

Primo Piano

# Dieci gemme nascoste del sud Italia per Decanter

di: Redazione

14 aprile 2017



## Southern Italy's 10 hidden gems

You may have to go off the beaten track a little, but there are top-quality wines to be found in Italy's hot south, says Susan Hulme MW, who selects great examples from 10 of her favourite producers

SOUTHERN ITALY HAS so much to offer in terms of value for money wines, but you can also find great quality and excitement. With a warm Mediterranean climate, distinctive and characterful grape varieties and a long history of winemaking that goes back to the time of ancient Greece and Rome, it has the potential to rival the great wine regions. Yet as recently as the mid-1990s, southern Italian wines were still languishing in the doldrums. Happily, in the last 20 years, much has begun to change: new sub-regions like Campagna (PNC), Cilento and Pantano have created a buzz alongside the historically famous DOCG of Taurasi, Aglianico and Taurasi, and the recently trendy Rosso di Taurasi. It is clear the south has a very strong hand to play. One might assume the region is too hot for fine wine, especially with the warming effects of climate change, but that isn't so. Climate change is about erratic weather patterns just as much as increased temperatures. For example, the 2015 vintage saw long periods of drought and record high temperatures, while in 2014 producers experienced prolonged, heavy rain. Southern Italy has been reaping grape varieties, such as Aglianico and Nero di Troia, and warm autumns to cope with wet vintages. It also has grape varieties that have adapted to the intense summer heat, and vineyards are

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often located on high-elevation sites with big diurnal temperature differences, allowing vines to cool down at night and slow grape ripening in hot and dry vintages. When it comes to grape varieties, the south has an abundance of riches. Carricante, Palagiano, Fiano and Greco make top-quality whites. Black varieties include Aglianico (capable of rivaling any of Italy's best black grapes), Primitivo, Nero di Troia, Nero di Troia, Promisio and many, many more. Add to that distinctive volcanic soils, a range of elevations and the skill and daring of a bunch of passionate winemakers and you have a lovely and intoxicating mix. What they have created is an explosion of vivid, delicious wines that are full of personality. There's so much going on that it's difficult to limit the number of producers represented here to only 10, these are the ones that have impressed me most in the past 18 months. Coincidentally, many are farmed organically or even biodynamically. While some are new and others are established names, they remain relatively undiscovered. In other words, here are a few of southern Italy's hidden gems.

**Pietracupa Campania**  
Participo is a name that comes up whenever the famous white varieties of Campania, Fiano and Greco, are discussed. Owner Roberto de

ITALY

### Feudo Montoni Sicily

Feudo Montoni is a very special place. Surrounded by wheat fields, the vineyards are 100m above sea level in Commarone in the province of Agrigento, in central western Sicily, about a two-hour drive from Palermo. The estate produces a range of white and red wines from local varieties: Carricante, Cillia and Fenuella for the whites, and from Nerello Mascalese, reds from Nero d'Aosta and Primitivo. But it is the flagship wine Vinateira from Nero d'Aosta which really stands out. This is a single-vineyard wine from 80-year-old, ungrafted, pre-phyllera vines – the producer's very own special clone of Nero d'Aosta, identified as such by noted consultant Giacomo Tachis, of Tignanello fame. He believed it may have developed partly due to the isolation of the vineyard. Feudo Montoni is one of Italy's true hidden gems, revealing a more elegant and elegant side to Nero d'Aosta than is usually seen. The wines have a lovely purity of expression and fantastic ageing potential. I recently opened a magnum of the Vinateira 2007, which seemed hardly to have aged at all.

**Below: the isolated vineyards of Feudo Montoni, at 100m elevation in Commarone, Sicily**

Owner Fabio Ricci comments: 'Nero d'Aosta is like a crazy horse, it needs time to be tamed in. Perhaps, like a thoroughbred, it also needs time to show its best.'

**Feudo Montoni, Vinateira Nero d'Aosta, Commarone, Sicily 2009**  
PNC Estate Wines  
This is not your typical Nero d'Aosta, but from 80-year-old, ungrafted vines of a special clone from the Vinateira vineyard and made by one of Sicily's best producers, it's not a blockbuster, but has elegant, pure aromas and flavours of tobacco, spice, cedar, lavender and sweet cherries, all masked in vibrant, juicy acidity. There is plenty of depth of flavour but it is really a voluptuous, lively wine that dances on the palate and keeps you coming back for more. **Drink 2017-2020** AB 100

### Occhipinti Sicily

Artena Occhipinti's wines have been coming quite a bit for a while now. She makes elegant, deliciously easy-to-drink Frappato and Nero d'Aosta reds, as well as intriguing whites from the rare Sicilian grape variety Alghero. Blended with Moscato di Alessandria (known locally as Zibibbo).





Il titolo è “**Southern Italy’s 10 hidden gems**”, dieci gemme nascoste del sud Italia. **Decanter**, tra le riviste al mondo più affermate nel settore enologico, si scopre ad elogiare alcuni grandi vini italiani: Campania, Basilicata, Puglia e Sicilia.

Dicevamo dieci “... *deliziosi vini, ricchi di personalità*...” e tre sono siciliani. Si tratta di **Tenuta di Fessina, Feudo Montoni e Arianna Occhipinti**.

Pochi commenti, il report, solo in inglese, è tutto da leggere: [decanter\\_mag2017](#)

I vini siciliani:

Feudo Montoni – **Vrucara, Nero d’Avola 2009**

Arianna Occhipinti – **SP68 rosso 2015**

Tenuta di Fessina – **‘A Puddara Bianco 2014**

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