



Winemaker: Giuseppe Martorana
Generation: 2nd



Nero d'Avola Sicilia DOC

Small-batch, artisanal Nero d'Avola is difficult to find, but worth the search! From the volcanic soils of Agrigento on the SW coast of Sicily, this vivid, unoaked Nero d'Avola is jammy without being sweet, and generous with its ripe plum, dark chocolate, and earth tones, but ultimately fresh in style. This dichotomy is thanks in part to 24-35 year old vines, and to Giuseppe Martorana's commitment to super low yields (just 1 bottle per plant). For three generations, the Martorana family has made wine together, and still hand-harvests in wicker baskets on their hill across from the sea.

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

After a storied career in law enforcement, winemaker Giuseppe Martorana now produces small-batch Nero d'Avola with his youngest daughter, Giadda. They live and work on the sun-drenched coast of Agrigento - also home to countless Greek ruins - along Sicily's SW shore.

ENOLOGIST

Giuseppe Martorana



TASTING NOTES

Color Dark ruby
Nose Ripe plum, berry cobbler, and almond skin
Palate Never overripe, it pops with vibrant boysenberry and blueberry
Finish Juicy and well-balanced



VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

Vineyard Location	Sicilia DOC, Sicily
Vineyard Size	20 ha
Varietals List	100% Nero d'Avola
Farming Practices	Organically farmed (non-certified), including dry-farmed; grapes picked by hand
Elevation	60 m
Soils	Igneous rock, calcareous-sand mix
Maturation Summary	Bottled for 6 months
Alcohol	14.0 %
Acidity	6.65 g/liter
Residual Sugar	4.2 g/liter
Annual Production	6,000 bottles



REGION

SICILY

A Mediterranean crossroads and Italy's largest autonomia, Sicily has been home to winemaking for some 6000 years. In the 8th century BC, the Greeks brought more advanced viticultural techniques to the island, and a brisk trade with Phoenicians and Romans ultimately followed. In more recent centuries, Sicily has been known mainly as a bulk provider of wine grapes – with the focus primarily on quantity – but that reputation is swiftly changing. In the 1980s and 1990s, Sicily's unusual terroir and potential for fine wines finally began to garner attention. Much of the acclaim was initially directed at international staples like Chardonnay and Syrah, but starting in the 2000s, natives like Nero d'Avola and Nerello Mascalese began taking their rightful place center-stage.

A trio of red grapes in particular are driving Sicily's growth today: Nero d'Avola, with its brambly fruit, juicy acidity, and softer tannins, is the most widely planted and wines are often fresh, unoaked, and affordable; Frappato, another easy-drinker with supple tannins, is mostly used as a blending grape; Nerello Mascalese, the powerful, elegant, and sometimes spicy or mineral-driven baseline for Etna reds, is second in volume to Nero d'Avola, but has been rising along with the DOC's popularity. White varieties of note include Cataratto, the most widely planted and often a starting point for Marsala; Grillo and Insolia, a pair of medium-bodied grapes that provide dry but substantive wines; and Carricante, the lush but zippy force behind Etna Bianco. With its dry, Mediterranean climate, Sicily affords its 23 DOCs and single DOCG abundant sunshine, moderate winter rainfall, and constant coastal breezes. As a result, the island's also well-suited to organic farming and the natural wine movement.

SICILIA DOC

Spanning the entirety of the island, the Sicilia DOC was upgraded from the original IGT in 2011, with the primary goal of promoting Sicily's native varieties. Although internationals like Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are technically permitted, there is an unspoken agreement amongst many producers that the appellation be applied to Sicilian natives like Nero d'Avola, Frappato, and Grillo (to name a few). For better or worse, the DOC Sicilia doesn't supply nearly as much information on terroir as the island's other, smaller appellations. For example, because producers may include grapes from anywhere in Sicily, there's no way to know offhand where they were harvested; on the windswept coast, up a volcanic mountainside, or Sicily's scorching interior? Further, winemakers are allowed to collect fruit from multiple zones and then blend, so grapes may not have come from a single area. Because it's so open-ended and inclusive, this DOC has been called a "wild west" appellation, although to be fair, it's also helped to reduce maximum yields and encourage quality over quantity on the island. Currently, the zone includes over 56,000 acres of vineyards (out of Sicily's total 261,000).

To qualify for the DOC, a bianco must contain a minimum of 50% Ansonica (Insolia), Cataratto, Chardonnay, Grecanico Dorato, and/or Grillo. Rossi and rosati must include a minimum of 50% Frappato, Nerello Mascalese, Nero d'Avola, Perricone, and/or Syrah. Along with a lengthy list of other authorized grapes, any of these may also display the varietal given a minimum of 85% in the bottle. There are no aging requirements, and both sparkling and sweet wines are also permitted.



MARTORANA

For a few decades, Giuseppe led a storied career in law enforcement, working first with Italy's national police, the Carabinieri, then later becoming the police chief of his own Sicilian town. "Now," he grins, "I am retired." That last word also earns a laugh from youngest daughter, Giadda. "What he means is that now he works full-time in the vineyards!" Together, the father-daughter team manages 25 hectares, making them tiny by local standards. Unsurprisingly, 80% of their crop is devoted to Sicily's mainstay, Nero d'Avola. An additional 4 hectares are planted with Syrah and 1 lone hectare is set aside for tiny batch whites like Insolia.

Starting just across the street from the Mediterranean, Martorana's farm begins at an altitude of 50 meters, progressing to 350 meters higher on the hill. His younger vines (now some 25 years old) are planted lower down, where the soils are sandier and contain more clay. Giuseppe says this causes them to be a bit more abundant, so for his certified organic wines, he tends to rely upon his family's older vines (planted 35 years ago). Located higher up, this fruit benefits from chalkier soils, with yields that are less prolific. This micro-terroir also lends a touch more acidity to the wines, along with the greater concentration. As with many of our Small Vineyards estates, Martorana is averaging just 1-1.5 bottles per plant – truly low, especially for Sicily! Further setting him apart, Giuseppe never allows his grapes to overripen. In a place as warm and arid as coastal Sicily – where the winds are constant but rainfall scarce – it's easy to cultivate ripe fruit. Giuseppe takes the more interesting route however, pursuing wines of lower alcohol, with vibrant acidity and even minerality. Every year, he and Giadda demonstrate this restraint, producing reds that are loaded with bright berry compote, but never trend too sweet!