

SICILY

A Continent of Wine

Once infamous for making industrial quantities of concentrated musts and uninspiring sweet wines, Sicily is fast shaking off its bulk-wine and sticky Marsala image. Kerin O'Keefe identifies the island's best growing areas and the dynamic estates that are transforming its reputation

Photography by Paolo Tenti

Thanks to almost ideal growing conditions and a patrimony of unique native grapes, Sicily's once-stagnant wine scene is undergoing a much-deserved quality renaissance. Now a wellspring of experimentation and investment, the largest island in the Mediterranean is quickly becoming Italy's most exciting wine-producing region, as winemakers discover the island's ancient grapes and classic growing areas.

Though the recent past was devoted to industrial-quantity winemaking, the future is focused on top-quality wines of relatively good value that are both modern and indisputably Sicilian. Sprinkled with ancient Greek temples and Norman cathedrals built by former invaders, Sicily has long been a land of contradictions, and this is especially evident in its flourishing wine sector, where new boutique wineries can be found alongside sprawling cooperatives the size of oil refineries. Even though Sicily is no longer merely a vast reservoir of grapes and concentrated must, the island's determined drive toward quality is hindered by its steadfast image as a bulk-wine producer.

Its lingering reputation is not groundless: Sicily remains one of Italy's most prolific wine-producing regions, with as much land under vine as all of Australia and more than double that of Piedmont or Tuscany. Surprisingly, only 17 percent of Sicily's massive output is bottled on the island, and only 3 percent of this is under Italy's Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) appellation system. The island remains a leading producer of strong grape must (*vino da taglio*), which is covertly used by many northern producers to give their more delicate wines an injection of southern muscle, while the brunt of the harvest, of dubious quality, is still sold in bulk or distilled. But side by side with these dismal remnants of mass production, dynamic winemakers have carefully revived ancient grapes and are now making some of Italy's most innovative wines.

An apparently smoking Mount Etna looms over *alberello* vines

The island's newfound status as one of the most inspiring quality wine regions in Europe is credited to a group of far-sighted pioneers—including legendary enologist Giacomo Tachis, of Sassicaia fame—and to the determination of the revamped Istituto Regionale della Vite e del Vino (IRVV). For years the IRVV kept a low profile against the backdrop of a lucrative jug-wine economy, but by the late 1980s it realized that Sicily's wine industry was in jeopardy, as wine drinkers the world over began turning away from easy-quaffing wines in favor of quality. In 1992, the languishing Institute took new direction under the presidency of local dynamo Diego Planeta, who had long presided over the region's most successful cooperative, Settesoli, founded by his father. Planeta convinced Tachis to advise for the region upon retiring from his role as Antinori's consulting winemaker. Guided by Tachis, the IRVV planted experimental vineyards throughout the island with both international and native grape varieties and set up a simple cellar at their Palermo headquarters. "My goal was to identify the best grape varieties and the best training systems that would encourage both growers and winemakers to move from quantity-driven to quality production. Although we had interesting outcomes with both international and native varieties, our research proved hands down that Nero d'Avola, especially if trained with *alberello* [en gobelet, as bush vines], gave the best results," explains Tachis. The determined winemaker also discouraged *tendone* (pergola) training of Nero d'Avola and other varieties, which normally produces tart, thin wines. Instead, he convinced growers to adopt Guyot, spurred cordon, or *gobelet*-trained vines, in order to lower yields and produce more robust wines.

Until Tachis began his trials with Nero d'Avola, this widely planted grape was known merely as the main ingredient in concentrated must and bulk wine and was considered by most as incapable of bearing wines of depth and complexity. The celebrated enologist notes that another fundamental problem he encountered in Sicily, particularly in regard to red-wine production, was the brief vinification time. "Red wines had very short maceration and fermentation periods, in part to avoid ceding too much tannin to what were easy-drinking wines, and in part because the intense heat quickly stopped

fermentation.” Perhaps nowhere else in Italy has cooling technology been as crucial to revolutionizing a backward industry as on the scorching shores and slopes of Sicily. Armed with proven results, Tachis and the IRVV shared their research with the island’s winemakers, and their combined expertise helped guide many of the region’s smaller wineries into the modern era. Retired since 2004, Tachis remains enthusiastic about the island’s great potential, declaring, “Sicily has nothing to envy in any other wine-producing region in the world and, especially for red wines, has world-class growing areas, thanks to the intense sunlight that drenches the entire island during the growing season.”

