

Highlight

Emma Dawson and Grillo: the “Sicilia en Primeur” Masterclass

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A full program of tastings and master classes. This was the agenda of the two days of **Sicilia en Primeur** at **Radicepura**. It began with a focus on **Grillo**, the most interesting white grape variety of the island. The tasting was guided by Master of Wine **Emma Dawson**, buyer at Marks and Spencer, one of England's major grand distribution chains. An interesting and commercially oriented point of view aimed at better interpreting the market trends which currently dominate the world of English wine. Grillo, according to Dawson, seems to have an important potential, one confirmed not merely by its presence in wine bars and restaurants but its increasing appeal to the public, which seems to see in it an “aromatic” alternative to Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon.

Ten the wines in the series, which has allowed us to understand and appreciate the different ways in which this native Sicilian grape expresses itself, a tasting which assisted in underlining an initial and significant distinction: that between aromatic Grillo, a wine in which the varietal characteristics similar to a Sauvignon emerge, and a richer, creamier, more honeyed Grillo, which recalls Dawson maintained, a Chardonnay, reassuring and easy to drink. A distinction which has its basis in the chemistry of the wines, as Andre Gabbrielli noted: two different bio-types, two different expressions. The wines presented were all from the 2016 vintage.

Palmares Brut, Gorgi Tondi: We are dealing with a Charmat method sparkling wine, a bubbly which Dawson defined as a perfect aperitif for those looking to try something different. Pleasurably fresh and fruity, it is very interesting commercially according to Dawson.

Enrica Spadafora, Dei Principi di Spadafora, a bottle-fermented wine with 30 months of aging on its lees. It was characterized by a more nose and with more personality and a creamier texture, an entertaining alternative to a more expensive Champagne. According to Emma Dawson, perfect for a celebration!

Grillo, Feudo Disisa. An aromatic Grillo, with Sauvignon notes. A pleasurable aromatic complexity and a bracing acidity make for a savory wine, very fresh on the palate. “Great with seafood”.

Eughenès, Sibiliana. A rich wine in which it is tropical fruit which emerges. A perfect expression of bio-type B, riper and softer. A style of fermentation which has been discovered more recently. "An every day wine with a entry level price" remarks Dawson.

Aegades, Fazio. An original style for this Grillo. A smoky and lemony note on the nose in this wine which, on the palate, shows much freshness. White peaches are the predominant flavor. "Refreshing and nice style".

Astolfo, Baglio Assuli. An ambitious tank sample with a lovely creaminess and a nose in which the aromatic character of Zibibbo are pleasurably perceptible. An interesting acidity as well. "Floral" said Emma, and we agree!

Grillo, Feudo Principi di Butera. Yet another style for this Grillo. A light minty note along with almonds and tropical fruit. The acidity makes it an excellent match to rich dishes such as those of oriental cuisine: it cuts the fattiness and further brings out aromatic character of the dishes: "food friendly". Fragrant, its color is attractively golden. Apricots and a light spiciness on the nose. "Salty" as well, clearly a marker of the territory.

Grillo, Feudo Arancio. Floral and aromatic, unquestionably sweeter and more concentrated. The acidity is lowish, the wine creamier. A perfect wine for an after dinner session in a wine bar.

Il Coro, Fondo Antico. High residual sugar and citrus fruit on the nose characterize this Grillo, making it a perfect accompaniment to seafood.

A fascinating overview of a grape variety in which Sicilian producers strongly believe. Different styles, accordingly, for different consumers. A *lectio magistralis*, an authoritative lesson, on the commercial possibilities for Grillo in the UK market at a special moment, just after Brexit, one which poses many questions about the future.

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