



Regional Institute of Vine and Wine (IRVV), Sicily, the Indian Wine Academy (IWA) and Michele Shah SRL recently organised a great evening with the finest wines from Sicily. The event was held in four major cities - Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune, where the organisers took some selective members from the press, importers and F&B Managers through a journey of one of the major wine growing regions in the world-Sicily. **Rojita Tiwari** reports.



The map of wine growing regions in Sicily.

**T**he 'Master Class on Sicily - soil, terroir and wines' was first of its kind in India as the experts and consultants of Italian wines took us through various wine growing regions of Sicily, some of its great wines and grape varieties. The tasting included wines from nine producers, a chardonnay and grillo blend Spumante, two white wines, a Rose, four red wines and a dessert wine.

The President of Indian Wine Academy (IWA), Cavaliere Subhash Arora and Michele Shah conducted the tasting and the Director of the institute, Dario Cartabellotta was present along with producers from Castel Venus, Cantine Nicosia and Colomba Bianca, the biggest co-operative in Sicily, to talk about their wines and answer queries.

Sicily, the second largest island in Italy has been fast gaining international acceptance because of its wines. Most of us are aware of the quality and range of one of the great Sicilian wines 'Donnafugata' available in India. But what many of us may not know is that a majority of Sicilian wines are made from indigenous grapes found in the region. The wines from Sicily are completely terroir driven.





Michele Shah



Subhash Arora



Dario Cartabellotta

In a brief presentation, Subhash Arora took us through various wine growing regions in Sicily. Often referred to as the Jewel of Mediterranean, Sicily (Sicilia pron. 'Sicheelia' in Italian) is one of the 20 regions of Italy. It has nine provinces - Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Catania, Enna, Messina, Palermo, Ragusa, Siracusa, Trapani; each province growing grapes of individual characteristics.

"Purpose of this tour was to promote Sicilian wines in India as well as to emphasise the way these wines could be paired with Indian cuisine," said Arora. The people of Sicily are very warm and friendly. Of all the Italian regions, the cuisine, climate and temperament in Sicily come closest to that in India. Their signature grapes like Nero d'Avola and Grillo are already being grown and are popular in India. But there are a hosts of other interesting indigenous grapes like Frappato, Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio, Catarratto, Carricante, Insolia and Zibibbo (Moscato d' Alessandria) that are typical of the region and make interesting and delicious wines palatable for Indian taste. They also produce international varieties like Cabernet, Merlot, Syrah, Malvasia, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

## THE TASTING

Wine enthusiasts attending the event in Mumbai had the privilege of sampling some of the classic Sicilian varietals at the guided tasting:

### Sparkling wine

1) Milazzo Spumante Metodo Classico G.Milazzo Chardonnay grape with 12.5 % abv produced with methode champenoise

*Notes: semi-dry, crisp and elegant wine*

### White Wines

2) Coste al Vento Grillo Sicilia IGT 2010 Cantine Barbera -Grillo with 12.5 % abv

*Notes: Tonic, fruity and Aromatic*

3) Fondo Filara Etna Bianco DOC 2010 Cantine Nicosia (Wine from the Etna region)

Blend of Carricante (60%) and Catarratto (40%) with 13 % abv

*Notes: Strong presence of minerality with a smooth finish*

### Rose

4) Rosanto di Nero d'Avola Sicilia IGP 2010 Castel Venus

A rose made of Nero d' Avola sounds exciting and tastes great too. With 13% abv, the wine has a beautiful pink colour.

*Notes: Fruity, aromas of berries and a mark of elegance*

### Red Wines

5) Frappato Sicilia IGT 2010 Feudo di Santa Tresa (Biologico)

Made from an indigenous grape varietal Frappato which is usually used for blends. 12.5 % abv and it should be served at 12-14 degree C.

*Notes: Fruity, good acidity*

6) Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG Classico 2008 Valle dell'Acate

This wine is a blend of 70% Nero d' Avola and 30% Frappato. 13.5% abv

*Notes: Its a great wine which can be paired well with medium spicy food. Good structure, rounded with spicy notes that linger for a long time.*



Sicilian wine delegation with Subhash Arora.



7) Cartagho Nero d'Avola IGT 2008 Mandrarossa (Settesoli)

14 % abv, 100 Nero d'Avola with six months barrel maturation.

*Notes: Honey, black currant and beautifully soft on the palate*

8) Rosso del Conte Contea di Sclafani DOC 2006 Cantina Regaleali

14% abv, Nero d'Avola blend (varying red varietals), signature Tasca D'Almerita wine. The wine is aged for 18 months in French barrique + min six months in bottle.

*Notes: Complex and full bodied with elegance.*

#### Dessert Wine)

8) Passito di Pantelleria DOC 2007 Abraxas

The grape varietal is Zibibbo. 14.5% abv.

*Notes: Very sweet, strong honey and vanilla notes*

The wine was awarded the dessert wine of the season recently.

All the wines tasted that evening had a mark of elegance and many of them have potential to be marketed in India though not necessarily be paired with Indian food.

After sampling the wines, we were able to enjoy more of our favourite wines from the selection at hand at a lavish 5-course dinner that followed the Master Class. The dinner menu had been tailor made by the hotel chefs to include specific dishes that paired best with the wines. While it offered a choice for the main course, I paired my braised lamb shanks with Don Antonio Nero d'Avola IGT Sicilia 2008 from Morgante.

## MORE ABOUT SICILY

1, 20,000 hectares of viticulture (Higher than Bordeaux, Australia, South Africa and Germany)

It has wines from the volcanic region of Mount Etna (The Etna Mountain volcano erupted in the beginning of January this year).

Over the past 20 years, the Istituto Regionale della Vite e del Vino (IRVV) and its consultants have contributed enormously to establishing vineyard management, research, and clonal selection of its main indigenous varietals, such as Nero d'Avola, Carricante, Nerello Mascalese, Catarratto and Inzolia, which today represent the face of Sicilian wines.

Many of the wines are excellent matches with Indian cuisine. The fact that they offer excellent Price Quality Ratio makes them a good choice for restaurants, hotels and consumers alike. The wines tasted that evening are not available in the Indian market yet. But looking at the response, I am quite positive that some of them will find their way into the market soon.

#### Wines Recommended

*Don Antonio Nero d'Avola IGT Sicilia 2008 from Morgante, Fondo Filara Etna Bianco DOC 2010 Cantine Nicosia, Rosanto di Nero d'Avola Sicilia IGP 2010 Castel Venus, Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG Classico 2008 Valle dell'Acate and a dessert wine which we had in the dinner menu, Moscato della Torre Bianco (Moscato di Noto DOC 2010 Marabino)* 🍷