While the whole island benefits from the extraordinary amount of sunlight, enormous variations exist between growing areas. “Sicily is like a continent when it comes to wine. Very few regions around the world can boast such a vast array of soil types and climates, not to mention such dramatically differing landscapes,” says Vincenzo Melia,

Sicily’s vineyards. Native white varieties Cataratto and Inzolia reign, particularly in Alcamo and on the outskirts of Marsala, source of the fortified wine for which the island was once renowned then later despised as consumers turned away from dessert wines and quality tumbled. Though clonal selection for Cataratto and the blending of Inzolia with more aromatic varieties like Sauvignon Blanc have shown unexpected potential, native white Grillo can produce remarkable wines of freshness and structure all on its own. Marco De Bartoli’s Grappoli di Grillo is a good example. Full-bodied with crisp acidity and a long finish, this 100% Grillo is made from unirrigated, Guyot-trained vines situated at sea level. While both fermented and aged in barriques of varying ages, it is complex and fresh with no invasive wood. “Grillo has been traced back to the Phoenicians [around 1000BC], but because it is not a very productive variety, it was nearly abandoned in the ‘60s and ‘70s in favor of more vigorous grapes like Cataratto and Trebbiano Toscano,” says Renato De



Left to right: Alessio Planeta, head of his family company and director of IRVV; Salvatore Geraci, owner of Palari in the Faro DOC;

director of the IRVV. Alessio Planeta, head of the leading firm of the same name, which has estates dotted across the island, elaborates: “The differences between our estates in Menfi and in Noto are as drastic as the differences between Piedmont and Tuscany.” Differences in annual rainfall alone are astounding, averaging less than 12 inches (30cm) along the southeastern coast, and more than 43 inches (1.1m) in the Mount Etna area. Vineyard altitude is as low as sea level or as high as 3,600ft (1,100m), while temperatures, especially during the crucial growing season, can be scorching on low-lying plains and downright cool and continental on the slopes of Etna.

Western Sicily

The great majority of the island’s vineyards are located in the west, and the province of Trapani alone, which has more land under vine than Tuscany, embraces nearly 60 percent of

Bartoli. “But Grillo is the best white grape for the hot plains around Marsala, because it thrives in the heat and does not become cooked and jammy as do international grapes such as Chardonnay.”

Another name associated with the Marsala area is Donnafugata, which has done an excellent job of promoting Sicilian wines around the world. The Rallo family has invested heavily in autochthonous red and white grape varieties, which they vinify on their own or blend with international grapes. Unfortunately, the wines express more the hand of their enologist, Carlo Ferrini, and less the unique character of their native varieties, thanks to overextraction and the zealous use of new wood for the reds, which mask the wines’ innate fruit and impart an abundance of aggressive tannins. Popular with American consumers, Donnafugata’s bottlings are strikingly similar to New World wines—the

result of a winemaking trend that has engulfed the island but that is thankfully being overturned by many of Sicily’s top wineries.

Though white-wine production still dominates in the west, the area has attracted heavy investment in red varieties over the past decade. On the outskirts of Alcamo, one of the best of the small boutique wineries—Ceuso, owned by the Melia family—shook up the stagnant local wine scene when it released its eponymous red wine in 1995. “We believe that Sicily is better suited to red-wine production than to white, so in the early 1990s we planted Nero d’Avola, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot in our vineyards near Salemi. Cueso, made from all three of these grapes, proved that even the Trapani province is well suited to reds, and that its fame for white wines is due more to tradition than to performance,” says Giuseppe Melia.

Situated between Camporeale and Alcamo, the large Rapitalà estate has noticeably improved the quality of its red



Giusto Occhipinti, co-founder of COS, in Vittoria (Ragusa); Salvatore La Lumia of Barone La Lumia near Lucata (Agrigento)

and white wines, thanks to major investment from Gruppo Italiano Vini, which has a controlling interest in the firm. Its Tenuta line, made only from estate-grown grapes, demonstrates the recent improvements in both vineyard and cellar. And while its most interesting wines are blends of native and international grapes, it also produces an outstanding Syrah called Nadir.

