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Sicily's varietal concentration



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Measuring an island's wealth in grape varieties, a journey through its winelands and tasting Sicilia en Primeur

by Michael Godel

Have you ever felt so at home or been so comfortable travelling as you have been in Sicily? If you've not been then you might not understand what I mean. Sicily is *casa quantu stai e tinnu quantu viri*, "home for as long as you need to be and land as far as the eye can see." I always assumed it would be the water to captivate me, but from endless seas of wheat to grapevines covering plains, hills and terraces, it would always be about the land.

You might also think this island in the southern Mediterranean would ripen grapes with the sort of ease akin to some of the world's warmest climates, like South Australia or the Western Cape of South Africa. Oh that it were so simple. In Sicily they say, *austu e ristu capu i mmennu*, "after August, winter starts." Growing grapes is truly a matter of place. You need to be specific with your grape varieties and match them to your micro-climate, but also your soils. This is a Sicilian necessity.



Feudo Principi Di Butera winemaker Antonio Paolo Froio

At Feudo Principi Di Butera winemaker Antonio Paolo Froio points out the mix of conditions just within the estate's lands, eight kilometres from the sea and even greater, the importance of mountain influences. The variability of the calcareous soil provides very different results in (especially) nero d'avola. Three distinct parcels, Trapani in the west, the estate's central plain and the "eastern theatre" are all planted to different clones. The west deals in fatter wines of lower acidities, the east in smaller, compact bunches and in the central plain, less compact bunches, bigger berries, high acidity and tannin. These revelations lead to correlations and being able to make desired blends in varietal wines. As a result Antonio's wines are pre-emptive, planned with great foresight and always with a caution strike. They are focused, precise, clean, sophisticated, subtle and balanced.

At Baglio Del Cristo Di Campobello proprietor Carmello Bonetta delves deep into the highly specific and territorial chalky soils and a micro-climate of high day for night diurnal temperature fluctuations. The limestone/gypsum in this portion of Campobello di Licata is quartz-like though very fragmented and fragile and it is here where grillo, the child of zibibbo and cattarrato was born. Masseria del Feudo's Carolina Cucurullo is a fourth generation farmer with two distinct vineyards in Caltasinetta and of the first producers to plant chardonnay, in 1991/1992.

[Feudo Principi Di Butera Nero D'avola DOC Sicilia 2016 \(\\$18.95\)](#)

Really complex perfume, jumping from the glass, fresh, vital, from large plantings that make up more than 50 per cent of the agriculture. It's both dark red fruit expressive and also herbal, of fennel and then a territorial limestone impression running through the fruit. Quite chewy and expansive in the mouth, all a result of stainless fermentations followed by older, larger barrels, 30 and 50 hL. Gives a broad, soft, elasticized and stretched palate texture with no departure from varietal and place. Very focused, clean, modern interpretation with no excesses, attitude or conceit, nor ambition neither. Drink 2018-2021. Tasted May 2018 impress inc