



In Memoriam
Claudia Cardinale (1938-2025)

The Athenaeum Film Society and Wine Committee
3rd October 2025

An evening of Sicilian wine, food and culture featuring
Luchino Visconti's masterpiece
Il Gattopardo (The Leopard) (1963)



MENU AND WINES

Canapés



Roast fillet steak with crispy caper, garlic and anchovy breadcrumbs.
Served with thyme roasted new potatoes, spinach and caponata.



Gattopardo rum jelly with figs and grapes



Tea and Coffee



Fèlsina

Vino Spumante di Qualità Brut NV (Tuscany, ABV 12%)
Sangiovese 60%, Chardonnay 20%, Pinot Nero 20%.

Donnafugata

Anthilia Sicilia DOC 2024 [12.5%]

Barone di Villagrande

Etna bianco DOC Superiore 2023 [12%]

Tenuta delle Terre Nere

Etna rosso DOC 2023 [14%]

Donnafugata

Passito di Pantelleria Ben Ryé 2022 [14%].

Claudia Cardinale 1938-2025



When Claudia Cardinale died just over a week ago at the age of 87, she was regarded as one of the last great actresses of Hollywood's "Golden Era." Sergio Mattarella, the president of Italy, described her as "an extraordinary artist, an unforgettable heroine of Italian and international cinema, always loved by the public and highly esteemed by great directors." Other tributes included French president Emmanuel Macron, who declared that the French "... will always carry this Italian and world star in our hearts. Alessandro Giuli, Italy's Minister of Culture, said she was "one of the greatest Italian actresses of all time", highlighting "her grace, her special beauty and her long career."

She was born in Tunisia, but both her parents were of Sicilian origin. Having won "The most Beautiful Italian in Tunisia" award in 1957, she received as a prize a trip to the Venice Film Festival. At this time, she spoke only French and a Sicilian dialect, and did not learn Italian until she started making Italian films. From 1958, she was regularly appearing in film, leading to comparisons with the two great divas of Italian cinema, Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida, but several newspapers and magazines, including *Paris Match*, began to consider her to be a credible young rival to Brigitte Bardot.

1963 was the year she blossomed into a fully fledged star. She found herself simultaneously filming Visconti's *The Leopard* and Federico Fellini's *8½*. She participated in the two films during exactly the same period, frequently moving from one to the other and experiencing the strictly planned approach of Visconti, which contrasted strongly with Fellini's very relaxed style and his almost total reliance on improvisation. She remembered Visconti's set as having an almost religious atmosphere, everything focused on the film, Visconti insisting on complete silence, while Fellini encouraged noise and confusion.

"If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."



Il Gattopardo is a novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, published posthumously in 1958. It soon became the top-selling novel in Italian history and is considered one of the most important novels in modern Italian literature, winning Italy's highest award for fiction, the Strega Prize, in 1959. In spite of this, the modernist persuasion of the Italian litterati despised the work. Tomasi was the last in a line of minor princes in Sicily. He had barely completed the manuscript when he died of lung cancer in 1957. He had long contemplated writing a historical novel based on his great-grandfather, Don Giulio Fabrizio Tomasi, another Prince of Lampedusa.

In August 1960, Italian studio Titanus announced they would make a film based on the novel on a budget of at least \$2 million. The film was to be an Italian-American co-production, shot in various languages, with a combination of Italian and American stars.

Several treatments were done before Visconti became involved. In July 1961, MGM announced they had signed a co-production deal with Titanus to make the movie. Visconti approached Laurence Olivier and Spencer Tracy to play the Prince, but the producers chose Burt Lancaster without consulting Visconti. This insulted the director, which caused tension on the set initially, but Visconti and Lancaster ended up working well together, and their resulting friendship lasted the rest of Visconti's life. Lancaster, whose performance in this film is universally regarded as masterly, later

called Visconti "the finest director I've ever worked with." Claudia Cardinale and Delon had made *Rocco and His Brothers* with Visconti, and were obvious choices for the juvenile leads.

The scenes with Lancaster were shot in English and dubbed into Italian for the Italian version of the film, while most of the other scenes were filmed in Italian and dubbed into English for the English/American version. Twentieth Century-Fox distributed the movie in both England and the United States, making several significant alterations. They replaced Visconti's vivid Technicolor images with the vastly inferior DeLuxe Color process and downgraded the film from 70mm to 35mm. Additionally, they cut several key scenes, further reducing the runtime from 185 to 161 minutes.

