

# The WineKnitter

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An adventure into the world of wine, food, knitting...and so much more!

## Day 571 Sicily Part One

5/5/2017

Through the gracious invitation of Assovini Sicilia, I and over one hundred other journalists from all over the world traveled to Sicily last week to partake in the fourteenth addition of the annual Sicilia En Primeur 17. We had the opportunity to taste the wines of the 2016 vintage and attend Masterclasses in the beautiful setting of Radicepura, a multifunctional park between Etna and the Ionian Sea.



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In addition to the two-day event, I spent several days prior to that as Assovini's guest in an organized and impressive tour of the island and five wineries.

Assovini Sicilia was founded in 1998 with the objective of giving voice to wine producers, promoting the region, ethics, sustainability and making a more pronounced impression in the marketplace. Part of their statement is "*Assovini Sicilia: expression of the wineries in Sicily*". There are presently seventy-six members of Assovini Sicilia of which forty-nine major wine producers participated in Sicilia EP17.

Francesco Ferreri, president of Assovini Sicilia said at the conference "*The safeguarding of the environment and the care and attention given to the territory have always been fundamental themes for viticulture and, in particular, for the producers grouped together in the Assovini Sicilia association, united in the putting into practice, day after day, of working methods aimed at the safeguarding of the environment.*"

Sicily is the largest Mediterranean island surrounded by the Ionian, Tyrrhenian and the Mediterranean seas. It is an island rich in culture and history. Human activity dates back to around 12,000 BC. Original inhabitants were Sicani and then the Elymians. Today, there are roughly five million people living in Sicily, making it the fourth most populated region in Italy. Sicily is considered a melting pot of ethnicities that include North Africa, Middle East, Greeks, Romans and Spaniards to name a few.





I had the opportunity to see an amazing array of landscapes from the westernmost part of the island to the easternmost part of the island as I made my way from Palermo to Mazara del Vallo to Menfi, then Cammarata to Catania and then all the way back towards Palermo and Marsala again. The diversity of the land and soil, the proximity to the ocean and of course the wind, all play a big part in the growth of the grapes and flavor of the wine. Volcanic eruptions over the years and the surrounding seas have contributed to mineral rich and fertile soil. In addition to Sicily being the third largest wine producer in Italy, they grow olive trees, wheat, citrons, capers, figs, lemons, oranges and pistachios. See slide show below.



My focus today is an overview of Sicily. Over the next few weeks, I will go into detail about the wines I tasted at Sicilia EP 17, the wineries I visited and how location, geography and climate play a role in the vineyards. The same grape can have many different expressions, depending on where it is grown on the island. I will also focus on Sicily's indigenous grapes and cuisine.

My first day in Sicily, our little group of seven visited an historical site, the Temple of Segesta, set high on a hill outside of Palermo. This Doric Temple is quite impressive with 36 Doric columns, built by the Elymians between 430 and 420 BC. They never completed building it, as there is no roof. It is thought that there might have been an attack on the settlement of Segesta. However, the temple is still standing and it is quite amazing.

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Further up, on a nearby hill called Monte Barbaro is a semicircular theater that was built at the same time as the temple. It sits 400m above sea level and the theatre can seat 4000. It is used during the summer months as a venue for concerts and Greek plays. I must admit it was quite a hike to reach both places, but well worth it! The views are stunning! One of the photos shows how far down the temple is from the theater.



And so begins my love affair with Sicily! I have so much to tell you. A visit to a few wineries is our next stop in my series on Sicily.



Cheers!  
Penina

To leave a comment or if you have an inquiry, please contact me at [winelettercomments@gmail.com](mailto:winelettercomments@gmail.com)

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