

## International Wine Review

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### Stunning New Releases from Sicily's Passopisciaro

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Andrea Franchetti at Passopisciaro

Located on the volcanic slopes of Mt. Etna, Passopisciaro is an ancient vineyard which produces some of Sicily's finest wines. It is owned by Andrea Franchetti, who pioneered the development of wine on Mt. Etna at the turn of the century. His high altitude estate consists of distinct terraces of volcanic soils planted with indigenous grape varieties of late-ripening Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio. He follows organic viticultural practices with no herbicides or fertilizers.

The jewels of the Passopisciaro estate are 8 hectares of old vines averaging 80 years of age situated at 500 to 1,000 meters. In 2001 Franchetti made his first wines, blends of Nerello Mascalese with Merlot and Petit Verdot. He later decided he could make stunning wines without blending, and in 2009 he released his single vineyard Nerello Mascalese separately in four new

Contrada Etna wines. Contradas are different Mount Etna crus located on ancient properties which Franchetti mapped and later discovered gave different wines drawn from lava spills on different sides of the volcano.

The stunning Contrada Etna wines reviewed here consist of Porcaria, Chippemacine, Sciaranuova, and Rampante. Produced in tiny quantities, the wines are 100% Nerello Mascalese, ruby red in color with a lovely perfumed elegance and minerality. In a blind tasting these pale and relatively lean and delicate wines could easily be mistaken for a Barbaresco or a coastal Pinot Noir. The labels of these single vineyard contradas bear only the first letter of their respective contradas on the front label. The back labels provide information on the full name of each vineyard site.

For more on the wines of Sicily see the International Wine Review's **Report #37: The Wines of Sicily** published in 2013.

**Passopisciaro 2014 Blanco (\$32) 91** The 2014 Blanco is crafted from Chardonnay rather than Carricante, the white grape grown on Mt. Etna. Planted some six years ago, with 12,000 plants per hectare, it is one of the most densely planted and highest altitude Chardonnays in the world. It is unoaked and exhibits moderate acidity. It has a ripe and lean mouth feel with hints of orchard fruit and minerals.

**Passopisciaro 2014 Contrada "C" Chippemacine (\$55) 93** The Contrada Chippemacine, which sits on the lower end of the slope at 600 meters, exhibits notable earthiness and ripeness with dark dry red berry fruit and minerals. A tiny parcel, it is elegant on the palate and reveals excellent concentration of flavor.

**Passopisciaro 2014 Contrada "P" Porcaria (\$65) 94** The 2014 Contrada Porcaria which resides at 750 meters, is a profound wine, rich and flavorful revealing dark cherry, plum and earth aromas and flavors. It has a silky texture, excellent intensity, and is long on the finish. It has 15.5 alc but the wine is beautifully balanced, refined and integrated.

**Passopisciaro 2014 Contrada "S" Sciaranuova (\$62) 93** Different from the other contradas, the wine from Sciaranuova, a one hectare parcel, reveals more ripeness and vibrancy. It is bold and mouth filling with hints of dried sour berries, minerals and herbs. It is beautifully balanced and has a long vibrant finish.

**Passopisciaro 2014 Contrada "R" Rampante (\$56) 93** This superb bottling is from the estate's highest vineyard. It is ripe and lean yet mouth filling with lovely dried cherry, spice, minerals and floral notes. It has a soft texture, fresh acidity, round light tannins, and is long on the palate.

Importer: T, Edward Wines. New York, New Yo

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