

Solichciata (Castiglione di Sicilia), Etna

Province of Catania

Established: 2005

Owners: Faro family

Winemakers: Michele Faro and Carlo Ferrini

Production: 50,000 bottles

Hectares under vine: 20

Viticulture: Organic

Vegan Friendly



Mount Etna is Europe's highest volcano and one of the world's most active. 'a Muntagna, as the locals call it, is rich in mineral components thanks to thousands of years of eruptions and the altitude and climate of warm days and cool nights endow the wines with extraordinary richness, minerality, fragrance and depth.

Generations of the Faro family have made wine and grown citrus fruit on Etna so it was a homecoming of sorts when Michael Faro and his family established Pietradolce, meaning 'sweet stone', in 2005. The vineyards, nearly all 80+ year old bush vines (alberello) are planted to Carricante for the whites and Nerello Mascalese for the reds.

Contrada

A contrada is an Italian term for a subdivision and on Etna it is used to classify the cru vineyards around the mountain. There are 133 contrade (plural) on Mount Etna and at Pietradolce they include:

Caselle: all of the fruit for Archineri Bianco comes from 2 hectares at 850-900 metres on the Eastern side near Milo, regarded as the best area for Carricante. The oldest vines here are 130 years old.

Santo Spirito: 2 hectares at 850 metres. Santo Spirito is the lower portion of Guardiola

Fuedo di Mezzo: 1 hectare at 700m located directly below Santo Spirito

Rampante: 5 hectares across three parcels between 800-950 metres, divided into three different wines (Barbagalli, Archineri Rosso, Rampante).

-Barbagalli is the highest, oldest and smallest vineyard set in a spectacular amphitheatre. The vines here yield tiny bunches and the wine is rich and concentrated – new vintage released in 2024.

-Archineri Rosso, the flagship red, is a terraced strip that runs from the winery up to Barbagalli.

-Rampante (the wine itself) is located right next to the Archineri terraces but is on older soils and the vineyard is, unusually at this altitude, on a near flat section.

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Etna Bianco DOC

This comes from young vines on the northern side at 600 metres. Carricante takes its name from *carico*, meaning 'charged, loaded, burdened' which refers to the abundant fruit on the vine. It is also a variety that is loaded with pronounced minerality and unabashed acidity. Fermented and aged in stainless steel, there are lively citrus notes with white flowers, the palate crisp and refreshing.

Etna Bianco DOC 'Archineri'

From Contrada Caselle, this is a complex white wine that rewards cellaring. Vinification and maturation are in stainless steel and the wine shows citrus fruit with white flowers and mineral notes, the steely palate focussed and refreshing. With time in the bottle these flavours put on some flesh and add texture to the wine.

2021 *The 2021 Etna Bianco Archineri is a beautiful wine with the crystalline luminosity and bright aromas that you look for in a wine from Etna made with the popular Carricante grape. In this case, fruit comes from pre-phylloxera vines at 900 meters in elevation. There is some saltiness and crushed oyster shell with grapefruit, unripe peach and green apple. Production is 7,000 bottles. 93, Monica Lerner*

Vigna Sant Andrea IGT

A vine by vine selection from Contrada Caselle, aged on skins for five months in a single large cask followed by 18 months in the bottle. It is not labelled Etna Bianco because the DOC stipulates that Carricante must be white/yellow and not gold/bronze in colour. A complex nose of apricots, pineapple and honey, the palate displays Carricante's typical minerality with some slippery tannic grip from the skin contact and great structure. Just 36 bottles imported to Australia.

Etna Rosato DOC

Nerello Mascalese from the village of Castiglione di Sicilia, this is the only Pietradolce vineyard that is not grown alberello. One of Italy's best rosato wines, this is pale pink and floral with strawberry, orange and ginger notes, the palate crisp and refreshing.

Etna Rosso DOC

From Solicchiata on the northern side grown at 600 metres. 18 days on skins and fermented in steel with three months in old tonneaux, this is a lighter framed wine for drinking over the short to medium term and a great introduction to Etna Rosso. The red berry fruit here is crunchy and bright with refreshing minerality and a crisp, juicy finish.