The dubbing was very poorly executed in terms of the translation, the voices and the synchronization. Burt Lancaster and supporting actor Leslie French were the only ones who re-dubbed their own dialogue. This disastrous dubbing and the poor choice of colour process contributed to producing a significantly inferior product. In consequence, the movie was poorly received by both critics and audiences in the US and England, unlike with the rest of Europe where it was well received. Visconti himself had no control on any of these changes. "I don't feel it's my film at all," Visconti said of this version. Indeed, he disavowed the American version and refused to take any responsibility for it at all. The version we are seeing today is based on the 1983 restoration by Fox, itself based on the version of the film which Visconti personally endorsed.

The film won a significant number of international awards, mainly for its cinematography, direction, art direction, and production and costume design. Not surprisingly given the above, it did not receive any Oscars. Most significantly, it won the 1963 Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film festival.

David Thomas

October 2025

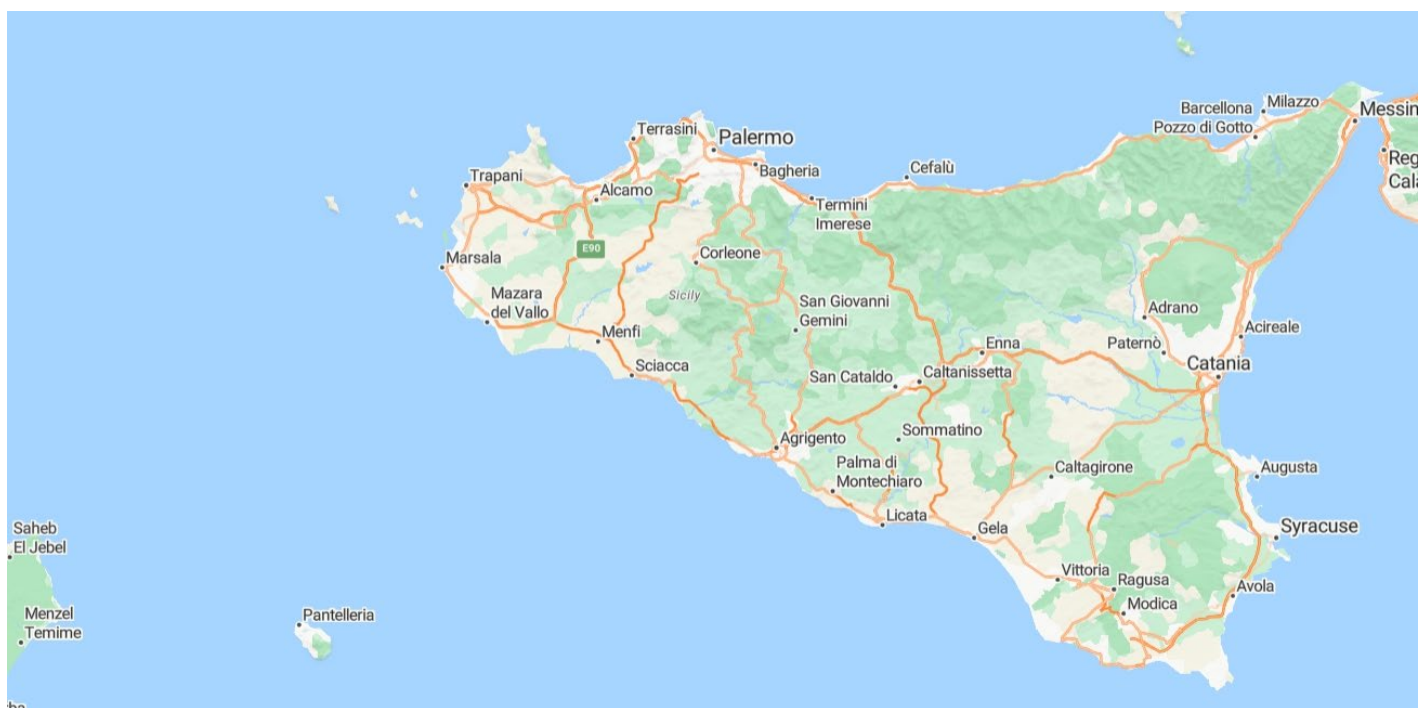
SICILIAN WINES AND WINEMAKING

With its stylistically well-crafted wines, Sicily is a region that can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the world's most prestigious terroir, thanks to forward-thinking agronomic choices made years ago which see native grape varieties benefitting. This testifies to the winemaking skill of Sicily's producers, and also the entrepreneurs who have been driving the region's success. Benefits of inward investment and EU subsidies are clear to see when travelling in Sicilian wine regions.

