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A Red from the Slopes of an Active Volcano Passopisciaro Sicilia 2008

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During Vinitaly, the annual wine fair in Verona, I visited with some producers from the Etna area of Sicily. One was Passopisciaro, an estate founded in 2000 by Andrea Franchetti.

Located on the north side of the volcano Mt. Etna at high elevations (1,800 to 3,300 feet), Passopisciaro makes a number of wines, mostly from the indigenous Nerello Mascalese grape. While my colleagues and I were dining at Bottega del Vino in Verona, we tried the racy Porcaria 2009, a single-vineyard wine also made from Nerello Mascalese.

Recently, I bought a bottle of the 2008 Sicilia, which carries the Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT) designation; Franchetti ages this red for 18 to 20 months in 30- and 50-hectoliter neutral oak casks to retain the fruit character and essence of place. Made from 100 percent Nerello Mascalese, it's a light ruby color, featuring tart cherry, sanguine, graphite and iron aromas and flavors. Though lightweight and gossamer in texture, it shows fine intensity and a long mineral finish (90 points, non-blind).

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Senior editor and tasting director Bruce Sanderson joined Wine Spectator in 1993. His tasting beats are Burgundy, Italy and Germany.

Bruce Sanderson

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