Contrade reds

The five cru red wines are all made the same way* and make for a fascinating exploration of the terroir of Etna. The vine age is similar and they are all grown alberello. In the cantina, the wines spend around 18 days on skins with fermentation in concrete tanks and they are aged in tonneaux, about 10% new, for 14 months. *Barbagalli sees a few more months in oak and an additional year in the bottle.

Etna Rosso DOC Santo Spirito

Contrada Santo Spirito is a terraced vineyard overlooking a valley in an area known for its drying winds which give the wine loads of freshness. The fruit here is wonderfully pure and silky, more like a Pinot Noir, perfumed with red berry fruit and sweet, fine tannins with crisp acidity.

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2019 *The Pietradolce 2019 Etna Rosso Contrada Santo Spirito sees grapes sourced from ancient, knotted pre-phylloxera Nerello Mascalese vines. The wine is well balanced with lots of fruit and ashy spice. It immediately reminds you of the striking volcanic environment from which it comes. The tannins on this wine are fine and polished. Production is 4,000 bottles. 94, Monica Larner*

Etna Rosso Feudo di Mezzo

2019 is the first release of Feudo di Mezzo. Typically the fruit here is dark and rich, the palate smooth and relatively full bodied.

2019 *Here's a new wine from Michele Faro and the team at Pietradolce. The 2019 Etna Rosso Contrada Feudo di Mezzo offers a soft entry to the palate with an open-knit texture and more accessible fruit compared to some of the other contrada-specific wines from this estate, such as Contrada Rampante and Contrada Santo Spirito. The wine ends with silky tannins, wild berry, rose and crushed stone. There is sweet violet as well. Only 1,000 bottles were produced. 93, Monica Larner*

Etna Rosso DOC 'Archineri'

A two hectare vineyard From Contrada Rampante but labelled Archineri Rosso, this flagship rosso was the wineries first in 2007. The vineyards are on a gentle sloping terrace almost directly behind the winery. Stylistically Archineri is between Santo Spirito and Rampante, displaying the red fruits of the former with the power and minerality of the latter. In addition, there's sweet spices, blood orange and balsamic notes.

2019 *Made with Nerello Mascalese from ancient, pre-phylloxera vines, the Pietradolce 2019 Etna Rosso Archineri has a pretty sense of balance with wild fruit, sour cherry, rosemary, lavender and crushed volcanic stone. The wine is relatively lean in texture; however, it also shows significant tannic structure and power. Production is 7,000 bottles. 93, Monica Larner*

Etna Rosso DOC Rampante

From a single vineyard of 1.5 hectares and neighbouring Archineri, this vineyard is more open with less protection from the weather. Rampante is not unlike a Barolo from Serralunga with firm tannins and minerality. There's a wildness to the fruit here with juicy strawberry and plum and hints of tea, spice and tobacco.

2019 *The Pietradolce 2019 Etna Rosso Contrada Rampante has an almost sweet bouquet with fragrant rose, candied almond and wild berry. The wine is lean and tonic in texture, ending with fine tannins and subtle mineral nuances. The vines are planted at 850 meters above sea level and are ancient pre-phylloxera plants in this case as well. Only 4,000 bottles were released. 93, Monica Larner*

Etna Rosso DOC 'Vigna Barbagalli'

Vigna Barbagalli comes from the highest point, 950 metres, of Contrada Rampante and lies just inside the DOC border. 1.5 hectares of 100 year old vines, amphitheatre shaped with terraced vineyards and surrounded by olive and almond trees, Barbagalli is one of the great, and most beautiful, vineyards of Etna. The harvest here often runs into early November and these old vines produce tiny bunches, just 500g per vine, of rich and concentrated fruit. Red berry and plum fruit, sweet spices, blood orange and mineral notes, the palate long and fine. Just 36 bottles imported to Australia.

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