Just outside Palermo is one of the oldest of the island’s wineries, Duca di Salaparuta, founded in 1824. Though the firm was later taken over by the regional government that managed it until 2001, and quality suffered toward the end of this period, the winery’s enologist in the 1980s, Franco Giacosa, was among the first to recognize the promise of Nero d’Avola. Duca di Salaparuta is credited with the first wine made exclusively from this now-trendy native variety—the firm’s flagship Duca Enrico—whose combination of finesse and

power astonished amateur and professional wine lovers in its debut 1984 vintage. Acquired in 2001 by northern holding group Illva (of Amaretto di Saronno fame), which has injected more than \$10 million, the firm has improved quality by acquiring new vineyards and modernizing the winery.

Inland from the capital is the famous Regaleali property, owned by the Tasca d’Almerita family since 1830. The estate’s name means “Ali’s farm” in Arabic, testimony to Arab rule of the island from the 9th to the 11th century, and it is one of the few Sicilian wineries to have focused on quality wines for generations. With vineyards ranging from 1,476 to 2,460ft (450 to 750m) above sea level, the estate benefits from hot days and cool nights that allow grapes to ripen slowly and reach perfect maturity with rich flavors. Even if Regaleali likes to blend tradition with innovation, its wines made from indigenous grapes are the most interesting—in particular, the Rosso del Conte. First released in 1971 as a blend of Nero d’Avola and Perricone, but now comprised mostly of Nero



d’Avola, it is both austere and elegant, with the capacity to age gracefully over many years.

Southwest/south central

Famed for its ancient temples, the arid Agrigento province is home to both giant cooperatives and a new generation of mid-sized wineries. Here, for example, are Planeta’s original Ulmo winery, in Sambuca di Sicilia, and its Dispensa winery in Menfi. Founded by Alessio, his brother Santi, and cousin Francesca in the mid-1980s, Ulmo was one of the first private mid-sized wineries in Sicily, at a time when most were either colossal or minuscule. Later, the Planetas invested in vineyards and built other cellars at strategic points across the island: Vittoria, Noto, and most recently on Mount Etna. Their continuing research into the microclimates and soils of the island’s vast growing areas has been fundamental in

understanding the suitability of cultivating certain grapes in specific areas. “Since 2003, I no longer use Nero d’Avola from our Menfi vineyards for our 100% Nero d’Avola Santa Cecilia, but only that from our Pachino vineyards near Noto, where the variety excels,” explains Alessio.

“Everyone is raving about our native Sicilian varieties,” he continues. “But we need to concentrate not only on certain grapes but also on the production areas best suited to those varieties. It would be a shame not to produce Chardonnay in Sambuca, or Syrah in Menfi, where these varieties grow beautifully, because the current trend is toward our autochthonous grapes; just as it would not make sense to cultivate Cabernet near Noto, where Nero d’Avola reaches perfection.” Planeta was among the first on the island to experiment with international varieties, and its modern-style oaked Chardonnay, first released in 1995, was a milestone in Sicily’s enological revolution. Over the past few years, critics and consumers have tired of the region’s international varietals, finding them overblown as a result of the island’s extreme heat and intense sunlight. But while they may have fallen out of favor, it was these more accessible and recognizable wines that showed the world Sicily’s potential and that initially attracted mainland producers including Zonin, Gruppo Italiano Vino, and Mezzacorona to the island.

Still in the Agrigento province, but moving steadily east toward the central south coast and the city of Licata, the family winery of Barone La Lumia is one of the most interesting and lovely estates in the area. Housed in a unique Arab-inspired country villa that the family built at the end of the 18th century with a view of the sea, the firm is now run by Nicolò and Salvatore La Lumia. Although they make a wide range of products, their 100% Nero d’Avola Don Totò—named for the ancestor who founded the family wine business—excels, as does their unusual dessert wine, Nikao, from Nero d’Avola *appassito*. Spreading into the adjacent Caltanissetta province, the colossal Grottarossa winery, with its enormous but thankfully abandoned silos from a bygone era, is also making leaps in quality. Its Rosso della Noce Nero d’Avola is especially good.

Eastern Sicily

Although there has been great progress across Sicily, the east is undoubtedly the area to watch most closely, as winemakers rediscover nearly forgotten growing zones, where almost extinct varieties once again thrive.

The southeastern province of Ragusa, around the town of Vittoria, is home to the revived Cerasuolo di Vittoria, a red wine made from 60 percent Nero d’Avola and 40 percent Frappato, planted in the zone’s characteristic red, sandy soil. From the 2005 vintage, the wine has been raised to DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita)—the first in Sicily to enjoy this more prestigious status—and a Classico zone has also been established. Yet little more than 20 years ago the wine was in steep decline. “Cerasuolo was hardly produced, since buyers wanted not the wine in itself but the must from overmature Nero d’Avola, the price of which was based on sugar

content,” explains leading producer Giusto Occhipinti, who started the COS winery with two school friends back in 1980.

