

The Wines

Ancient vines and rising wine stars

It is hard to believe that a small island should offer so many varieties of wine, but Sicily boasts more vineyards and produces more wine than any other region in Italy. Nero d'Avola and Cataratto are, respectively, the most commonly planted red and white grapes. Even Cabernet Sauvignon or Chardonnay grapes grow here to a remarkable quality.

Wines from the Volcano. Sicily's landscape is overshadowed by the presence of the volcano Etna. This very fertile region is blessed with a peculiar climate: the grape vines, which grow as high as 3,280 feet, thrive with shifts in temperature between day and night; exposure to the hot summer sun and cool—even cold—nights helps to develop aroma and flavor. The mineral-rich volcanic soil provides the grapes with an abundance of nutrients. A few wineries produce excellent red wines from the grape varieties Nerello and Cappuccio, as well as apple-scented white wines.

Red South. The most important areas that grow Nero d'Avola, the indigenous grape found in almost all the red and rosé wines of Sicily, are located in the south, in the province of Agrigento and around the

town of Vittoria. Until a few years ago this vine was still almost unknown; today it has become almost a status symbol. With well-tended vines and storage in small barrels, the wine is earning a reputation of fine quality. It has a slightly bitter and fruity aroma and has all the elements for a long aging maturation. Vines such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah have found a suitable home in this region. Other authentic Sicilian wines are characterized by a delicate aroma of candied oranges. The white grape varieties of the island such as the Cataratto, Trebbiano, Grillo, and Inzolia sometimes produce pure variety wines and sometimes mixed mild and fruity wines.

New in the West. Marsala is Sicily's most famous wine region. Most closely associated with the fortified wine of the same name—which isn't necessarily a good thing—the area nevertheless produces some excellent aged fortified wines. The grape variety Grillo is used not only to produce strong dessert wines but also to make sparkling white wines. Throughout the area of Trapani, full bodied aromatic reds are produced from Nero d'Avola grapes. Two other dessert wines create serious competition for Marsala wines: the Malvasia delle Lipari Passito, made from sun-dried Malvasia grapes that have a scent of lemon and orange blossoms, and the Passito di Pantelleria made from Zibibbo grapes with a scent of orange and apricot.



Left: Grape cultures in Sicily – the vines are trained along bamboo frames. Above: Famous regional samples (from left to right)—the reds Nero d'Avola and Monreale Syrah; the whites Grillo Parlante and Don Pietro.



Regional Recipes

Sicily's cuisine lives off the freshness and the aroma of its ingredients

Antipasti (Appetizers)

- 278 **Sfincione di Caltanissetta**
Small Pizzas with Tomatoes and Cheese
- 280 **Muffuliette**
Small Fennel Rolls
- 280 **Pomodori nel Panino**
Tomato Subs
- 281 **Tonno con l'Insalata di Patate**
Tuna on Potatoes and Onions with Mint
- 282 **Carciofi Gratinati**
Baked Artichokes

Primi Piatti (First Course)

- 286 **Orecchiette con Spigola**
Orecchiette with Sea Bass
- 286 **Spaghetti alla Diavola**
Spaghetti, Devil's-Style
- 287 **Melanzane Ripiene di Spaghetti**
Stuffed Eggplants with Spaghetti
- 288 **Linguine al Cartoccio**
Seafood Linguine in the Bag

Secondi Piatti (Main Dishes)

- 290 **Sarde a Beccafico**
Baked Sardine Rolls
- 291 **Tonno alla Messinese**
Tuna Messina-Style
- 292 **Bistecche alla Palermitana**
Rib-Eye Steaks, Palermo-Style
- 294 **Spiedini di Carne**
Meatball Kebabs
- 294 **Pollo alla Liparota**
Chicken with Onion Gravy
- 295 **Fegato di Vitello su Caponata**
Veal Liver over Caponata

Contorni (Side Dishes)

- 298 **Melanzane Ripiene**
Stuffed Eggplants
- 300 **Insalata di Pane**
Bread Salad
- 300 **Bietole con Uva Secca**
Swiss Chard with Raisins
- 301 **Involtini di Peperoni**
Pepper Rolls
- 302 **Funghi Porcini Grigliati**
Grilled Porcini Mushrooms
- 302 **Patate al Forno**
Oven Roasted Potatoes
- 303 **Scarola Ripiena**
Stuffed Lettuce or Escarole

Dolci (Desserts)

- 304 **Babà all'Amaretto**
Raised Yeast Muffins with Amaretto Syrup
- 306 **Macedonia**
Mixed Fruit Salad
- 306 **Tortine di Pasta Frolla**
Pie Dippers
- 307 **Frittelle d'Arancia con Fichi d'India**
Orange Fritters with Cactus Pears



The dreamlike sea sparkles around Sicily and around the Egadi. Cooking seafood and pasta in parchment or foil is a way of preparing food that preserves flavors and nutrients. Stuffed vegetables are a favorite; breadcrumbs enhance noodles, stuffing, and fillings, and even coat fish fillets and steak.