



THE VOLCANO'S FERTILE SOIL

Pindar called it the column that bears the heavens; for the Arabs it was “gibel utlamat,” the mountain of mountains; while some older locals still call it Mongibello. Etna, from a Greek verb meaning to burn, rises to 3,340 meters symbolizing Catania and indeed the whole of Sicily. A young, still-active volcano, Etna has created soil that mingles ash, lapilli, pumice, sand, porphyry and lavic rock in a very fertile cocktail particularly suited to viticulture. Wild and bare on the west, the volcano presents a gentler aspect on the wooded northern slopes while the east is dominated by the vaguely disquieting Valle del Bove. Winter snow on the upper slopes makes skiing possible until spring, although the lifts are often destroyed by lava flows. Snow on Etna and other mountain chains feed the rivers that have always made the vast Catania plain excellent farming country for cereals, citrus fruits, grapes and special crops like pistachios and blood oranges. Catania was founded in 729 BC by Greeks from Chalcis and, like

the rest of the island, has been inhabited by a succession of people. Unlike other Sicilian towns, it was destroyed by eruptions and earthquakes and rebuilt several times. Today, its

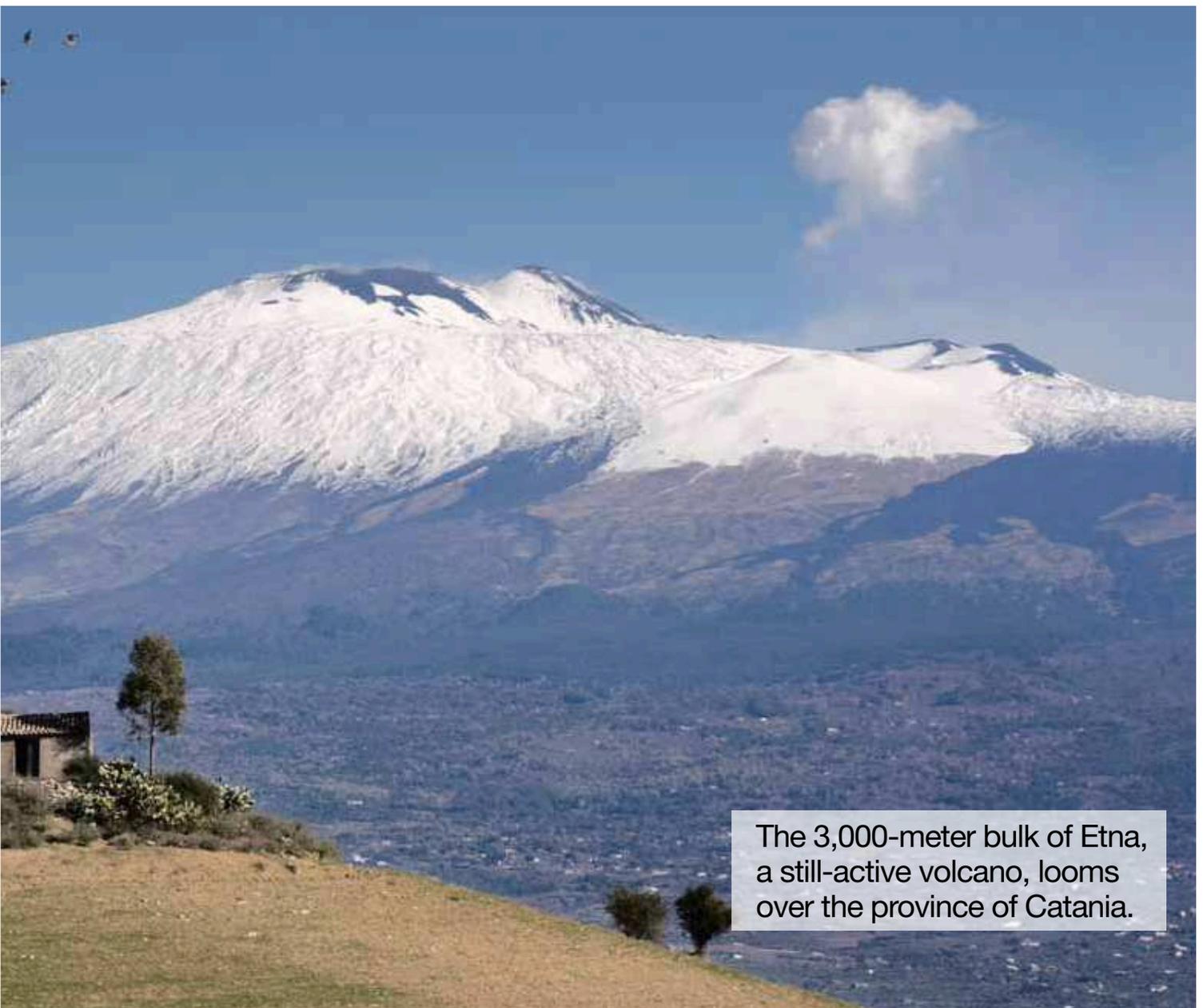


main artistic treasures are from the Baroque period. With seven other municipalities in Val di Noto (“val” or “vallo” was an Arab-Norman administrative area), Catania has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2002. Catania’s symbol is “u liotru,” a lavic rock statue of an elephant with an obelisk on its back. The city has green areas and at Sant’Alfio, the Etna regional park hosts the Castagno dei Cento Cavalli, perhaps the oldest tree in Europe.