On a shoestring budget, the three friends vinified grapes from their parents’ vineyards and, from 1983, bought Angelo Gaja’s used barriques in which to age their wine. By the late 1980s they were buying new barriques, and were influenced by California’s Napa Valley. Other winemakers in the area were impressed by the results and also began resurrecting Cerasuolo di Vittoria instead of selling the grape juice from Nero d’Avola. “Then we took a huge step back,” recalls Occhipinti. “We tried some of our earliest bottlings, those matured in recycled barriques, and we were shocked at the difference. With its mineral notes and earthy sensations, the wine was so much more interesting than the later vintages matured in new oak, with its sensations of vanilla and toast. Just as everyone else in the mid-1990s invested in new French barriques, we began using a combination of different sized barrels—from barriques to large casks, all of varying ages.” COS also shuns selected yeasts and has never used chemicals in the vineyards. “Our goal isn’t to make wines that impress wine critics, but to make wine that expresses our great terroir. Here Nero d’Avola is more elegant than in other regions and has great mineral notes from the soil, which gives Cerasuolo di Vittoria its rich fruit, while the Frappato adds floral components and freshness,” he says. The winery also makes another version of Cerasuolo, called Pithos, fermented and aged entirely in clay amphorae. Its pure fruit and elegance are stunning.

The town of Pachino is one of the hottest areas on the island, both literally and figuratively. Located 12 miles (19km) south of the celebrated baroque city of Noto on the extreme southeastern point of Sicily, Pachino dips below North Africa and lies farther south than the tip of Tunisia. With broiling days, cool windy nights, and the lowest rainfall on the island, this is where Nero d’Avola thrives and is the variety’s classic growing area, having originated around the nearby town of Avola. Top local producers include the family-owned Curto, whose complex Nero d’Avolas are made from 45-year-old vines near Pachino, and who also make a wonderfully refreshing *rosato* from the famed grape. Alessio Planeta not only bought vineyards in Pachino but even built a new winery under the original farmhouse on the aptly named Buonavini estate. According to Planeta, “The vineyards around Noto, particularly near Pachino, are to Nero d’Avola what Montalcino is to Sangiovese. Nero d’Avola is now cultivated everywhere on the island but is at its best here, because the arid climate and calcareous soil give wines that are austere, more deeply colored, and more complex than those from Nero d’Avola grown elsewhere.”

The port near Pachino is lined with derelict wineries that once bought grapes from the multitude of small growers. The area was abandoned in the 1970s as small growers took advantage of a national policy meant to decrease overproduction from more prolific areas, including much of Puglia and Sicily. To cut down on exhaustive farm subsidies, the government paid farmers to pull up their vines, and poor growers around Noto willingly ripped up their vines and left

en masse. But thanks to the grape’s recent international success, the Noto area has been revived. Vines from around Pachino, in particular, produce terroir-driven wines with good acidity and soft tannins and have a strong identity sadly lacking in many of the island’s more fruit-forward wines based on the same grape. Producers are also reviving the ancient Moscato di Noto, a delicious dessert wine from the area’s own clone of Moscato and redolent of citrus fruits, pistachio, and pastry cream, enlivened with fresh acidity.

Northeast

In what could easily be another part of the world, vineyards along the slopes of smoking Mount Etna, surrounded by primordial fauna, are finally making wines that match the grandeur of their spectacular setting. This was one of the original DOCs in Sicily, but production nearly stopped in the late 1970s when small farmers left Etna to look for work in the cities. Those who stayed had switched over to modern training systems and easier-to-grow varieties that produced lackluster wines. Then Dr Giuseppe Benanti from nearby Catania, who made his fortune with his family’s pharmaceutical company, invested heavily to revive ancient vineyards and modernize winemaking. His cult wine production began as a personal challenge. “A friend and I had lunch at small restaurant near Mount Etna, and the local wine was just terrible. I thought, ‘Is it possible that this is the best we can produce from Etna,

where everything from pistachios to every fruit imaginable thrives?’ This was in 1988, and I decided to try making wine from my family’s nearly forgotten vineyards on Etna.”

