

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: Wines of Sicily, January 2017

Presented by Tim Syrad, Wine Educator & Tour Guide

Report by Barbara Jones

Your Society's Chair Margaret and Secretary Keith know Tim Syrad very well. They enjoyed the most splendid wine tour with him in the Piedmont region of Italy in May 2016. So it was an absolute pleasure to be able to welcome Tim to present a tasting of wines from Sicily. Tim is involved in so many wine related activities. As well as organising a full programme of wine tours around the world, he also runs and presents at three wine clubs in the London area. And he manages to fit in many corporate engagements as well! Tim knows the wines of Sicily very well. The Italian island has deservedly won a top class reputation for its wines and our tasting explored the extraordinary diversity of wines grown on this Mediterranean island.

The vine was brought to Sicily by the Greeks 3000 years ago and today the island produces more wine by volume than Australia and Chile combined! Even more surprising perhaps is that 65% of the wine produced is white despite the island's southerly location. White grapes survive here because of the cooling sea breezes and altitude. In some cases also, red grapes are vinified as white wine. The evening started with three white wines, all of which were pale lemon in colour and sparklingly clear. All three were fermented in modern stainless steel vats without being exposed to any oak. Our first was a **Grillo 2015 Cento Cavalli IGT Terre Siciliane** [14%, £9.50] that had a subdued nose but more body and depth than its colour predicted. It was clean and fresh on the palate with good length and finish. Our second white was vinified from a blend [15/85%] of two red grapes – a **Ciuri 2014 Carricante/ Nerello Mascalese Terrazze dell'Etna** [12.55, £18.50]. This had a delicate and aromatic nose with a hint of apply minerality and a fresh finish. Our final white wine was a Muscat – a **Zibibbo 2015 Curatolo Arini IGP Terre Siciliane** [13%, £16.50] that had a sweetish unctuousness accompanied by freshness and good acidity; a well-made wine with a long finish.

We then moved on to three red wines, the first of which came from the well-known Donnafugata winery – **Sherazade 2015 Nero d'Avola, Donnafugata, Sicilia DOC** [13%, £13.50]. This had a black cherry colour that was vibrant and full of fruit with a hint of spice. It was un-oaked, had medium body and tannins; it probably needed another six months in bottle. The next wine was a blend - **Il Passo 2015 Nerello Mascalese Vigneti Zabù** with 40% Nero d'Avola [13.5%, £13.00] with six months spent in French and American oak. It had a dark blackcurrant colour and a fruit laden nose. On the palate there were rich smooth fruits, slight sweetness and medium tannins. The richness apparently comes

from the grapes being cut and left to dry on the vine – known as a ‘cordon- cut’. The last red wine was a **Tancredi 2012 Donnafugata ICT Terre Siciliane** [13.5%, £31.00]. Blended from Cabernet Sauvignon, Nero d’Avola, Tannat and other grapes, this wine had spent fourteen months in French oak and two years in bottle. It was a dense, opaque blackcurrant colour with a spiced cherry nose. It was full bodied, had good structure and medium tannins – sort of ‘chewy’ needing a meat casserole!

As Sicily is well known for its Masala wine, it was a ‘must’ to taste one - a **Marsala Riserva Superiore NV Curatolo Arini DOC Marsala Superiore** [18%, £15.00], a dry variety blended from Grillo/Cattarato/Inzolia, 45/25/10%. Intense gold in colour with shades of amber and toasted almonds, cloves and cinnamon on the nose it was smooth and velvety on the palate with lots of dried fruits and a spicy finish. Our final wine was a sweet wine - Muscat of Alexandria – a **Kabir 2014 Donnafugata DOC Moscato di Pantelleria** [11.5%, £32.50], much paler in colour than the previous wine with a honey-laden nose. On the palate it was surprisingly light with a rich and fragrant bouquet and indulgently sweet, with hints of white peach and aromatic herbs! What better way to end an evening of wines rarely available in supermarkets.

Our grateful thanks go to Tim for a most interesting selection of wines and also for his energetic and fast-paced presentation. We are now certainly better informed about Sicilian wine than we were when we arrived!