

## REDEFINING MARSALA: LAUNCH OF THE NEW FLORIO RANGE



The highly awaited launch that made a real splash at the Vinitaly International Wine and Spirits Exhibition saw the new **Florio Marsala** range in the starring role. This fine selection of wines came to life at the storied Florio Cellars with an ambitious objective, that of redefining the entire category while underscoring a long-forgotten self evident truth. Namely, there is no one marsala; rather, there are many

expressions of this fortified wine from the western lands of Sicily, and every one preserves and likely surpasses the very nature of it. Including a full **10 products**, each a different expression of **Marsala**, the **new Florio range** is impressively rich. It comprises a dynamic three-tier panorama which goes from introductory varieties (**Classic** and **Premium**) that have greater production volumes, to collector's

bottles that come in ultra limited editions (**Exclusive**). There is also a time wise element to the differentiation, **present to past**, sweeping specifically from 2017 Marsala Superiore to 1994 Marsala Superiore Riserva. As in any journey, Marsala keeps moving forward in sync with the evolution of events and production choices: the path it follows is marked both by the passing of time and by the shifting of places, so much so that its identity depends not only on this or that decade of vintages but also on the distance over time of barriques from the sea – the sea being the predominant natural factor in the complex dynamics of the **Florio Marsala** aging process.

To get a better handle on the creation and development of this new product range, as well as a better understanding of the Florio Marsala identity, we had the pleasure of interviewing **Giacomo Tarquini**, Global Marketing Director of the **Duca di Salaparuta Group**.

### **1. What's the core idea behind the launch of the new Florio Marsala range**



*Giacomo Tarquini - Global Marketing Director of the Duca di Salaparuta Group*

### **for the On Trade channel?**

The idea originated from the company's distinct desire to redefine the Marsala category per se. The long standing tradition of Florio Cellars entails the responsibility to protect fortified marsala wine from the imitations and usurpations which through the years have ridden roughshod over both domestic and foreign production. The whole **new Florio marsala** project centers on the **cellar**, the production hub, where during (and due to) the pandemic we had the chance to spend a lot of time, listening to, rediscovering and giving a new lexicon







to a product that aims to be in equal parts **innovative** and **traditionalist**. The guise and storytelling of the new range are quite modern, capture an image that's a cross between a fortified wine and a liqueur. Yet, its identity is rooted in the origins of Florio marsala, a marsala of great quality that's always been a "superiore" one. So the genesis lay in redefining the category in an **authentic way**, with very much of a modern twist, to spark the interest of wine bars and restaurants as directly as possible thanks to a totally unique type of product versatility.

## **2. Oenologically, what are the features of the different marsalas in the new range, what's the story on the new labels?**

The range consists of **three distinct lines** for a total of ten products: **Classic** (four references: virgin Marsala, dry Marsala, semi dry Marsala, sweet Marsala), **Premium** (two references: virgin Marsala and semi dry Marsala), and **Exclusive** (four references: virgin Marsala, dry Marsala, semi dry Marsala, sweet Marsala). It has a modular aspect, for we gave the range a structure that enabled us to substitute a reference (once a particular vintage has run out) with what the cellar offers yet staying within the framework of the three lines.

Fundamentally, the labels on the bottles talk precisely about the **cellar's interaction, its connection with the immediate territory** and with the environment. We brought to light marsalas that for years aged in the Florio Cellars, cellars which are structurally unique on a worldwide scale. We are a **cellar that overlooks the sea**: the entrance to it is a mere 95.5 meters from the closest pier. All the subsoil is bathed by the sea, affecting the part of the natural tuff foundation that absorbs moisture. In addition, our cellars enjoy **natural ventilation**, a constant recirculation of the air, which thus changes from season to season creating a positive effect. Then, the Florio Cellars are so large that we decided to apply there too the same **zonation concept** we use in the vineyards, choosing different internal microclimates (which depend





on humidity, temperature, distance from sea) and diverse barrel volumes for aging the wines. Even the position of the woods in the cellar impacts the marsala differently.

Another important detail re the new Florio range concerns the bringing to marsala the matter of “**angel’s share**” we find in the world of spirits. What we’re talking about here is that share of product which evaporates during the years of aging; it’s an index of loss within the container which in the case of marsala represents a **precious value of the concentration** of what remains.

### **3. Wines “in love,” “angel’s share” and “listening theory”: the new marsalas show the public, maybe for the first time, an oenological world that also has philosophical and artistic veins. What’s the evocative force of Florio Marsala wines?**

After spending a lot of time in the cellar, selecting and tasting the finest marsala wines in every season, it’s almost normal to get a human feel for the place. So we sought to sense the truest and most genuine quality of the cellar; and to convey it, we had to use new terms, not standard ones. Technically, from grape harvest to aging process, marsala is

not a wine. Just think, to be a marsala it has to have the addition of alcohol. This addition we have called “**falling in love**”: it’s the moment when the alcohol and the wine join forces. Instead the “**listening theory**” is fundamental for our oenologist **Tommaso Maggio**, who during the harvest must be able to grasp the proper ripening of the grapes in order to send to the cellar a high-performance crop in terms of marsala making; likewise, during the preparation stage for the aging in barrique, he must envision how it could become a certain product in 20 years; and then afterward over time, in carrying out the aging process, he must keep making the right choices.

### **4. What are the company’s expectations as to this major launch?**

The idea of **redefining** the category is the most ambitious of our long-term objectives. On a practical level, rather, we wanted to offer an exclusive line to the restaurant sector so that it could play with this kaleidoscope of products we’ve introduced, in confirmation of the fact that marsala is not simply a fortified wine to enjoy with dessert at the end of a meal, but can be a product perfect to pair with food or, comparably to whisky or rum, to drink as a nightcap.

*Our thanks to Giacomo Tarquini for the interview, a true snapshot of the thinking behind the new range of **Florio Marsala** wines.*

To mark the launch of the new range of Florio Marsala wines we delved into the origins of marsala, benefiting both from the contribution of today's leading Sicilian historian and from the study of 19th century documents. All to reconstruct the highlight dates of a great history.

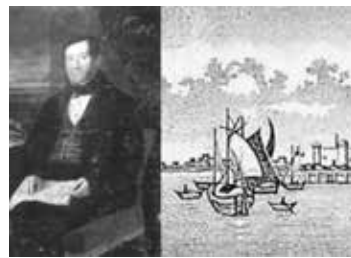
John Woodhouse, an English trader, lands in Marsala, Sicily. Here he falls under the spell of Sicilian wine: he purchases 60 412-liter barrels of it, to which he adds two gallons (9.08 l) of brandy. In other words, he fortifies the wine.

1773



Admiral Nelson, British Navy hero, decides to supply his fleet with Woodhouse's Marsala, a wine «so good as to be worthy of adorning any gentleman's table.»

1800



During the so-called "English decade" many British merchants move to Sicily. These merchants include Benjamin Ingham and his nephew Joseph Whitaker, who up until the mid 19th century report the world's highest volume of Marsala sales.

1806-1815



1774

Aware of the British predilection for fortified wines such as Madeira and Porto, Woodhouse follows up the success of his first expedition in 1774 with a surge in exports; and from mere trader he becomes a wine industry entrepreneur, creating his "Factory Wine" in the area of Trapani.



1806

The continental blockade imposed by Napoleon indirectly favors Marsala wine, which prevails over other similar products such as Porto, Madeira and Jerez, which are no longer sold on the British market.



1833

Vincenzo Florio purchases the land on which Italy's first Marsala winemaking company is established: it's the beginning of Italian competition in the Marsala wine market, which subsequently leads to the development of requisite production technologies.