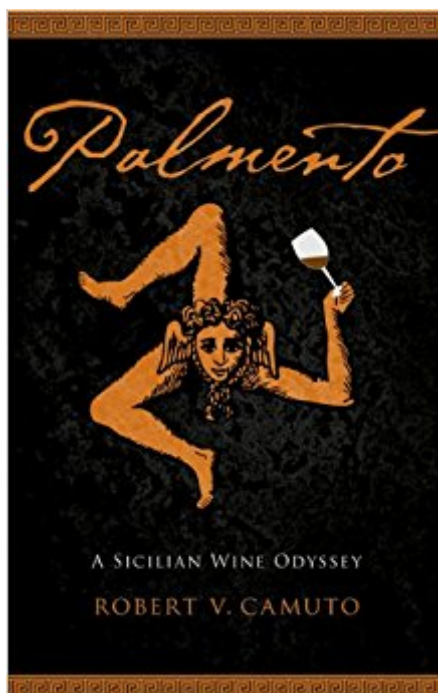


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Palmento: A Sicilian Wine Odyssey (At Table)



Synopsis

Inspired by a deep passion for wine, an Italian heritage, and a desire for a land somewhat wilder than his home in southern France, Robert V. Camuto set out to explore Sicily's emerging wine scene. What he discovered during more than a year of traveling the region, however, was far more than a fascinating wine frontier. Chronicling his journey through Palermo to Marsala, and across the rugged interior of Sicily to the heights of Mount Etna, Camuto captures the personalities and flavors and the traditions and natural riches that have made Italy's largest and oldest wine region the world traveler's newest discovery. In the island's vastly different wines he finds an expression of humanity and nature and the space where the two merge into something more. Here, amid the wild landscapes, lavish markets, dramatic religious rituals, deliciously contrasting flavors, and astonishing natural warmth of its people, Camuto portrays Sicily at a shining moment in history. He takes readers into the anti-Mafia movement growing in the former mob vineyards around infamous Corleone; tells the stories of some of the island's most prominent landowning families; and introduces us to film and music celebrities and other foreigners drawn to Sicily's vineyards. His book takes wine as a powerful metaphor for the independent identity of this mythic land, which has thrown off its legacies of violence, corruption, and poverty to emerge, finally free, with its great soul intact. Watch the Palmento book trailer on YouTube.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[Robert Camuto's] book--half wine book, half travelogue--is entertaining and enlightening and will certainly pique your interest in visiting Sicily and drinking Sicilian wines."--Jordan Mackay, chow.com--Jordan Mackay"chow.com" (11/24/2010)"Camuto does a good job of evoking the beauty and mystery of the island, and captures some dozen winemakers in profiles that range from the very brief to the very detailed. . . . Through his eyes, I enjoyed meeting Giusto Occhipinti of COS, Diego Planeta, Frank Cornelissen, Marco de Bartoli and others."--S. Irene Virbila"Los Angeles Times" (03/23/2011)"[Camuto's] affection for Sicily and its citizens is heartfelt, and his skill and enthusiasm combine to create a captivating portrait of a singular culture."--"Wine Spectator"--Thomas Matthews"Wine Spectator" (12/31/2010)"From the craggy vineyards of Mount Etna to the tiny moscato-producing island of Pantelleria, and from every angle of its wine hierarchy, Mr. Camuto extracts fascinating and illuminating details about Sicily, bringing to life the characters, conflicts and family dynamics that define a culture and its wines. It's a beautiful, enthralling work, eternally wistful and hopeful, much like Sicily itself."--Eric Asimov, "New York Times"--Eric Asimov"New York Times" (10/06/2010)"You'd better be ready to open a good bottle of wine and prepare some appetizers before you start reading--the author's tantalizing writing will drive you to snacking."--Tracey, Powell's Books--Tracey "Powell's Books "

Robert V. Camuto is an award-winning journalist and travel writer. He is a contributor to *Wine Spectator* and the *Washington Post* and the author of *Corkscrewed: Adventures in the New French Wine Country*, available in a Bison Books edition.

Being of Sicilian parentage and having been through all of Italy a number of times EXCEPT Sicily, this book convinced me that I have to get there soon. It's true. If you're of Sicilian parentage, when asked what your nationality is, what emits from your mouth is "Sicilian" rather than "Italian". Then you correct yourself, maybe. I'm also a veteran of the high end wine industry and Camuto got me interested enough to have brought up the possibility of traveling to Sicily to find a product to import to the Senior VP of my company. We should. Maybe I'll ask Camuto for a few recommendations should we plan the trip. You really get a feel for Sicily while reading this book. It reminded me so much of stories I heard from family members when I was growing up. Plenty of positives but Camuto does not avoid discussion of the negatives. Good book!

