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LOCAL HEROES

A new generation intent on showing the true potential of Sicily's indigenous grapes is transforming its reputation around the world. Stephen Brook and Mark O'Halleron introduce some of the island's outstanding producers



Barbera

Marilena Barbera took over the family estate after the death of her father in 2006. Although he had tended to grow Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, Marilena (*left*) has been slowly changing the focus to include indigenous varieties.

Barbera's vineyards lie in three different areas: on the plain and the slopes near the town of Menfi, giving significant variations in soil and microclimate. Focusing on the varieties that work best for her – Chardonnay and Cabernet on the one hand, and Grillo, Inzolia and Perricone on the other – Marilena wants to avoid fads. 'The spotlight today is on Etna, and 10 years ago it was on Nero d'Avola. The problem is that prices have risen too high and too fast, which is dangerous, as one day the spotlight will move elsewhere and producers will be forced to cut prices, which could damage the image of our wines.' **SB**