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Marilena Barbera, at Cantine Barbera

The town of Menfi is located about 40 southwest of Palermo on the northern west coast of Sicily. It is an amazing valley formed by the Belice River, which flows slowly into the beautiful Mediterranean Sea. The picturesque scenery of sandy dunes covered with dwarf palms and sea lilies is only a few steps from the magnificent Greek temples of Selinunte, which are the perfect background for focused and sustainable agriculture.

This is where Cantine Barbera began in the early 1960s to experiment with more modern and precise viticulture techniques. A passionate and far-seeing entrepreneur, Pietro Barbera started the winery by first reclaiming a vast alluvial area in the DOC Menfi territory and planting new vineyards with selected varieties that would best adapt to the land's micro-climatic conditions. As a wine lover and collector, he then started with natural and sustainable winemaking techniques using only grapes grown in the estate, Tenuta Belicello.

More than twenty years ago he built a winery, designed as a Mediterranean home, where the traditional layout is revisited in a more contemporary outline. Wide windows towards the sea let the sunlight freely soak inside, where everything is absolutely white, made to synthesize and amplify all the colors of the rainbow outside and create an immediate reference to Sicily's magnificent landscape. It is an incredible place, fresh and delicate like a summer breeze; warm and deep like the blue Sicilian sea.

Old people of the area use to say that the vines "take a nap" in winter. During the winter months, the sap runs

Wine Experiments
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slower into the shoots and the vines recover from their summer life cycle. It is a very important quiet time for the vineyards that allows a good vegetative start in spring.

Winegrowers have to work hard to help the vines regenerate: pruning is a long and arduous operation, performed manually by diligent farm hands. It is an ancient work, where experience is essential to understand the vigor of each vine in order to give the correct shape to the branches and balance the future fruit production with vegetative growth.

Marilena Barbera, Pietro's daughter, is the proprietor and winemaker today at the small family winery Cantine Barbera. She carries on her dad's commitment to produce quality wines with only estate grown grapes

and believes in the magic of making wine in a fully sustainable way. Using indigenous yeasts for fermentation she takes pride in her wines not to contain GMO's and to have very low levels of sulfites. She shuns modern techniques like concentration or micro-oxygenation, and stabilizes the wines only using cold temperatures. Filtration is done with natural cellulose layers composted after use. All processes are constantly monitored to preserve the quality and full traceability of the wines, never losing sight of environmental respect and protection.

Marilena caters with her wines to people who care about food and about the way it is produced, who are interested in the traditional culture that is beyond a bottle of good wine, who respect the work that winegrowers do to achieve quality, and to make the pleasure of wine possible everyday.

You can meet Marilena in Brandon at the Café Provence this Friday, 24th, at a wine tasting from 5:30 to 6:30pm and join her for an informal dinner afterwards.