As I read Camuto's book, after spending a few weeks in Sicily, I began writing in my head a review

that would recommend it to people who are in love with or intrigued by Sicily and/or wine. But now, with just a few pages left to go, I'd expand that audience to anyone who appreciates first-rate journalism. The author manages to cover his subject through personal encounters, without intruding himself into the proceedings. I haven't come across many writers who can accomplish that. Palmento brings to mind the best of the New Yorker magazine, especially when it had the page count to allow delving deeply into a topic.

I thought *Adventures on the Wine Route* was as good as it could get but this gem moves up another notch. Loved the description of the real characters who make the wines we drink taste or seem like they taste the way they do. The author should be paid by the Sicilian Travel Bureau because I'm sure I'll be joined by a host of others looking for those roads, those towns, those people, that food and those wines. (I already brought back a nice collection of Sicilian wines from a recent trip to Rome). No slouch at writing, Camuto has you feeling the dry air, the cold. You can see the palmentos, the volcano, the hills and valleys. You can hear the slight change in accents, the tones of their voices, as people tell their stories.... and of course you can taste the foods and wines. Wonderful book.

I am a great admirer of Mr. Camuto's previous book, "Corkscrewed," which focused on the "natural" wine scene in France and changed the way I think about, purchase, and appreciate wine. Palmento isn't necessarily a better book, but it should appeal to an even wider audience, thanks to Mr. Camuto's passion for Sicilian history and culture as well as to its broader insights and exploration of universal themes. In his odyssey, Mr. Camuto inevitably reaches some dead ends, both literally (not literally) and metaphorically. (Maps and first impressions of Sicily aren't always accurate, believe it or not!) Although these diversions are entertaining enough in their own right, they are highlighted by the numerous revelations he shares as he travels the island nation in search of wine, food, people, and places that can be not only inspirational but at times even mythic - like Mt. Etna itself, where grapes are being grown and wine is being made by modern-day characters who a few thousand years ago might have inspired Homer as well. I've chosen several passages to illustrate how this book rises above being just another celebration of wine, although that's not an unworthy endeavor in itself: "Wasn't it all related? Land, agriculture, exploitation, urbanization, the Mafia, were all part of Sicily's sad and confounding history." "To me there is no more important distinction in the wine world than between those who view land as a possession or a factory and those who care for it intimately." "Biondi made no money from wine and seemed not to care. He was driven by other

things: the footprints of his ancestors, the land that made him not want to build buildings, the black eruption carved into a phallus of a talisman, and the scent of a goddess of the night." "I was thinking of how much more fragile existence was for most of us Westerners--dependent not on the soil and its seasons, but on money and sophisticated systems created to keep it circulating." "I was beginning to see that passito is, as the name suggests, all about the passage of time: the lateness of the harvest, the weeks the grapes spent baking in the sun, and its years of aging. Unlike most wines that absorbed time haltingly and unevenly, passito seemed time's perfect reflection. If you knew it well enough, I figured, you could set your watch to it." "The route we took was an all-too-typical Sicilian juxtaposition of beauty and squalor: the desolateness of Santo Stefano was followed by a spontaneous trash dump, a shepherd grazing his flock on weeds and trash, and the open wound of a cement plant just before we got to the road along the sea." "There it was again: the sweeping verbal gesture magnified in the prism of Sicily, the pronouncement so poetic it nullified any arguments before they could take their first breath. The vines, the amphorae, the thousands of years of history, the palmenti, the volcano--the beauty and power of it all. In Italy, of course, beauty is next to holiness. Sicily was long the most treasured daughter of the Mediterranean. So who can teach Sicily anything about beauty?" "It is like a village or a city here,' Foti said. 'Some of the vines are young, some are old, some are more intelligent, and others more stupid.'" "Some reviewers have said that reading Palmento has moved them to include Sicily in their immediate travel plans. I feel the same motivation; but even if I never go, I will still be searching for what is "Sicilian" in the rest of the world.

If ur a Siggy-nayeven an eytye, this is the tome for u. Slow going but eventually modern odyssey is a great intro to the spirit of old and new vinters on the volcanic isle. Everybody and their cousins make wine as a centuries old traditions meld with the new lions sans mafia but as virulent as the legendery Mt. Etna. Locavories will luv it too, as this is a feast of local foods & wine. As Martha sez: ENJOY!!

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