
TENUTA DI FESSINA



• Castiglione di Sicilia •

Contrada Rovittello

I' vigne di Fessina

Silvia Maestrelli is a wine producer in the Tuscan estate Villa Petriolo in Cerreto Guidi (Florence). With her husband **Roberto Silva** and **Federico Curtaz** in order to weld their collaboration and get more quality, they bet on the Sicilian ground. In 2007, fascinated by this extraordinary, beautiful and rich land, they bought a XVIII century “palmento” made of lava stone. The noun overlooks the vineyard of the past century, six hectares of Nerello Mascalese.



“*I'vigne di Fessina*”, as the local people define the vineyards of the estate, are overlooked by a magnificent tree. Its roots wrap up the village’s wall of Rovittello, its branches look up towards the mounts Nebrodi. People call it the Millicucco, fascinating and hieratic guardian of the village.

“The most striking thing that you can see when looking up to the mountain are puffs of smoke rising from the gnome’s hat on the mountain’s top. It never stops, puffing away, since five hundred thousand years and more. It pours the ground with ashes and lapilli, sometimes gathered or wiped away by the rain, sometimes mixed and covered by flowing lava. The ground is hidden for hundreds of years until the nature begins patiently to conquer the rocks, creating a fertile ground which, if farmed properly, gives wonderful fruits. I' vigne di Fessina are one of these natural basins, rich in their poverty. Between Linguaglossa and Randazzo you will find many of these basins, which cuddle the vineyards as a generous nurse. The vineyards produces different wines, from particular types of soil and microenvironments which make them unique”. (Federico Curtaz).

The renewed vineyards and the good weather favours the abundant and fruitful grape harvest, starting from 2009 we will find the fruit of this commitment in the bottle, ripened at the sun of the famous and magnificent “*a' Montagna*” of Salvo Foti.



The position of Sicily in the Mediterranean



In the Classic period, praised by politicians, poets, play writers, philosophers, historians and naturalists, it was considered the fulcrum of all the political, religious and socio-cultural events during the Arabian domination, as a link between the Christian and Muslim world. Under the Norman domination, Sicily was open minded to the Italian and European culture. In 1550, with the discovery of America, Sicily was far from the economic and financial centres.

Geographically the island is situated in the same zone of North-Western Africa, Southern Spain and the Peloponnesian peninsula, therefore it has a mild climate. This climate changes little by little entering the island, the flora as well, that becomes Mediterranean. Sicily is an island with defined coasts. It is like a bridge which unites two continents: Europe in the western Mediterranean Sea and Africa.

The island has always been considered as the mainstay of the Mediterranean area thanks to its political force and its strategic geographical position for the economy. Physically, Sicily is an isosceles triangle, surrounded by islands: Pantelleria, Ustica and the archipelagos of Eolie, Lipari and Egadi. The Northern coasts are washed by the Tyrrhenian Sea, while the eastern coasts are on the Ionian sea. In the North the coast is high and steep. Towards the south eastern cape the coastline is jagged. The south western coast is geologically various. The coast towards Africa is formed of sand, dunes and chalky formations.

Etna, a great volcano

A' Muntagna....

Tutto ciò che la natura ha di grande,
tutto ciò che ha di piacevole,
tutto ciò che ha di terribile
si può paragonare all' Etna
e l'Etna non si può paragonare a nulla.

D. Vivand Denon
Voyage en Sicile



The Etna massif is bounded by the Alcantara valley, the Simeto basin, the Catania plain on one side and the sea on the other. It extends for 1570 square Kilometres and has a perimeter of 110 Kilometres; its peak is 3350 metres with mild slopes of about 1550 metres which are cultivated and inhabited. Up to 2400 metres there are dark lava flows and spots of wood and brooms and then bare stone.

The main cone is still active. Along the slope there are hundreds of small cones, sometimes the lava still comes out, reaching the peopled area. In 1669 a flow destroyed Catania, while in 1928 one destroyed Mascali.

The volcanic ground consists of lava, basalt, tuff, lapilli and ashes, very permeable to water. During the winter time the peaks are covered in snow, anyway the ground is not barren due to a lack of rivers. Those are numerous in the lower part of the mountain.

A' Muntagna...