Sicily enjoys a very varied landscape, favourable climate and extraordinary cultural heritage. The mountains in the northeast are usually snowcapped in winter months, but elsewhere the very hot summer months make vineyard irrigation an absolute requirement. The southeastern tip of Sicily is south of Tunis; the distant island of Pantelleria, a Muscat from which we will be tasting tonight, is on the same latitude as this north African city and closer to it than Palermo.

There are many indigenous Sicilian grapes, of which we will be tasting Catarratto, Carricante, and Nerello Mascalese. The latter two are grown in the Etna region, of particular interest due to its volcanic terrain and grape varieties. Vineyard visitors need only glance up to the smoking summit of Etna in the distance to be reminded of the geological basis of the ground on which they stand. A particular Sicilian specialty is dessert wine. Moscato thrives on Pantelleria and around Noto in the southeast, and Malvasia on the volcanic islands of Lipari north of Sicily.

Frank Larkin, Wine Committee



WINES AND THEIR PRODUCERS

Donnafugata

One of the largest wine producers in Sicily but also an innovative enterprise. Now based in Marsala, founded in 1983 by Giacomo and Gabriella Rallo and now managed by their next generation. The company takes its name from Queen Maria Carolina of Naples who, with her husband Ferdinand IV, fled her home city on the arrival of Napoleon's troops and took refuge in Sicily. The name refers to *Il Gattopardo*, set in part in the hills of Contessa Entellina where the history of this company began.

Anthilia Sicilia DOC 2024

Catarratto-based blend. [ABV 12.5%]

Produced in Contessa Entellina estate, W Sicily.

Fermented in stainless steel tanks, bottled for early release.

Yellow colour, bouquet notes of white pulp fruit and citrus zest; fruity palate with freshness and pleasant salinity. (www.donnafugata.it)

Passito di Pantelleria Ben Ryé 2022

Zibibbo (Muscat of Alexandria) 100% [ABV 14.4%]

Pantelleria is a volcanic island west of Sicily. Vines are cultivated on terraces bordered by dry stone walls using a special Pantelleria 'alberello' head-trained bush method.

Expressive nose, intense notes of peach, apricot and honey. Long palate. A meditation wine. (www.donnafugata.it)

Barone di Villagrande

Marco Nicolosi is a 10th generation winemaker on this estate established in the late 17th century, before any other. His ancestor Paolo Nicolosi introduced the practice of separate vinification of white and red grapes in 1869. It is hard to believe that until this time on Etna, as almost throughout Italy, wine was made by blending the grapes together without any distinction of colour or variety (see www.villagrande.it). The main force behind the introduction in 1968 of the Denominazione di Origine Controllata Etna, the first DOC in Sicily, was Carlo Nicolosi Asmundo.

Etna bianco DOC Superiore 2023

Carricante 90%, autochthonous other grapes 10% [ABV 12%]

Bright straw colour; bouquet of flowers and white fruit; acidity and minerality of the palate. (www.villagrande.it)

Tenuta delle Terre Nere

Vineyards are in four districts on the northern slopes of Mount Etna at altitudes ranging from 600m to over 1000m and planted 60 to more than 100 years ago. Separate harvesting and fermentation introduced in 2002 put this estate at the forefront of interpretation of terroir and the difficult Nerello Mascalese grape. Several wines are produced, including some reds from pre-phylloxera vines that have a place among Italy's most reputed wines.

Etna rosso DOC 2023

Nerello Mascalese 96%, Nerello Cappuccio 4% [ABV 14%]

Vine age 7 to 50 years. Bottled after 15 months ageing in large French oak barrels.

Annual production 120,000 bottles.

