

Sicilian wine masterclass

It's a rare occasion when a Master of Wine hosts a wine workshop in Mumbai, and when there is such an opportunity, the city's wine folk certainly make the most of it. On the 24 January, the Sicilian Institute of Wine and Olive Oil (IRVOS) held a masterclass in Mumbai to promote Sicilian wines to buyers, wine experts and journalists. Following similar sessions in New Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore, the masterclass was led by the Master of Wine, Susan Hulme, in partnership with the President of the Indian Wine Academy, Subhash Arora, and the specialist consultant in Italian wine, Michele Shah.

Over 90 minutes, a room full of wine professionals were taken on a virtual tour of the Sicilian wine regions, learning about their grape varieties and tasting wines from some of the premier wineries. Eleven family-owned wineries were part of the tour, led by Diego Planeta, the Wine Brand Ambassador of Sicily and owner of the Planeta winery. The wineries that participated were Benanti, Valle dell'Acate, Castellucci Miano, Tasca d'Almerita, Disisa, Ottoventi, Feudo Montoni, Curto Giombattista, Gulfi, Planeta and Donnafugata.

After encouraging statistics of Sicilian wine consumption in India over the last few years, the Sicilian wine industry is keen on investing more in the Indian market. Across Italy, Sicily is closest to India in terms of climate and food, which lends well to the pairing of Sicilian wines with Indian delicacies. Everyone also had the opportunity

to taste a selection of the best Sicilian extra-virgin olive oil from three top producers.

The wines presented at the Masterclass were:

- Planeta La Segreta Bianco IGT 2010
- Castellucci Miano Catarratto IGT 2011
- Valle dell'Acate Frappato Vittoria DOC 2011
- Benanti Serra della Contessa Etna DOC 2004
- Gulfi Reseca 2007 (90% Nerello Mascalese, 10% Nerello Cappuccio)
- Tasca d'Almerita Lamuri Nero d'Avola IGT 2010
- Feudo Montoni, Vrucara Nero d'Avola IGT 2009
- Curto Giombattista, DOC Etna Nero d'Avola 2008
- Donnafugata Ben Rye 2008

A little-known and less acknowledged fact is that Sicily has a vineyard holding twice the size of Tuscany and Piemonte and equal to Chile and South Africa. Interestingly, in the approximately 119 thousand hectares of cultivated area, Sicily produces 64 per cent white and 36 per cent red wines. Hulme introduced everyone to some of the many indigenous Sicilian grapes including Frappato, Catarratto and Carricante among others. Sicily is fiercely proud of these varieties, and thus 80 per cent of the varietal landscape is represented by native grapes, and a mere 20 per cent by international varieties. As one wine producer said, "Our motto is to believe in our indigenous grapes. We aim at drinking 'Glocal' instead of 'Global'?"

The masterclass was definitely

an evening well-spent, with much learning and some fabulous tastings. "In the end," as Diego Planeta put it, "all wine is influenced by three factors. 1. The man or woman who makes it 2. The terroir 3. The grape variety. It is the combination of these three and how they work together in the highest possible harmony, which creates a great wine." Going by the showcase, Sicily certainly has a well-tuned system in place.

~ Karina Aggarwal