*Everything that in Nature is great, pleasant, terrible
can be compared to the Etna Volcano
And Etna can be compared to nothing.*

D. Vivand Denon
Voyage in Sicile

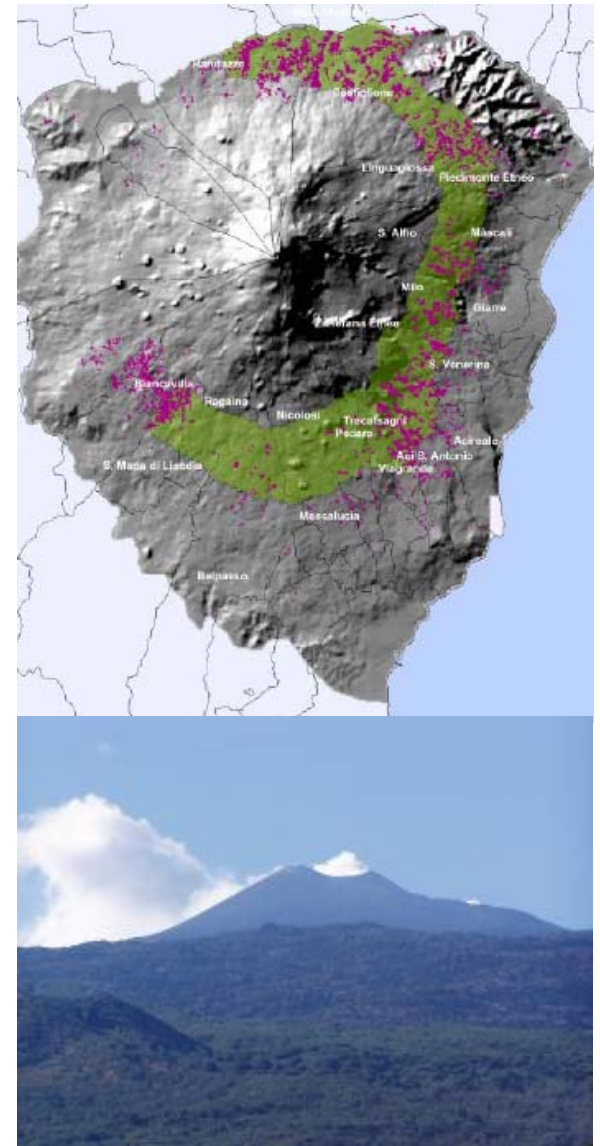
The Etna vineyards

The Etna viticulture is developed on three quarters of the volcanic cone circumference. It occupies 2900 hectares, from the southern side which overlooks the Catania plain to the east towards the sea, till the North towards the Nebrodi mounts.

In the Southern side you will find the highest vineyards, which exceeds 1000 metres of altitude. The type of grapes that grow here are Nerello Mascalese, Carricante and a small part of Grenache. The best Etna wines are produced in the Northern part of the volcano, between Piedimonte and Randazzo. The grape variety par excellence is Nerello Mascalese and more rarely the Nerello Cappuccio. Hazel and olive trees grow close to vines.

About 45% of the whole Etna wine production is here, mostly in the municipalities of Castiglione di Sicilia and Randazzo.

Salvo Foti in 2001 wrote: “the best area for the vine cultivation, are Verzella, Rovittello and Valcerasa, are in the municipalities of Piedimonte Etneo, Linguaglossa and Castiglione di Sicilia. Those are the best and oldest vineyards of Nerello Mascalee that give very elegant red wines with a good alcohol content and spicy aromas”.



Today varietals

In the past, on the Etna region, you could have found about ten varieties of grape. The situation changed when the *Phylloxera* reached the island. A few are left, Nerello Mascalese, Carricante, Grenache and in a smaller percentage, Minnella and Nerello Cappuccio.

Nerello Mascalese

The grape is original from the Mascali plain. Quotations confirm that it has been cultivated already since four centuries. The Nerello Mascalese has a great vegetative and productive vigour. On the Etna it has good equilibrated conditions thanking the scarce deepness of the soil, the high plantation, the considerable altitude as well as the cultivation practices. The grape ripening difference among districts is very high.

Quoting again Salvo Foti: “experience shows that the best trellising system for the Nerello Mascalese grape is the traditional *alberello* with high density of vines per hectare (6.000/9.000 stocks per Ha). The *alberello* is still the most diffused trellising system on the Etna, but it is destined to be abandoned by the vine-growers for the excessive farming costs and the missing workforce. The new trellising systems, especially with the *contropalliera* do not give good results with this grape”.

The grape of Nerello Mascalese, with its tardy ripening, has a long form. The skin is red tending to blue, with an abundant presence of bloom.

