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## Sicilians are coming...Sicilians are coming to India

December 17: Sicilian wines compete with some of the best Italian and international wines. Eleven wineries are being showcased in India next month with producers accompanying the delegation also bringing an MW to help present the region and its wines, writes Michèle Shah, consultant to Sicily's international promotional programme for the Regional Institute of Wine, Viticulture and Olive Oil, who is conducting the programme for the second year running, in conjunction with the Indian Wine Academy



The joint project will showcase about 20 wines from these wineries covering different parts of Sicily thus showcasing different soils and terroir within the 'continent' in the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore and Mumbai from 20 - 24 January. Indian Wine Academy has partnered with the top hotel chain ITC Hotels in all these cities.

We have launched the boat a little further this year and in addition to the producers attending the seminars and Master classes, Susan Hulme MW is coming especially from UK to guide the tastings in each city. I have known Susan for many years now, having organized a number of specialized trips to

Italy which she has always attended, being a great supporter of Italian wines. Last May she attended the Sicily Master of Wine tour which was organized with the Institute of Master of Wine, bringing 20 MWs to Sicily to discover the incredible diversity and quality that is today arising from this enchanted Island. 'This trip to Sicily, from east to west and north to South was one of the most enjoyable professional wine trips I had made for its culture, beauty, food and last but not least the plethora of Indigenous grape varieties and wines,' she had told me.

The producers attending this year's India Road Show have been carefully selected to show the participants attending the range of production from the back-bench wineries such as Planeta, Donnafugata and Tasca D'Almerita, internationally well-known Sicilian wineries and a series of younger emerging and established wineries which proudly bear proof to the range of exciting new wines from Sicily with specific focus on indigenous grape varieties, selected from different areas of production.

The strength of these producers is that they are mainly hands-on companies, most are still family run and because of their diverse styles they can compete in most international markets, offering something with a difference.

Another exciting news is that this year we are also bringing Olive Oil from Sicily to India. During the events we will set up an Olive Oil tasting where it will be possible to taste blends as well as mono-varietal olive oils.

The third novelty to this year's event is that we shall have a star Chef from Sicily attend each event. Carmelo Florida is the Executive Chef of Locanda Gulfi (one of the participating wineries) based near Ragusa in the south eastern part of Sicily. Following the master class, Carmelo will be the star Chef at each dinner to be hosted by the ITC Hotel in each city.

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Carmelo will be the star chef at each dinner to be hosted by the ITC hotels in each city, presenting their invitees with authentic Sicilian cuisine which of course will be paired with a range of superb, Sicilian wines.

Here is a brief description of the participating wineries, first those that will be participating in person, followed by those that will be participating only with their wines.

#### **Wineries visiting with producers attending**

##### **1. Tasca d'Almerita [www.tascadalmerita.it](http://www.tascadalmerita.it)**

**Vineyard area:** 500 hectares

**Annual production:** 3,000,000 bottles

**Tasca d'Almerita** is one of Sicily's historic family estates. The estate extends amidst a dramatic hilly landscape at the edge of the provinces of Palermo and Caltanissetta. It was one of the first in Sicily to exploit local Inzolia and Nero d'Avola vines, to use moderate aging in barrels (in the 1970s with Nero d'Avola) and to experiment with Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon in Sicily as well as the use of soft presses and temperature-controlled fermentation vats for the preservation of grape aromatic richness.

Following the path paved by their ancestors, **Lucio**

**Tasca** runs the company today with his sons, Giuseppe as Vice President (who is coming to India) and Alberto as C.E.O. They represent now the 7th generation of a family run business.



##### **2. Planeta [www.planeta.it](http://www.planeta.it)**

**Vineyard area:** 364 hectares

**Annual production:** 2,300,000 bottles



**Planeta** was established in 1995 by **Diego Planeta**.

Today the company is still run by the family and has expanded its exports worldwide. Planeta's project has turned as much to the past as to the future. On one side, there is a deep link with the oldest enological Sicilian traditions with their heritage of indigenous white varieties, Grecanico, Carricante, Moscato di Noto and Frappato, Nerello Mascalese and Nero d'Avola (red varieties). On the other, is an arena where the greatest producers of the five continents are appraised for the varieties

Chardonnay, Syrah, Merlot and Cabernet, great classics of international enology interpreted by a territory which unmistakably marks them.

