




THE WORLD OF
SICILIAN WINE



BILL NESTO, MW  FRANCES DI SAVINO



ETNA ERUPTS!

The massive volcano, its unusual climates and soils, and the elegant, refined Etna Rosso wines have given Sicily its most convincing tastes of terroir. Etna wines veer away from international stereotypes. They are unique. But comparisons of Etna red wines to Burgundy or Barolo and Etna white wines to Alsace help us to understand their character.

Franchetti, from Rome, also had a U.S. connection. As well as being born there, he had spent time in the United States in the 1980s developing a wine distribution company, which he eventually sold before returning to Italy. He set up his own wine estate, Trinoro, in Tuscany during the 1990s.

For many years he had visited eastern Sicily on holiday. In 2000 he bought vineyards in the village of Passopisciaro on the north side of Etna. *Passopisciaro* became the name of the winery he built there. He first made wine in 2000 from grapes he purchased from farmers on the mountain. Franchetti, a frequent visitor to Bordeaux, initially overlooked the potential of Nerello Mascalese, believing that his favorite variety, Petit Verdot—in his own words, “a prince of a grape”—outclassed it. After making several vintages of Nerello Mascalese side by side with Petit Verdot, he realized that although his Petit Verdot-based *Franchetti* was a thick, tactile wine in the image of Bordeaux, his Nerello showed uncommon elegance, finesse, and Sicilianness. In 2008 Franchetti created, organized, and financed an event at his estate called *Le Contrade dell’Etna*. He invited all Etna producers, as well as journalists from Italy and abroad. *Le Contrade dell’Etna* has showcased the wines of nearly all Etna producers every year since.