



The Perfect Combination: The Wines of Donnachiara and the Food at IL Gattopardo NYC

Charles Scicolone (December 12, 2011)



Campania Wine and Food at its Best

Some things are perfect --such as a luncheon featuring a wine producer from Campania and a



restaurant that specializes in the food of Campania and Southern Italy. This was one of the best events of this type that I have been to in a very long time.

Ilaria Petitto is the daughter of Chiara for whom the [Donnachiara Winery](#) [2] is named. Ilaria said that the land has been in her family for generations but the winery began production in 2005. It is located in Montefalcione, in the heart of the area where the three main Irpinian DOCG wines, Fiano di Avellino, Greco di Tufo and Taurasi are produced. She told us that they want to make wines that are true to the tradition of the area and therefore only produce wines made from traditional grapes.

Spumante Santé Brut IGT 100% Falanghina. The soil is chalky clay. There are 2,500 plants per hectare and the harvest takes place the first week of October. Fermentation takes place for 40 days. Ilaria Petitto referred to the method used as the Martinotti method for sparkling wine. (The Charmat method, as it is more popularly known, was invented by Frederico Martinotti in Asti in the 1920's.) Refermentation takes place at low temperatures in autoclaves for about 6 months. Then the wine matures on the dregs for another 2 months. The wine had very good bubbles; it was fresh, delicate with floral and citrus aromas and flavors. It was the perfect wine for the appetizers of arancini di riso con piselli and mozzarella e sugo di vitello. It would be great as an aperitif and with fried foods. \$ 20

Falanghina Beneventana IGT 100% Falanghina. The soil is chalky clay, there are 2,500 vines per hectare, the training system is Guyot and the harvest takes place the first week of October. Fermentation in stainless steel at controlled temperature for 40 days. The wine does not undergo malolactic fermentation and does not see any wood.

The wine was fresh with hints of citrus and floral aromas and flavors, good acidity and is a very pleasant wine to drink. \$18. It was very interesting to taste both the sparkling and still Falanghina side by side. The sparkling tasted like Falanghina with bubbles, as it should!

Fiano di Avellino DOCG 100% Fiano. The soil is chalky clay; there are 4,400 plants per hectare, the training system is Guyot and the harvest takes place the second week of October. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel tanks for 90 days. The wine does not undergo malolactic fermentation and does not see any wood. This is an elegant wine with good body, dries fruit aromas and flavors and a hint of tropical fruit. Parmigiana di zucchine con provola e salsa al pomodoro (zucchini parmigiana with provola cheese and tomato sauce) had a wonderful aroma and was so light it almost melted in your mouth. Both wines went very well with the dish but I gave the nod to the Falanghina. \$19

Aglianico IGT 100% Aglianico. The soil is clay, training system is Guyot and there are 4,000 vines per hectare and the harvest takes place in the second week of November. This wine does not see any wood. The wine is aged in bottle for 6 months. This is a very aromatic wine with wild berry aromas and flavors and hints of blueberries and cherries. \$18

Irpinia Aglianico DOC 100% Aglianico. The soil is clay, there are 4,000 plants per hectare and the harvest takes place the first week of November. The wine is aged for 4 to 6 months in 225 liter French barriques and 6 to 8 months in bottle before release. Ilaria said that the winemaker Angelo Valentino did not want the wood to be more important than the wine so he uses mostly second and third passage barriques. This is a more complex wine with hints of berries and prunes and a touch of spice. I could not tell the wine was aged in oak but as Ilaria said the winemaker is very careful when it comes to oak. Paccheri alla "Genovese" Napoletana (pasta tubes with an onion sauce) accompanied it. Even though it has the name "Genovese", it is a typical Neapolitan dish. Few restaurants serve it in NYC and none do it this good. \$20

Taurasi DOCG 100% Aglianico, The soil is clay, there are 4,000 vines per hectare and the harvest takes place the first week of November. The wine is aged in 225 liter French barriques for 12 months and for 24 months in bottle before release. This is a big complex wine with berry aromas and flavors, hints of cherry and plum and a touch of cacao and coffee. This was the only wine where I could feel the oak. It was subtle and did not mask the character of the wine. Carre d' agnello arrosto con patate e spinaci saltata (rack of roasted lamb with potatoes and sautéed spinach).



The lamb knocked me over--I turned to Gianfranco Sorrentino, the owner of [Gattopardo](#) [3], who was sitting opposite me, and said to him, I will give you the greatest compliment I can about your food and this lamb--it is as good or better than in Italy. \$36

Greco di Tufo DOCG 100% Greco. The soil is tuffaceous, the training system is Guyot

and there are 3,300 plants per hectare. Fermentation for about 90 days in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks. The wine had flavors and aromas of citrus, pear and a hint of pineapple. It was served with dessert, La Pastiera (a cheesecake made with orange and wheat berries.) This is the traditional Neapolitan dessert served at Easter and I have been told recently during Christmas. Michele makes it every Easter. \$20

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