Just north of Catania is Acireale, another Baroque town famed for its lemons. To the west is Paternò, which has been

inhabited for 5,500 years and which the Normans called “Civitas Fertilissima.” Today, it is still a farming hub and also a center of craft manufacture in terracotta and lavic stone. The town of Caltagirone, strategically positioned 600 meters above sea level and one of the seven Val di Noto heritage municipalities, is a leading producer of craft pottery.

Finally, on the west slope of Etna is Admiral Horatio Nelson’s dukedom of Bronte, which produces 30,000 quintals of pistachios a year, while nearby Randazzo boasts a royal palace and cathedral in black lavic stone. 🍷



The 3,000-meter bulk of Etna, a still-active volcano, looms over the province of Catania.

Catania: our selections

VINI BIONDI • Etna DOC Rosso “Outis (Nessuno)” 2007



GRAPES:
nerello,
mascalese, nerello
cappuccio

DRINK BEFORE:
2014

Serve at 16 °C
in a stem glass
about seven cm
at the rim

\$21

A long-established Etna winery, Vini Biondi was founded in the late 19th century. Over the past decade or so, it has earned a fine reputation for the Catania-area DOC and IGT wines sourced from its eight hectares.

THE WINE

Pale, garnet-flecked ruby; nose opens slowly into leather, sour cherry and fresh greens, ending on nutmeg; warm alcohol offset by refreshing acidity, then pleasing extract and persistence, closing on spice and sour cherries.

TRY IT WITH...

A fragrant, lingering red that partners tasty, moderately elaborate meat dishes. Perfect with traditional Sicilian recipes, such as rabbit in sweet and sour sauce, or with a delicious, if less ambitious, Milan-style veal cutlet.

CONTACT: www.vinibiondi.it

ANTICHI VINAI • Etna DOC Rosato “Petalava” 2009



GRAPES:
nerello mascalese
95%, nerello
cappuccio 5%

DRINK BEFORE:
2012

Serve at 14 °C
in a stem glass
about four cm
at the rim

\$15

One of Etna's leading producers since 1877, Antichi Vinai has been growing native Sicilian varieties for four generations. The Gangemis release a territory-focused range.

THE WINE

Brilliant purplish pink; pleasing wild strawberries and violets fuse with discreet fresh greens; restrained acidity tempers the palate's initial alcohol-driven warmth for a very fragrant, beautifully balanced drinking experience.

TRY IT WITH...

Freshness, balance and moderately robust structure make “Petalava” the perfect pink wine to serve with flavorsome fish-based foods, such as Sicilian-style fish soups, or recipes from further north in Italy like stewed eel.

CONTACT: www.antichivinai.it

NICOSIA • Cerasuolo di Vittoria Classico DOCG “Fondo Filara” 2007



GRAPES:
nero d'Avola,
frappato

DRINK BEFORE:
2014

Serve at 18 °C
in a stem glass
about seven cm
at the rim

\$20

The Nicosia family owns estates at Trecastagni, near Etna, and in Vittoria and Acate in southeastern Sicily, where they grow nero d'Avola and frappato for this DOCG Cerasuolo.

THE WINE

Purple-tinged ruby red; ripe, cherry-led fruit fragrances meld with intense clove and black pepper spiciness, closing on leather; fresh acidity keeps the alcohol in check while the robust tannins avoid any hint of astringency.

TRY IT WITH...

The assertive extract, freshness and balance of this Cerasuolo mean that it is an excellent partner for meat-based entrées. Serve it with Sicilian-style meatballs or with more traditional dishes, such as grilled pork chops.

CONTACT: www.cantinenicosia.it

TENUTA DEL NANFRO • Vittoria DOC Nero d'Avola “Strade” 2009



GRAPES:
nero d'Avola 100%

DRINK BEFORE:
2015

Serve at 18 °C
in a stem glass
about seven cm
at the rim

\$21

The Lo Certo siblings have farmed the family's 32 long-established hectares near Caltagirone since 1989. The organically managed vineyards are almost all planted to native grapes.

THE WINE

Pale ruby with lustrous highlights; intense fresh cherry-led red fruits lifted by sour cherries in alcohol and a waft of spice; delicious blackberry and raspberry flavors, pepper and cinnamon spice and a twist of bitterness.

TRY IT WITH...

A robust, fruit-forward Nero d'Avola that perfectly complements oven-roasted or grilled meat, such as kid with potatoes, but goes equally well with bollito, the traditional north Italian platter of mixed boiled meats.

CONTACT: www.nanfro.com