

Arianna Occhipinti

Profile

In 2006, Joe and Kevin fell in love with the wines of an unassuming 24 year old showing her first vintage at an Italian wine fair. Today, Arianna Occhipinti has become a seminal figure for a new generation of wine lovers. Her rise to prominence has been meteoric, and rightfully so: anyone who has met Ari will instantly vouch that her charming personality and positive attitude are contagious.

Arianna is the niece of Giusto Occhipinti, whose COS wines are undisputedly amongst the very best of Sicily. In 1998, Giusto invited her to help him out at Vinitaly for four days. Arianna was 16 at the time and knew nothing about wine, but the experience was such a good one that she decided to study viticulture and oenology in university. This quickly proved counter-intuitive, since everything she had learned from her uncle (organic viticulture, hand-harvesting, native yeast fermentations) clashed with what she was being taught in school.

Undeterred, Arianna started making her own wine with just 1 hectare of abandoned vines in the commune of Vittoria. Over the years, she has progressively expanded the estate by replanting 10 hectares of the region's indigenous Frappato and Nero D'Avola in selection massale. A few years later, she was able to start renting 50 year old Frappato and 45 year old Nero D'Avola vines, both independently bottled as single varietal/vineyard cuvées. In 2012, an additional 7 hectares of 19 year old vines were acquired, which for the time being will be used to produce more *SP-68*.

Continually pushing things forward, Arianna built herself a new cellar in 2014, a huge step up from the cramped, chaotic space she used to work in. Besides the obvious advantage of having more space, it has permitted Arianna to start a new regiment of concrete fermentation and aging for both *SP68*'s, which used to be produced in stainless steel and fiberglass. Some of the tanks are glass lined, some aren't. They are all 2mx2m, and with the way they are set up, the juice can be worked by gravity.