Benanti hired agronomist and enologist Salvo Foti, who grew up on the slopes of Etna. At a time when other winemakers were pulling up indigenous grapes to plant Chardonnay and Merlot, Foti convinced Benanti that the area’s native grapes, *alberello*-trained and grown with no irrigation, were Etna’s real future. “Etna has unique growing conditions compared to the rest of Sicily,” says Foti. “We have, on average, the highest vineyards on the island, which result in drastic differences between day and nighttime temperatures and give us a long growing season. Etna also gets the most rainfall, and its rich volcanic soil, loaded with minerals, also greatly influences our wines.” Foti and Benanti are largely credited with the area’s new respectability and with securing Etna’s winemaking future by restoring past traditions.

Red varieties Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio are Etna’s most important grapes, but it was Benanti’s white wine, Pietramarina Etna Bianco Superiore DOC, that made winemakers all over Italy take notice of the once-sluggish Etna wine scene. Pietramarina is made with Carricante grapes from 80-year-old, head-trained vines, many of them ungrafted, since phylloxera did not wreak as much havoc here, thanks to the volcano’s sandy soil. Better maintenance of the traditional *alberello*-trained vines, particularly in regards to pruning; modern cellar techniques; and employing malolactic fermentation to soften Carricante’s abundant acidity have all

The fertile, mineral-rich soils and intense sunlight of Mount Etna



greatly enhanced quality. According to Tachis—who firmly declares that “one of the best wines I have ever had in my life was a Pinot Nero from Etna, from one of our experimental vineyards”—the area is also well suited to Burgundy’s famously fickle grape.

Mount Etna’s growers battle chronic labor shortages, and even when workers can be found, climbing steep slopes in ankle deep sand and doing everything by hand is extremely costly. Nevertheless, the exciting wine scene has lured many younger people back to deserted family vineyards, as well as tempting outside investors. Besides Benanti, other good producers from Etna include Ciro Biondi, whose Outis bottling is among the best; Simply Red singer Mick Hucknall; and Murgo. The Scammacca del Murgo family have been making wine on the volcano’s slopes for generations, and they still age their earthy Etna Rosso in chestnut barrels. They also make a delicious rosé and a sparkling wine from two red grapes. They recently opened a lovely country inn offering views of the volcano, the vineyards, and the sea.

In the extreme northeast above Messina, where Sicily is separated from mainland Reggio Calabria by less than 2 miles (3km), another once-famous red wine has been given new life thanks to architect-turned-winemaker Salvatore Geraci. The Faro DOC, one of the few appellations in Sicily never geared toward bulk wines, had slid into obscurity. Looking to save the DOC from extinction, famed Italian wine critic Luigi Veronelli asked Geraci—who had well-kept family vineyards of *alberello*-trained vines, some more than 50 years old, situated high above the Straits of Messina—to meet with consultant enologist Donato Lanati. Geraci and Lanati

aligned in 1990, and Veronelli compared the first vintage of Faro Palari DOC to Romanée-Conti when he tried it two years later. “Anyone can make enormous, jammy wines in Sicily. Making elegant wines is much harder,” says Geraci. He has succeeded beautifully. With unprecedented refinement, his Faro Palari DOC is one of the finest examples of terroir-driven wine on the island. Made from local varieties Nerello Mascalese, Nerello Cappuccio, and Nocera, the wine has a charming combination of earthiness and finesse. While the Etna Rosso DOC based on the same grapes yields wines with a strong mineral character and more fruit flavor, Faro is markedly different: lighter in color and more elegant.

Sicily, with its multitude of unusual grapes and diverse climates and soils, is at the height of its quality revolution but faces certain risks, particularly homogenization of Sicilian wines. According to Geraci, “Sicily has always had what Veronelli called ‘golden grapes.’ The problem was that, until recently, local winemakers lacked the knowledge to turn them into top-quality wines. Today, producers all over the island have learned to make technically perfect wines—so much so that now the pendulum risks swinging in the other direction. Sicilian winemakers need to focus their efforts on making wines that reflect their terroir, instead of concentrating only on whatever style and variety are in vogue at the moment. Otherwise the island risks producing identical wines, flawless but lacking character, wines with no soul.” Having struggled to get their island recognized as a quality wine region, Sicilian producers should embrace their highly spirited sense of individualism and celebrate what makes their wines unique. ■