According to recent studies by Rocco Di Stefano the anthocyan composition of this varietal doesn't include the family of the acilate anthocyan, as it happens with Pinot Noir. It seems that only Nerello Mascalese and Pinot Noir are the only grape varieties in the world with this characteristic.

The tannins are abundant, deep and soft when the grapes are fully ripened. The varietal aroma is complex, from terpenic nuances to tobacco. It produces about 70 quintals per hectares. 220 hectares of Nerello Mascalese are on the Register of the DOC wines and half of them are more than thirty years old.





Nerello cappuccio

We don't know the origin of this variety. With Nerello Mascalese it forms the blend for the DOC Etna Rosso. Like Nerello Mascalese it gives wines suitable to be aged. Nerello cappuccio has a smaller bunch of grapes, with a violet blue skin. It is rich in anthocyanins and its aroma is fruity, with cherries jam nuances.



Carricante

Carricante, cultivated only on the Etna area, was originated in Viagrande. It has a big and winged bunch of grapes and is very fertile and productive. It produces wines with a high fixed acidity, low Ph (2.9/3.0) and an high content of malic acid. It gains complex nuances by aging. 50 hectares of Carricante are on the Register of the DOC wines and half of them are more than thirty years old.

Tenuta di Fessina, Contrada Rovittello, Castiglione di Sicilia



The vineyards of the Fessina's estate are at **Rovittello**, a small village in the municipality of **Castiglione di Sicilia**. The town was created by the Greeks, has the agorà and other typical Greek architectural characteristics.



Rovittello is a small village of houses and millstones which belonged to Mr. Musmeci. It is a quiet place, at 650 metres above sea level. The winter is severe, it snows very often, spring is rainy and summer hot and dry, autumn is long and warm, with a high daily temperature difference.





In the centre of the village you will find the five centenary trees, called “millicucchi”.

The vineyards are surrounded by small black walls, made of lava stone, which are called “rasole” in the local dialect. Those have various functions: they bound the property, work as retaining levels of the fine Etnean ground, as well as paths for the vines cultivation.





The vineyards extend for about six hectares. The vines are grown at *alberello*, planted between 1920 and the period after the first world war. The growing sixth of 1,15x1,15 with a density of about 8000 plants per ha.



Plants have a central trunk, from which three or four short spurs do sprout. They are held up by a chestnut tutor, to which the trunk and the yearly vegetation are bounded. The farming cultivation is rather simply. Pruning in winter and pinching out in spring, which gives 6,7 vine-branches, then thinning in summer.

The *alberelli* are like sculptures, pruned by generations of people; sometimes they are strong and erect, sometimes twisted.



The vineyards are surrounded by two semicircular scree, which embrace them like a mother. Those have been formed by lava flows of the past, which followed one after the other for 500.000 years.



The ground on which the vines grow is not deep, black, rich in pumice and fine clay. The vineyard grows on the lava ground, in the middle of these two 'wings', covered by hazel and olive trees and spontaneous vegetation, like aetnensis brooms and chestnut trees.



The varieties **Nerello mascalese** and **Nerello cappuccio** are mixed with ancient vines, some vineyards of **Carricante** and **Catarratto**. They produce small bunches of grapes. By ripening they have an alcohol content of 20, 21° and a total acidity of 7 grams per litre. They are not rich in anthocyanins, the tannins are thick and abundant. The ripeness is tardy.

The wine we fermented in 2007 and 2008 seem to be austere, with an acid backbone and vigorous and ample tannins which are gradually evolving. The aromas have spicy nuances, typical of the varietal. They will produce elegant and graceful wines, with pleasant but not marked colours.

Our objective is to produce a unique wine, a kind of 'cru', carefully defined, selecting the best grapes. Fessina is like a nest made of thousands of stocks of vine, growing thanks to a dark and generous land and to the laboriousness of all the people committed in this project.

Il Musmeci

We decided to dedicate our cru wine obtained from Nerello Mascalese grapes to the Musmeci family and particularly to mister Musmeci, who for many years have taken care of the vineyards "I Vigne di Fessina" with so much love that today we can cultivate eighty years old vines. The history of this extraordinary land, with its colours, its landscape, its culture, meets the people's fate. And that of the wine which is coming to life.



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Video Tenuta di Fessina

<http://it.youtube.com/watch?v=YiYrcn0H08g>

<http://it.youtube.com/watch?v=hQGVZcu35co>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-a_qC7bmS_k

