



UNCORKED

BY CLAUDIA ALARCÓN

M Sicilian Mavericks

Sisters Marilena and Daniela Barbera carry on their father's winemaking legacy with love, pride for their land, and environmental responsibility.

We are convinced that the uniqueness of a great wine comes not only from being characteristic and indigenous of the land, but also from the fascinating interaction between people working with wine.

YOUNG WINEMAKER SISTERS MARILENA AND Daniela Barbera are no strangers to the hard work of the vineyards as the third generation of grape producers in their native Menfi, on the southwestern coast of Sicily. Their grandfather planted the vineyards in the early 1920's, then father Pietro began to experiment with more modern viticulture techniques in the 1960s, reclaiming a vast alluvial area in the Belice Valley, where the Belice River flows into the Mediterranean Sea. There, he planted the family's 30-hectare Tenuta Belicello vineyards, selecting varieties which would best adapt to the land's micro-climatic conditions. In those days, making wine in Sicily was not done in large-scale commercial production, but more as

a fun family tradition. In the male-dominated Sicilian culture, vineyard work was exclusively reserved for the men, but Signore Barbera found himself with two daughters as his heirs. The girls grew up playing among the vines, and soon developed an interest in what was going in and around them.

Soon enough, Pietro Barbera gave in to his daughters' insistence on participating in the vineyards, and thus Cantine Barbera, a family winery business, was created. Encouraged by rave reviews from friends and wine experts on their very first wines, they began commercial production, following tradition and adding innovation while remaining connected with the terroir and history of Sicily. "Our territory is our way of >>>





Austin Woman, May



Austin wine lovers will have an opportunity to meet Marilena and sample her flagship wines, along with a couple new surprises, on Monday, May 4th, for a special wine tasting at Bess Bistro. Call 477-BESS (2377) for details, pricing and hours.

being," says the lovely Marilena – a charming young lady with a bright smile, a keen eye for business, and an excellent command of the English language – who is in charge of winery management and public relations. "Our identity reflects the character of our territory, and the history of our people and culture," she says, referring to the many influences that have dotted Sicily through millennia: Roman, Greek, Arabic, Tunisian and Spanish. "The DOC Menfi appellation, to which we dedicate our confidence and support, is our identity, in order to strengthen more and more the special relationship between our wines and their native land."

Enologist Daniela leaves the limelight to her sister and oversees every aspect of the vineyards, where they grow both indigenous Sicilian vines such as Nero d'Avola and Inzolia, as well as international varietals that are best adapted to the climate. The vineyards lie very close to the sea, and the alluvial clay soil is surprisingly rich in minerals, with saline components that account for the uniqueness of their wines. "Our job is to preserve the grape's integrity and aromatic and varietal richness, and to reinforce the special relationship between our wines and their native land," Marilena states firmly. Their driving force is to emulate the tradition of winemaking learned from their ancestors: to have the greatest respect for nature and the highest regard for the true characteristic expression from each grape variety, while performing fully sustainable farming that is friendly to the environment.

The entire team at Cantine Barbera takes every necessary measure for environmental protection and control, such as water management and biological treatment, waste material and noise emissions reduction, etc. They use only biological additives (natural yeasts and enzymes) that do not contain genetically modified genes, and use very low degrees of sulfites in their winemaking. With the firm belief that a healthy environment is the best defense against pests and diseases, they monitor the vineyards everyday to prevent invasion from harmful agents. They also have implemented an intensive soil management program, applying

See SICILIAN MAVERICKS on page 111



Marilena Barbera at the Old Dietro le Case vineyard.



A view of the Tenuta Belicello, the vineyards owned by the Barbera family.