##### **3. Castellucci Miano [www.castelluccimiano.it](http://www.castelluccimiano.it)**

**Vineyard area:** 105 hectares

**Annual production:** 150,000 bottles

Known for its Mountain Viticulture, Castellucci Miano vineyards lie at different altitudes between 650 and 1050 meters situated along the slopes of the Madonie mountains. The vineyards planted to old alberello indigenous varieties, such as Catarratto, Inzolia, Perricone, Nero d'Avola, average between 30-40 years. The philosophy of environmental sustainability along with natural and biological cultivation methods and the reintroduction of ancient local traditions contribute to safeguard and enhance viticultural biodiversity at a territorial level along with the



achievement of excellent grape quality. Castellucci Miano has the rare ability to combine sustainable agriculture, experience and wine-growing masterfully with the ability to envisage new stories capable of conveying, through the value of mountain viticulture, a true link to the territory to which the company belongs.

#### 4. Giuseppe Benanti [www.vinicolabenanti.it](http://www.vinicolabenanti.it)

**Vineyard area:** 24 hectares

**Annual production:** 130,000 bottles



**Benanti** is situated on the slopes of the Volcanic Mount Etna in the Comune of Castiglione Sicilia. Its bush-trained alberello vineyards planted to the minerally rich lava soils, ranging between 450 and 750 m above sea level. The vineyards of Etna with the indigenous varieties Nerello Mascalese, Nerello Cappuccio, Carricante, produce wines very different from each other, depending on the micro-zone of production. The DOC region has a semicircular shape which stretches from north to south-west in an area ranging between 450 and 1,000 m asl. Therefore, the pedo-climatic conditions of each area are different

from one another thus influencing the peculiarity of the grapes even among neighbouring territories. 'We extended our boundaries by acquiring different DOC areas of the Etnean massif thus widening the range of our high quality wines', says the owner Benanti accompanying the delegation. The elegance and longevity of Etna wines have often been compared to the 'Burgundy' of Sicily or the 'Pinot Noir' of New Zealand.

#### 5. Valle dell'Acate [www.valledellacate.it](http://www.valledellacate.it)

**Vineyard Area:** 100 hectares

**Annual production:** 450,000 bottles

Valle dell'Acate near Vittoria in the province of Ragusa was founded by Giuseppe Jacono whose family has been farming, growing vines and producing wine since the days when Vittoria was the main centre for exporting wine to France at the end of the 19th century. Valle dell'Acate grows mainly indigenous vines, namely Nero d'Avola, Frappato, Insolia and Grillo, with special attention to Cerasuolo di Vittoria, Sicily's first and only DOCG, and to Frappato Vittoria DOC. The calcareous sandstone substrate inter-bedded with pockets of clay which



keeps the soils cool give the wines a unique quality and elegant, fresh notes that embrace its rich floral aromas. Today, the company is directed by Gaetana Jacono (attending the Road Show) who, with the same passion that bound her ancestors to the vine and a remarkable entrepreneurial style, has taken these wines out into the world, well aware of their value and unique qualities, and certain that they are worthy of accompanying food anywhere in the world.

#### Wineries showcasing wines (without producers):

#### 6. Donnafugata [www.donnafugata.it](http://www.donnafugata.it)

**Vineyard area:** Contessa Entellina, Pantelleria

**Annual production:** 2.300.000 btl



The Donnafugata adventure began in 1983 in the Rallo family's historic cellars in Marsala and at its Contessa Entellina vineyards in the heart of western Sicily; in 1989 Donnafugata arrived on the island of Pantelleria, starting to produce naturally sweet wines. Today Donnafugata has about 328 hectares of vineyards in production, of which 260 are in Contessa Entellina and 68 on Pantelleria. Donnafugata



cultivates a plurality of native and international varieties in order to valorise the special features of the different districts (soil, altitude, exposition) and to

produce complex wines with personality. They are passionate interpreters of the territory. The company today consists of 14 cultivated varieties, 7 territories at Contessa Entellina, 11 districts in Pantelleria. Grape varieties cultivated: Ansonica, Catarratto, Viognier, Zibibbo, Chardonnay, Grecanico, Sauvignon Blanc, Nero d'Avola, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Tannat, Alicante and Petit Verdot.

#### 7. Agricola Ottoventi S.R.L. [www.cantinaottoventi.it](http://www.cantinaottoventi.it)

**Vineyard area:** 40 hectares

**Annual production:** 100,000 bottles

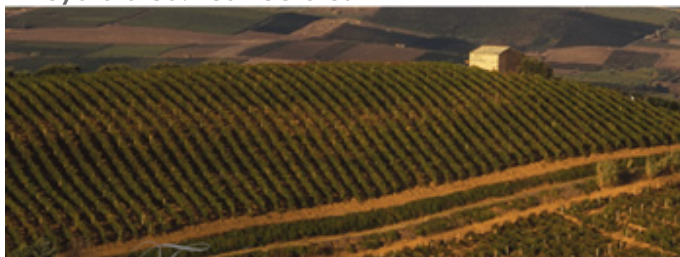
Ottoventi is an emerging Sicilian winery situated in the area of Trapani. The wines of this enterprising and modern estate have made a mark in the international arena, for the genuine fresh quality of its indigenous whites, in particular the indigenous Grillo, once the base of Marsala wine, known for structure and character.

