



Cantine Pellegrino is one of Sicily's most important and prosperous wineries. Today they are one of very few families who can trace their lineage back to the original 19th Century founders of the Marsala trade.

Over the years the Pellegrino family married into the Alagna, Renda, Tumbarello & Bellina families, who today collectively manage the company. Pietro Alagna is Pellegrino's President and Benedetto Renda its CEO. Recently they welcomed the 6th generation to the family business.

In 1880 Paolo Pellegrino, local notary and vine grower, founded his winery in the heart of the city of Marsala on the West coast of Sicily. With the help of his son Carlo, he built the company up from nothing into one of Sicily's leading Marsala

producers. After the death of his father, Carlo took the reins of the company, assisted by his wife Josephine Despaigne, daughter of a famous Sauternes oenologist Oscar Pierre Despaigne. Josephine brought with her a wealth of winemaking knowledge and together they continued to build the company.

Today the company has 150 hectares of vineyards, and 3 wineries all of which are solar powered. Pellegrino have been instrumental in putting Sicily on the winemaking map, with the family's





**IMAGES** This page – Top – The family (from left to right) Benedetto Renda – CEO, Caterina Tumbarello Renda and Sebastiano Renda. Middle – Pellegrino Marsala Cellar. Bottom – ‘Le Torri’ two historic silos at the winery converted in 2004 to contain luxurious meeting and dining rooms. Opposite page – The Pellegrino winery. Bottle – 1980 Vintage Vergine Marsala.

Marsala, fine wine and sweet Pantelleria wine, all of which are exported around the world.

## Marsala Wines

Sicily’s most famous wine, Marsala, has been at the heart of Pellegrino’s success. This fortified wine was first “invented” in 1773 by John Woodhouse, an Englishman with a penchant for Sherry, Madeira and Port wines. On a visit to Marsala he saw great potential in the region’s still wines so he had them fortified and shipped to England. This new wine met with great success, and by 1796 Woodhouse had set up a cellar and winery in the town. Soon to follow was English merchant Benjamin Ingham, who founded his business in 1812, marking the start of a booming industry.

The 20th century saw decline in the Marsala market and it is testament to the strength and success of Pellegrino that they are 1 of only 3 of all the original 19th Century founders to still be in business.

*Pellegrino are 1 of only 3 of all the original 19<sup>th</sup> Century founders of the Marsala trade still be in existence*



Incredibly, of these they are 1 of only 2 that have kept the company in the family. Today they are unquestionably one of the leading Marsala producers – championing the wine’s revival with high quality, aged, blended, and Vintage Oro and Ambra styles all made from the islands indigenous grape varieties. They are also one of the only producers to make a Rubino style from the island’s indigenous varietal, Nero d’Avola.

## Terre Siciliane Wines

Pellegrino have also used their winemaking expertise to produce unfortified white and red wines from the Marsala region. The family have always recognised the importance and uniqueness of the region's terroir and indigenous varietals. In 2010 they started exhaustively researching and experimenting with these varietals in their 150ha of vineyard. The result was the "family estates" range, launched in 2014. The range is comprised of four different estates, each planted with a single grape varietal. Salinaro – "vineyard by the sea" has 14ha of vineyard metres from the sea with a climate that is perfectly suited to producing fresh and aromatic white wines made from Grillo. Kelbi – "lush garden" has 19ha of vineyard

planted at an altitude of 150m, which helps to moderate temperatures, making it perfectly suited to full bodied white wines made from Cataratto. Gazzarotta "brown & productive land" has 90ha located further inland, where temperatures scorch the brown clay limestone soils, making it perfect for rich reds made from Nero d'Avola. Rinazzo "harsh desert terrain" has 11ha of low lying vineyard which is even hotter than Gazzarotta. Here the soils were formed from an ancient seabed which helps to preserve water during the intensely hot summer months. It is perfectly suited to low yielding Syrah grapes. In addition to the family estates range Pellegrino also produce "Diantha" and "Gibele" 2 aromatic whites producing using Zibbibo and "Tripidium" their flagship Nero d'Avola red.

*The family have always recognised the importance of Sicily's unique terroir and indigenous varietals*



**IMAGES** This page – Bottles – Gazzarotta and Diantha made from Zibbibo with one of its vineyards. Below Right – the family (from left to right) Maria Chiara Bellina, Massimo Bellina – export manger, Paola Alagna, Caterina Tumbarello Renda, Sebastiano Renda, Benedetto Renda – CEO and Dr. Romano Pietro Alagna



## Pantelleria DOC Passito

The family are also the leading producer of Pantelleria DOC sweet wines. These luscious passito styles made from Zibibbo are widely regarded as Italy's finest sweet wines. They are produced on the tiny, volcanic island of Pantelleria which lies 100km southwest of Sicily and 60km east of Tunisia. Here viticulture has been practiced for 2,500 years and incredibly the method remains virtually unchanged. To provide shelter from island's high winds the vines are head trained into bush vines and grown in small hollows in the soil known as 'Conca'. The vineyard is then encircled by a dry stone wall made from the island's black volcanic rock. This ancient practice received UNESCO world heritage status in 2014. Pellegrino have invested heavily in viticulture on the island, building a state of the art winery at great expense in 1992. Today they are responsible for 80% of all the grapes produced on Pantelleria.



**IMAGES** Opposite page – Above – Sicilian windmills. Below – Pantelleria, wines produced on this tiny island are considered some of the best sweet wines in all Italy. A UNESCO world heritage site, Zibibbo has been grown here using traditional methods for over 2,500 years.