

COS

viticoltori in Vittoria

Country:
Italy

Region:
Sicily

Estate owned by:
Giusto Occhipinti and
Giambattista 'Titta' Cilia

Winemakers:
A collective overseen
by Giusto and Titta

Vineyards:
Certified Organic since 2007
with biodynamic principles,
34 hectares in total.

Year founded:
1980

Home link:
<http://www.cosvittoria.it/en/>

Production:
Rami: 2000 cases
Pithos Bianco: 1000 cases
Zibibbo in Pithos: 500 cases
Frappato: 3200 cases
Nero di Lupo: 1600 cases
Pithos Rosso: 1000 cases
Cerasuolo di Vittoria: 3200 cases
Cerasuolo di Vittoria
delle Fontane: 400 cases
Maldafrica: 400 cases

This is a unique story of three young friends who would go on to create one of the most legendary wineries in Sicily today. This benchmark producer evolved out of a means to keep the boys busy during summer, before heading off to university.

Founded by three friends, Giambattista "Titta" Cilia, Giusto Occhipinti, and Cirino Strano, Azienda Agricola COS (an acronym for their last names) started in 1980 when Titta's uncle put them in charge of some vineyards to try their hand at winemaking. These foot-stomped grapes were sold the following year in enotecas around the university. From that moment, Titta and Giusto made wine part of their lifelong passion and still run the winery to this day. Strano's pursuit of medicine took him away from the wine project, but Giusto and Titta were able to slowly build the project while both receiving degrees in architecture.

"We must remember that the Earth is not just a legacy inherited from our fathers, but it is also one that we pass on to our children."

– Giusto Occhipinti

Even from the start, Titta and Giusto had a passionate and idealistic view of winemaking that was uncommon at the time. Since the inception of the winery, no chemicals have been used in the vineyards, and their minimal interventionist approach has evolved with techniques like native yeast fermentation, amphorae (clay pots for aging and fermenting), and minimal additions of sulfur. COS was one of the first western wineries to include amphorae into the aging process with their first commercial release of an amphora aged wine in 2000, Pithos Rosso.

Throughout the last 40 years, they have experimented and explored their natural world and local terroir to produce wines with an authentic and personal touch. They have built this idea slowly, with the clear vision of a true architect. Giusto laughs that it took 27 years to fully release COS as it stands today. The term "natural wine movement" wasn't a thing when COS first started down this path for something pure and eternal. They were, and still are, an inspiration to many producers throughout Italy and abroad in this regard.

COS is in the heart of Sicily's only DOCG, Cerasuolo di Vittoria, which requires a blend of the two most important red grapes of the area, Frappato and Nero d'Avola. Established as a DOCG in 2005, many people attribute the success of this area to COS, and vice versa, the success of COS, can be attributed to this region's dynamic potential. The standout characteristic is the dense limestone bedrock which adds freshness and structure to the local varieties making them stand out in a blind tasting with other Sicilian regions.

COS farms land organically and biodynamically in the southeastern part of Sicily, about 700 feet above the Mediterranean Sea, not far from Ragusa. The unique terroir consists of red sandy/clay soils over a dense limestone bedrock, protected by the Hyblaean mountain range to the north. This part of Sicily is even further south than parts of Africa and there is a deep history to this enchanting place with ancient relics from the Moors, Greeks, and Romans.

Freshness and beauty are found in these indigenous varieties that have evolved harmoniously, over millennia, with this ancient land. Sicily is experiencing a renaissance when it comes to winemaking, and it all started with three teenagers in 1980.

