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AWARDS**
2019

In 2000, the editors of *Wine Enthusiast* conceived an annual awards program to celebrate luminaries who have significantly contributed to the success of the beverage industry.

The Wine Star Awards aim to highlight progressive thinkers in the fields of wine, beer and spirits. In award categories that cover the evolving scope of the industry, these winners represent the best of today's beverage culture. They are united in a passion for change and exhibit business acumen and savvy for anticipating what's next in the world of wine and beyond.

From winemakers to wineries, sommeliers to CEOs, philanthropists, innovators and social visionaries, these trendsetters are the drivers for what's in your glass. Turn the page and get to know the bright stars of 2019 whose work is changing the drinking universe for the better.

BY
THE EDITORS OF
WINE ENTHUSIAST

TASCA D'ALMERITA

EUROPEAN WINERY OF THE YEAR

This Sicilian powerhouse is an Italian icon of the past, present and future.

For eight generations, the Tasca d'Almerita family has dedicated itself to the extraordinary land of Sicily. If the island is now considered one of Italy's most exciting viticultural areas, a good amount of credit is due to the firm, which has been a driving force in Sicily's quality wine revolution.

Its story starts in 1830, with the acquisition of the Regaleali Estate, then named "Rahl Ali," which loosely translates from Arabic as "house of Ali." Situated in the Sicilian countryside of Sclafani Bagni, between Palermo and Caltanissetta, the estate's rolling hills range between 1,312–2,953 feet above sea level. There are pronounced day-night temperature changes here, which encourage ideal grape ripening and complex aromas in both native and international grapes.

By the middle of the 20th century, the firm had become even more focused on viticulture and winemaking, and it began to employ avant-garde strategies in the vineyard and the cellar. These experiments ultimately led to Count Giuseppe Tasca d'Almerita's creation of a special reserve red wine, Regaleali Rosso del Conte.

Made from Nero d'Avola, Perricone and other native red grapes, the debut 1970 vintage was called Riserva del Conte. It was the first single-vineyard wine in Sicily, and one of the first red wines destined for lengthy aging.

The revered bottling was followed by Nozze d'Oro in 1984, a blend of Inzolia and Sauvignon Tasca, a unique selection.

In 1979, Giuseppe's son, Lucio Tasca, planted international varieties on the estate. His work with Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in the 1980s and '90s spurred many other Sicilian winemakers to follow suit.

Lucio handed the reins to his sons, Giuseppe and Alberto, in 2001. That same year, the firm acquired the gorgeous Capofaro estate on the island of Salina, where the focus is native grape Malvasia.

Alberto, now the CEO and driving force behind Tasca d'Almerita, shares the entrepreneurial spirit of his father and grandfather. Under his guidance, the company has continued to expand, investing in areas that yield wines with strong, distinct personalities.

In 2007, the firm began its Tascante project on Mount Etna, which would result in the establishment of an estate in the iconic, volcanic denomination. That same year, the Whitaker Foundation entrusted Tasca d'Almerita with the restoration of vines on the island of Mozia. Thought to be the spiritual home of native grape Grillo, they work with about 30 acres of the variety from which they produce Mozia Grillo.

Just one year later, Tasca assumed management of the historic Sallier de La Tour property.



Alberto Tasca

It now produces delicious, poised versions of Syrah that highlight unmistakable Sicilian roots. Starting with the 2016 vintage, Tasca has bottled four separate Mount Etna *contrade*, or single vineyard, bottlings. They are compelling, mineral-driven wines made from Nerello Mascalese.

Besides innovation, research and a commitment to express Sicily's multifaceted growing zones, perhaps the most important contribution Tasca d'Almerita has made is Alberto's commitment to and passion for sustainability.

His dedication led to the creation of SOSustain, now an association of like-minded Sicilian producers that launched in 2010. Members must adhere to a strict set of terms and undergo field checks made by an independent,

third-party organization.

Among other requirements, the association's rules include using "only treatments whose impact on the environment, the farmer and the consumer are lower than that of organic treatments... Moreover, the use of chemical weed control is also prohibited."

Today, the company's commitment to sustainable viticulture has had a huge impact, and quality at all of Tasca d'Almerita's estates is at an all-time high.

In recognition of the firm's achievements and contributions to the betterment of Sicilian and Italian wine, as well as its progressive, forward-thinking initiatives, *Wine Enthusiast* is delighted to name Tasca d'Almerita as European Winery of the Year. —Kerin O'Keefe