Zibibbo (Muscat of Alessandria) also indigenous to Sicily produces some vibrant dry and dessert wines. Other wines of indigenous character include Catarratto, Nero d'Avola, Nerello Mascalese, (one of the few regions where Nerello Mascalese is grown outside the Etna area) as well as Syrah.



#### 8. Feudo Disisa [www.vinidisisa.it](http://www.vinidisisa.it)

**Vineyard area:** 180 hectares



**Annual production:** 120,000 bottles

The Disisa Estate extends over 400 hectares, of which 180 ha. The vineyards are situated in the area of Alcamo DOC and Monreale DOC. Since 1970, the **Di Lorenzo** family, with the cooperation of the Istituto Regionale della Vite e del Vino, have carried out a large-scale

experimentation to test the adaptability of the most important national and international grape varieties on the Sicilian soil and climate. Today Disisa produces quality driven Grillo, Insolia, Chardonnay, Fiano, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Nero d'Avola, and Merlot.

#### 9. Curto [www.curto.it](http://www.curto.it)

**Vineyard area:** 30 hectares

**Annual production:** 70,000 bottles

The **Curto**s boast a very ancient French origin, dating back to 1030 and have been viticulturists since 1670. Today they still own 200 hectares of which 30 ha are planted with 50 year old "alberello" vineyards which form the main focus of their production of Nero d'Avola. The soil of the estate has a very calcareous nature and it is all part of the Eoro D.O.C. area, near Pachino, not far from Avola, the original town of the "Nero d'Avola" grape variety. This is the most luminous and the hottest area of Italy which also enjoys the benefit of the Mediterranean sea- breeze. The excellent quality of the grapes obtained thanks to the above described climatic conditions turn eventually into very elegant and high class wines.



#### 10. Feudo Montoni [www.feudomontoni.it](http://www.feudomontoni.it)



**Annual production:** 180.000 BOTTLES



Feudo Montoni estate has been in the **Sireci** family since the 1800s and has been passed down through three generations. Today Fabio Sireci combines the knowledge of his ancestors with the assistance of modern technology and produces what is seen today as one of the purest forms of Nero d'Avola with complete authentic appeal, elegance and in a class of its own. The estate of Feudo Montoni extends over 80 ha which are situated in the province of Cammarata right in the center of Sicily, at Montoni Vecchi in the D.O.C. Contea di Sclafani zone. The east facing position of the vineyard, the high altitude which ranges from 400 m to 750 m a.s.l. and the very strong temperature excursions, permit a gradual and full ripening of the grapes. The wines produced have balanced alcoholic strength, combined with a natural acidity and rich extracts for its geographical positioning, the land of Montoni is uncontaminated and protected from any surrounding pollution. All this, helps them in the adoption of biological methods in our cultivation.

**11. Azienda Agricola Gulfi Di Vito Catania [www.gulfi.it](http://www.gulfi.it)**

**Vineyard area:** 75 hectares  
**Annual production:** 300,000 bottles



Azienda Gulfi is considered a rapid rising star with vineyards in the area of Chiaramonte in Ragusa and further south near Pachino, famous for its bush-trained Nero d'Avola vines. Today the winery is run by Matteo Catania, and the 300.000 bottle production is overseen by consultant enologist Salvo Foti, considered one of Sicily's most authoritative winemakers. Gulfi's non-irrigated, organically grown, 30 years old 'alberello' vines, planted

to a density of 8-10,000/ha, produce the estate's four single vineyard crus: Nerosanlorenzj, Nerojbleo, Nerobufaleffj, Nero Baronj, yielding well-structured wines, high in acidity with good complexity and elegance. The winery today includes a Relais, Locanda Gulfi with a small number of rooms and a well-renowned restaurant headed by Chef Carmelo Florida.

Indian wine professionals and a select group of connoisseurs are in for a real treat to get to know Sicily, its soil, terroir and wine, some of which are quite unique. More details are available in the previous edition of delWine.

**Michele Shah**

*Michele Shah is an English wine journalist specialising in Italian wines. She is a writer, author and an international judge who also felicitates wine programmes, with Italy as her specialty. She lives in Tuscany and has been to India on a few occasions. She will also be a part of the delegation and will conduct the Master Classes in India along with Susan Hulme MW and Subhash Arora on January 20-25, 2013. Ms Shah may be reached at [micheleshah@gmail.com](mailto:micheleshah@gmail.com)*



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