
Feudi di San Gregorio  
Terredora  
Antonio Caggiano

### **FALANGHINA**

Mastroberardino  
Feudi di San Gregorio  
Villa Matilde  
Fontanavecchia  
Alois

### **COSTA D’AMALFI**

Giuseppe Apicella  
Marisa Cuomo

### **AGLIANICO DEL TABURNO**

Fontanvecchia  
Cantina del Taburno  
Ocone

### **OTHER NOTABLE PRODUCERS**

Luigi Maffini (Fiano from Paestum IGT – province of Salerno)  
Casa d’Ambra (white and reds from island of Ischia)  
Pietratorcia (Ischia)  
I Borboni (Aspirinio d’Aversa from province of Caserta – excellent *passito*)