

WINELOVERSPAGE.COM – AGOSTO 2020

Sicily's Mandrarossa – new labels, new wines



Some time ago I wrote about tasting three of Mandrarossa's Sicilian wines. I said I would like to try more Mandrarossa wines.

The wines I'm reviewing today came from both the southwestern part of the island around Menfi as well as the Etna area on the northeastern coast. An added bonus was that Mandrarossa introduced new labels telling the story of various legends of the area on some of the most interesting and colorful labels I have ever seen. My wife said she would buy these wines if only for the labels.

Trust me, there is more to these wines than just labels.

As is my custom, we tasted the wines with meals prepared by my excellent chef/cook wife. Our initial wine was a 2017 Bertolino Soprano Bianco Sicilia DOC, a 100% Grillo grape, 12.5% alcohol offering. Cryomaceration at 5-8°C for 4-6 hours was followed by 15-20 days fermentation at 16-18°C. It was aged for one month in stainless steel tanks and concrete vats and then was refined for 11 months in large oak barrels. The product of this was a wine that was pale yellow in color with a very light fruit nose. It finished medium and smooth with nice acidity. We tasted this with various antipasti including fried melanzane (eggplant) with tomato sauce dip. I rated the Bianco Sicilia an 88 and felt it was a nice wine to serve with appetizers at 10-12°C, about 51°F.

With the main course of my wife's homemade lasagna we tasted 2016 Terre del Sommacco Rosso Sicilia DOC, a 100% Nero d'Avola grape, 14% alcohol wine. The Terre del Sommacco had



MANDRAROSSA

LA SICILIA CHE NON TI ASPETTI

maceration and fermentation for 6-8 days at 22-25°C. Aging was for 8 months in stainless steel and concrete vats plus 19 months in large oak barrels. Additional aging was for 8 months in the bottle. This wine was a very dark garnet in color with a slight leather nose. It finished medium and smooth, slow in the beginning but stronger later. I rated it a 90 and it should be served at 16-18°C, about 65°F.



On another occasion we tried a 2019 Perricone Rosé Costadune Terre Siciliane IGT, a 100% Perricone grape, 12% alcohol wine. The Perricone grape was once abundant throughout Sicily but because of its susceptibility to the dreaded phylloxera, it is found today only in the western part of the island. The Perricone Rosé was cold macerated for 8-10 hours at 41-46°F with the must left to ferment for 15-20 days in stainless steel tanks at 61-64°F. After this it was aged in stainless steel tanks for 4 months. We drank this wine with Pollo Involantino (chicken thighs stuffed with Italian breadcrumbs in a sauce of wine, butter, artichokes and mushrooms). The Perricone Rosé was one of the best rosés that my wife and I have had the pleasure to drink. The color was almost peach and it had a slight fruit nose. It finished medium to almost long and very smooth. I rated this wine a 91/92 and highly recommend it if you like rosés.

At a family dinner we tasted some of Mandrarossa's Etna wines produced from their vineyards on the South-eastern slopes of Mt. Etna. This area has developed in the past few years where the cost of land is cheaper than the Northern slope which has been producing wines for some time.

The first wine was a 2018 Sentiero delle Gerle Etna Bianco DOC made from 100% Carricante grapes. After destemming, the grapes for this 13% alcohol offering were crushed and soft pressed and only the first fraction of must was used for fermentation. Selected yeasts were added to the must for a fermentation of 25-30 days at 10-15°C. After fermentation the unfiltered wine was placed in stainless steel silos to age for 13-15 months at 14°C. We tasted this wine with antipasti consisting of my wife's homegrown cherry tomatoes stuffed with mozzarella di bufalo and fresh basil, soppressata, and cheese. The Etna Bianco was a pale straw in color with a pleasant fruit nose. It finished medium, crisp and very smooth. I liked this wine very much and rated it a 91. I think it will go well with seafood and even white meats.



MANDRAROSSA
LA SICILIA CHE NON TI ASPETTI

With the entree, we tried a 2016 Sentiero delle Gerle Etna Rossa DOC, a 13.5% alcohol wine made from 100% Nerello Mascalese grapes. Like the Carricante grapes above, the Nerello Mascalese grapes are almost unique to the Etna region of Sicily. After destemming and crushing the grapes, the product was moved to tanks where it was kept in contact with the skins and must using continuous racking. The maceration/fermentation process lasted for 10-12 days at a constant temperature range of 25-27°C. After maceration the wine was separated from the skins and aged for 10-12 months in 50hl French oak barrels. The Etna Rosso was served with an entrée of grilled beef steak accompanied by roasted potatoes and zucchini stuffed with Italian breadcrumbs and cheese. The wine was a dark garnet in color with a slight leather nose. It finished long and very smooth. I rated this elegant European style wine a 93/94 and recommend it highly.

Our final was a replay of a Mandrarossa wine that I had tasted some time ago in a previous column. The prestigious Italian magazine group Gambero Rosso recently rated this wine tre biccheri, their highest award. Thus I was very pleased that Mandrarossa had sent a bottle of this wine, the 2017 Cartagho Mandrarossa DOC, along with the others. If you are interested in the production data, you can refer to the previous article. The 2017 Cartagho was also a 100% Nero d'Avola grape wine, 14% alcohol offering. It was a very dark garnet in color with a light fruit nose. We tasted it with my wife's Sicilian mezzi rigatoni pasta alla Norma and garlic bread. This wine started medium and finished long and very smooth. I loved this excellent example of Nero d'Avola and rated it a 94.

Mandarossa is imported in the U. S. by Palm Bay International.

My thanks to Annalisa Chiavazza at Mandrarossa's PR firm for sending me more Mandrarossa wines to taste, and to Mandrarossa for providing me samples during the coronavirus shut-in.