

## Italian new releases 2023 – the south and Sicily



Part 3 of Walter's mouth-watering selection of newly released and highly distinctive Italian wines takes us to the south of the country, from Campania to Sicily. Above, Calabria champion Giusy Andreacchio (right) with Mariolina Baccellieri. See also his reviews of the north and the centre.

A stone's throw away from the Costa d'Amalfi in Campania, Cilento is perhaps a little less picturesque but has the same aquamarine sea and a dramatic, unspoilt mountainous hinterland. Sandwiched in between are fields dedicated to the production of a type of small artichoke that is conserved in vinegar and olive oil.

Cilento is much warmer than Avellino, the province to its immediate north where Fiano di Avellino, Greco di Tufo and Aglianico in Taurasi are grown, but in Cilento, too, producers prefer to cultivate this trio of varieties rather than international ones, with excellent results. Because it's warmer, the wines take on more weight but still have bags of personality. San Salvatore, an ambitious producer of both mozzarella and wines near Paestum (which has its own small IGT within Cilento), turns out reliable, delicious versions.

Fiano also turns up in a metodo classico sparkling incarnation in Basilicata, where Masseria Cardillo give it a full 36 months on the lees. The estate has also been taken under the wings of oenologist Giampaolo Chiettini; Scacomatto, a 100% Sangiovese, is a strong link between him and the estate.

Masseria Cardillo is serious about Fiano, with a more than passable still version as well as the delicious metodo classico. It also produces several reds made from Primitivo on its own or supporting Aglianico, as well as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot moulded into an international style. Baruch Primitivo is the variety in its most concentrated form, made from sun-dried grapes and aged in barriques. It's surprisingly agile and juicy for such an intense style.

Arteteke, the outfit I like to dub 'the punks of Vulture', have just released their new vintages. Russinè is a delicious as well as a serious and seriously refreshing rosato made from 100% Aglianico, while the 2020 Russè Aglianico del Vulture is the first vintage made with the help of Piemontese Luca Faccenda from Roero. Russè, a tannic, embryonic and beautiful Aglianico which needs further ageing, truly represents the Roero-Vulture axis.

Calabria is the rugged and little-known region in the very south of the peninsula. Cirò, right on the shores of the Ionian Sea, turns out distinctive, often archaic rosatos produced to be drunk young while one waits for the Cirò Rosso, whose formidable tannins demand more time.

Nowadays these tannic reds seem much less demanding and harsh since Nebbiolo became a global hit.

The fact that the world has begun to embrace rather than struggle with tannins makes the efforts of winegrowers such as Cerminara, with an output of around 6,000 bottles, potentially viable. The Cerminara brothers, engineer Pierpaolo, economist Sergio and pharmacist Saverio, could no longer resist the call of Gaglioppo, Cirò's signature grape variety. Pierpaolo and Sergio abandoned their careers to devote themselves to a couple of hectares of Gaglioppo

that for generations have been in their family, with Saverio on standby. Also at Cerminara, help came from Nebbiolista Luca Faccenda and the first two vintages of this start-up, especially the 2021, are real stunners.

With lots of classy wines, but with little knowledge of the international market, most of Calabria's bottlings struggle to find the appreciation they so richly deserve. Some of them are lucky to have been taken under the wing of Giusy Andreacchio, who has taken on several producers of these hard-to-market but super-interesting wines.

A force of nature, Andreacchio tirelessly travels the globe to show what Calabria has to offer, becoming the region's unofficial ambassador. The region itself has never made any coherent marketing effort. Andreacchio knows how to get your attention by representing some of the best that Cirò in particular has to offer, and doing it with a bang. Tenuta del Conte's Manere, a blend of 50% Greco Bianco and 50% Trebbiano Toscano co-fermented and aged for seven months on the lees and seven (!) years in bottle blew me away. All waxy fruit, lemon and orange blossom, long and taut, it came as a complete surprise.

Tenuta del Conte also delivers in the Cirò department, especially Mani Contadine, a rosato of great class and staying power. Another Andreacchio find is Mariolina Baccellieri, who seems especially talented with the local Greco Bianco, which is distinct from Campania's Greco di Tufo. Both the dry, saline Siccagno and the Passito from sun-dried Greco Bianco grapes are stand-outs, as is Piroci, an elegant Nerello Mascalese aged in 500-litre American oak tonneaux. The 52 tasting notes are grouped by region and subregion, roughly north to south.

(...)

Etna

(...)

#### Passopisciaro, Bianco 2020 Etna

100% Chardonnay grown between 850 and 1,000 m above sea level in Contrada Guardiola. Brilliant yellow. A ripe white-fruit nose that is a little rich and with hints of oatmeal and cream. Plenty of depth of peach and melon fruit. Reminds me of Pinot Bianco rather than Chardonnay. Soft and round palate but with the perfect dose of acidity. Suave. (WS)

13%

Drink

2022

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2028

16.5

(...)

#### Passopisciaro, Contrada G 2020 IGT Terre Siciliane

Contrada Guardiola. Just mid ruby. A nose loaded with spice over a layer of cool red fruit spiked with stony hints. Open-knit and completely ready and accessible. Fresh, supple red fruit. Elegant rather than concentrated with soft, polished tannins. Ready now. (WS)

15%

Drink

2023

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2028

17

(...)