Etna’s steep, terraced vineyards are the highest on the island



SELECTED WINES

Marco De Bartoli Grappoli del Grillo 2005

Enticing aromas of jasmine, orange blossom, banana, and a hint of pineapple that carry over on to the palate. Well structured but fresh, with a long, clean finish. **17**

Benanti Etna Bianco Superiore Pietramarina 2001

A white wine with the structure of a red. Full-bodied but fresh, with aromas of Spanish broom and lemon peel, with apple and honey on the palate and a long, mineral close. **17.5**

Murgo Etna Rosso 2004

Earthy aromas of fresh strawberry and raspberry, with ripe juicy red-fruit flavors laced with minerals and balanced by crisp acidity and soft tannins. **17.5**

Ceuso Ceuso 2004

Rich plum and blackcurrant aromas. Earthy flavors of lush black fruits elegantly layered with well-integrated oak and balanced by firm tannins. **18.5**

COS Cerasuolo di Vittoria Pithos

Intriguing floral bouquet, with nuances of blackberry and pure, succulent blackberry flavors, with hints of earth and mineral balanced by fresh acidity and silky tannins. Long, clean finish. Stunning. **19**

Curto Nero d’Avola 2004

Enticing nose of black cherry and carob with hints of leather. Rich but restrained blackberry flavors beautifully balanced with good acidity and smooth tannins. **18**

Duca di Salaparuta Duca Enrico 2003

Nose of ripe berry, leather, and smoke, with opulent fruit flavors layered with herbs and licorice. Firm tannins and a lengthy finish. **18**

Faro Palari Palari 2004

Bright berry and rose fragrance with hints of earth and tobacco. Delicious cherry flavor with subtle vanilla and spice. **18.5**

Ciro Biondi Etna Rosso Outis 2004

Ripe strawberry and floral nose, with elegant flavors of berry and tobacco. Beautifully balanced, with pleasing acidity, silky tannins, and mineral finish. **18.5**

Planeta Nero d’Avola Santa Cecilia 2005

Earthy black-fruit aromas with a hint of leather and sea breeze. Juicy blackberry flavors with sweet tannins and a long finish. **18.5**

ACCOMMODATION

Excelsior Palace Hotel
Via Marchese Ugo 3
Palermo

Tel: +39 09 17 90 9; fax: +39 09 13 42 13 9

Palermo makes the perfect base for day trips to wineries on the western part of the island. Centrally located and completely renovated in 2005, the Excelsior Palace is still a gem from the Belle Epoque.

Masseria degli Ulivi
Contrada Porcari – SS287 Noto-Palazzolo Acreide (SR)
Tel: +39 09 31 81 30 19

A spacious and airy hotel renovated from a private country villa.

Hotel Villa Diodoro
Via Bagnoli Croci 75
Taormina (ME)

Tel: +39 09 42 23 31 2

Fax: +39 09 42 23 39 1

Beautiful views of the sea and Etna in the distance and centrally located in Taormina.

Tenuta San Michele
Via Zafferana 13
Santa Venerina (CT)

Tel: +39 09 59 50 52 0

Murgo’s lovely agriturismo on the slopes of Mount Etna, surrounded by vineyards and with breathtaking views of the volcano. Good on-site restaurant.

RESTAURANTS

Antica Focacceria San Francesco
Via Alessandro Paternostro 58
Palermo

Tel: +39 09 13 21 02 64

Legend has it that even Garibaldi ate at this favorite spot for locals in the historic city center that serves up Palermo’s traditional cuisine.

Trattoria Garibaldi
Piazza dell’Addolorata 1
Marsala (TP)

Tel: +39 09 23 95 30 06

Informal and always crowded, thanks to its wonderful seafood dishes.

La Madia
Corso Filippo Re Capriata 22
Licata (AG)

Tel: +39 09 22 77 14 43

Certainly deserving of its coveted Michelin star, thanks to chef Pino Cuttaia’s delicious and creative renditions of local dishes made with the freshest ingredients, a wonderful wine list, and tasteful decor.

La Cialoma
Piazza Regina Margherita 23
Marzamemi (SR)

Tel: +39 09 31 84 17 72

One of the best small trattorie, in a lovely piazza near the harbor, serving fresh local seafood.

Ristorante Casa Grugno
Via Santa Maria dei Greci
Taormina (ME)

Tel: +39 09 42 21 20 8

This fine restaurant packs in locals in the know with its elegant atmosphere and refined cuisine.