



## OVERVIEW

On the side of the most active volcano in Europe, wineries are producing some of the most heralded wines of Sicily in the Etna DOC. This is a denomination that has no problem explaining how it is different from the other wine-producing areas around it. The DOC includes some of the highest elevations of any vineyards in Sicily in all of Italy, in fact. And the soils are unquestionably volcanic, a relatively rare soil type and one that has shown itself to make some unique quality wines. The Etna denomination forms a partial circle around the lower slopes of the volcano. Mount Etna rises to nearly 11,000 feet (3,330 m), but the upper reaches of the mountain are too cold for proper ripening of the grapes, so the denomination covers only the elevations up to about 3,000 feet (900 m), with a few areas on the south side going as high as 3,600 feet (1,100 m). The circle is open on the west side because that is the direction the lava flows during major eruptions (not good for the vines). Etna DOC allows a few different styles of wine, but most of the production is red, based on Nerello Mascalese. Etna Rosso is required to have a minimum of 80% Nerello Mascalese, with the remainder theoretically being Nerello Cappuccio (an unrelated variety), but there is very little Nerello Cappuccio planted on Etna, so in practice Etna Rosso is usually pure Nerello Mascalese. A similar rosato version is also possible. If you see an Etna Rosso Riserva, it has been aged at least 4 years, including 12 months in barrel. Etna Bianco, on the other hand, is made primarily from Carricante, but with as much as 40% Catarratto and possibly other grapes. The production of white Etna is much smaller than the red (and sparkling Etna is rarer still).