

*The world's best wine magazine*

# Decanter

## Italy 2021

Your guide to what's new  
and exciting in Italian wine





## Southern Italy: grapes



### Sicily

**Frappato** is Nero d'Avola's partner in Sicily's only DOCG wine, Cerasuolo di Vittoria, in which it is permitted to make up 30%-50% of the blend. One of Sicily's oldest varieties, cultivated in a small area between Vittoria and Siracusa, Frappato is likely a sibling of Calabrian Gaglioppo. I have been impressed by single-varietal Frappato wines I have tasted for the sheer pleasure and enjoyment they provide: they are light, fruity, amenable wines with a delightful aroma and flavours of fresh strawberries and herbs.

The red grape variety **Nocera** is found in the northeast corner of Sicily and is one of the components of Faro DOC wines. These wines are hard to come by, but are super-fashionable among wine critics. In the past, Nocera was used as a bulk wine to perk up blends, as it has a lot of acidity and colour as well as some astringency. But, remarks Planeta's chief winemaker Patricia Tóth: 'What we love in Nocera is that it has all the qualities in one.' She says the tannins are firm but soft and

velvety, and it has interesting black cherry, tamarind, salty, iodine notes that reflect the place it is grown. 'I am quite sure it'll be one of the very important grapes in the future of Sicily,' she adds.

**Perricone** comes from western Sicily, where it was once much more widely planted under the name of Guarnaccia. At one time most farmers produced some Perricone, cultivating it for home consumption during the winter. It was popular because it ripens late and is disease- and drought-resistant. Fabio Sireci of Feudo Montoni says that when young the wines are full of tannins – it can make them 'grumpy' in character. 'The work we do at Montoni is to tame the tannins, to make them more elegant, and better integrated.' Sireci's dedication to Perricone is partly because his father, Elio, was fond of it and used to call it 'the true king of Sicily'. Perricone produces robust wines that go well with slow-cooked lamb braised with tomatoes, red wine and warm spices such as nutmeg and cinnamon. ➤

**Above: Feudo Montoni winery at Cammarata, western Sicily**

**Below: Cantine Paolini's Frappato (see p88)**



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### Antonella Corda, Vermentino di Sardegna, Sardinia 2019 91

£19.99 Eton Vintners, Liberty Wines  
This southern Sardinian Vermentino has rich, deep notes of green apples, green pepper and spice. On the palate, Granny Smith flavours integrate beautifully with ripe red apples and peaches. Soft and round, this is a full-bodied, richly textured wine ideal for pairing with roast pork and crackling or barbecued oily fish such as sardines or mackerel. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 14.1%**

### Alois, Morrone, Terre del Volturno, Campania 2018 90

POA Passionevino  
This is a lovely example of the rare Pallagrello Bianco grape variety (see p87). Grown in Pontelatone in the northern part of Campania, near the city of Caserta, the vines are situated at an altitude of 300m above sea level. There are gentle, creamy notes on the nose – more textural than aromatic in character – with a savoury leesy quality. On the palate, it's bright and lively with juicy acidity and a tangy, grapefruit pith finish. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 13%**

### ④ Cantine Paololeo, Triade Bianco, Campania 2019 89

£8.99 Waitrose  
Triade is an unusual but exciting blend of three of Campania's most celebrated

native varieties: Fiano, Falanghina and Greco. It offers great value and is so deliciously drinkable. It's bright gold in colour with salty, lemony aromas and a waxy note reminiscent of Semillon. Crisp and zesty, it's medium-bodied with sea-salty citrus flavours that bring to mind a brisk walk along a Mediterranean seashore. **Drink 2021 Alc 13%**

### Polvanera, Minutolo, Valle d'Itria, Puglia 2019 89

£24.99 The Surrey Wine Cellar  
Not surprisingly, DNA analysis has shown that southern Puglia's rare Minutolo grape is related to Muscat (see p80). From the glass, a whoosh of honey, grapes and summer flowers greets you, reminding you of an English garden in the summer. But make no mistake, the palate is dry and firm, balanced by fresh acidity and lemon flavours, leaving just a memory of ripe grapes and summer – until the next glass. Biodynamic. **Drink 2021 Alc 12%**

### ⑤ Sergio Arcuri, Il Marinetto, Calabria 2019 90

£20 WoodWinters  
This dark orange rosé made from Gaglioppo has bright aromas of citrus and strawberry fruits. It has more complexity to it than many rosés, with notes of mandarin, wild strawberry and orange peel on the palate. Medium-bodied, soft and round with an attractive savoury, pithy finish, it is flavoursome and full with a slight tannic finish. A more serious food rosé but good enough to enjoy on its own too. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 13.5%**

### ⑥ Feudo Montoni, Perricone del Core, Sicily 2019 93

£19.95 (2016) Baglio  
Core ('heart' in Italian) is the name of this heart-shaped vineyard. It's bursting with vivid aromas of smoky blackberry, wild herbs and liquorice. The palate is full of vibrant acidity and creamy vanilla flavours, interwoven with blackberries and brambles against a sappy, green-herb background, tannins round and nicely integrated. It's one of the best examples of Perricone I know. Aged for eight months in cement tanks and three in barrels, and organic. **Drink 2021-2025 Alc 13.5%**

### Santa Venere, Cirò Rosso, Calabria 2018 91

£9.95 The Wine Society  
Made from the Gaglioppo grape (see p83), this is so enticing and easy to drink. Bright

and juicy, it's brimming with dark raspberry fruits, and lots of fine, chalky-textured tannins. It's a very pretty, medium-bodied wine with a youthful ruby colour and red fruit, plum and spice aromas. On the finish there's a little twist of Negroni bitters mixed with smoke and cherry notes. Pleasantly savoury, with fresh acidity and a dry finish. Organic. **Drink 2021-2022 Alc 13.5%**

### ⑦ Planeta, Nocera, Sicily 2018 90

£17-£22 Exel, Simply Wines Direct, The Great Wine Co, The Wine Society, Vinvm  
Nocera is a characterful grape variety found in the rugged coastal area around Messina in the northeast of Sicily. Planeta's 2018 vintage is one of the nicest examples I have tried of this rare variety. Medium-bodied, it has quite fine, silty-textured tannins and bright cherry, green herb and black olive flavours, along with lovely bright, juicy acidity and a long, savoury finish. It makes a great food wine that will go well with any robust casserole or salty, creamy goats' cheese dishes. **Drink 2021-2023 Alc 13.5%**

### Vallone, Tenuta Serranova Susumaniello Rosso, Salento, Puglia 2018 90

£10.53-£11.99 (2017) All About Wine, Define Food & Wine, Kwoff, North & South  
Top notes of creamy strawberry combine with herbal, bitter olive notes. The soft, round, medium-to-full-bodied texture, together with strawberry purée and contrasting bitter herb flavours, make for a distinctive and characterful flavour profile. Tannins are round and soft and the acidity is fresh and lively. Something about the flavours makes me think of Italy's deep south and hot, summer nights. It makes me want to try more wines from this variety. **Drink 2021-2023 Alc 14%**

### Cantine Paolini, Frappato, Terre Siciliane, Sicily 2018 89

£9.50-£9.99 Chester Beer & Wine, Hennings, The Salisbury Winestore  
This Frappato (see p84) from Sicily's southeastern corner is such a joyful, moreish wine to drink. The friendly nose is full of sun-warmed strawberries, herbal notes and white pepper spice. Pretty red fruits, juicy acidity and light tannins result in a lively, fun wine that is so easy to drink. It pairs well with many dishes, including pizza and some fish dishes. The light tannins also make it suitable for chilling. **Drink 2021 Alc 12%**



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