



New reviews of well-priced reds and whites from the island of Sicily
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The warm and sunny island of Sicily, once a hotbed for Marsala and bulk wine, is uprooting its past for a better future, literally. In the last 15 years, vineyard acreage has declined by nearly half, to 285,000 acres today. But despite the decline in acreage, Sicily still turns out about 200 million bottles a year and remains one of Italy's most prolific wine-producing regions. Quality-minded wineries, including the historic Duca di Salaparuta estate (which has three wines in this report), along with a continuing stream of emerging smaller wineries, are focusing on producing value-driven bottlings of the island's unique grape varieties.

Nero d'Avola, named after the town of Avola, located in the southeast corner of the island, is Sicily's signature red grape. Atop this report are Ceuso's Scurati Red, a dense and concentrated version made from low-yielding young vines, along with Donnafugata's Sedàra, which demonstrates Nero d'Avola's ability to blend successfully with international varieties. Newcomer Giacomo d'Alessandro, who founded his namesake winery in 2006, enters the U.S. market with his 2008 Nero d'Avola, a wine that offers a pure fruit- and mineral-driven profile.

The white grape Inzolia (often spelled Insolia), presumed to be native to the island, is a top candidate for values in its class. It provides the base for Duca di Salaparuta's whites below. The winery, which was owned by the regional government for most of the second half of the 20th century as a means to keep workers and farmers employed, modernized its operations in the mid-1990s and produces a wide range of quality brands, including the popular and affordable Corvo label.

D'ALESSANDRO Nero d'Avola Sicilia 2008 Score: 87 | \$14

Notes of plum, black currant and wet stone remain focused in this medium-bodied red, as a touch of licorice flickers in the lingering finish. Drink now. 6,250 cases made. Red. -N.W.

D'ALESSANDRO Inzolia Sicilia 2009 Score: 86 | \$14

Fresh, with juicy lemon-lime and melon notes picking up hints of pine and Marcona almonds in the finish. Drink now. 1,250 cases made. White. -N.W.