



# All the Stars of Sicily

fotolia

From the Baroque to chocolate, via good food and fine wines. More museums, Sicilian carts and famous names, plus an ancient manor transformed into a Hotel de Charme

by Antonella Euli [e](#) Marina Moioli



**T**his large island cannot really be described in just a few pages. Sicily is an ancient land, rich in history and culture, offering a huge selection of unique archaeological sites, beaches, cities of art and a handful of archipelagos and small islands standing guard around them. We chose to explore Sicily at its most intimate, taking in the cities of the Baroque, from Noto to Ragusa, and the gastronomic centres where visitors can enjoy indescribably wonderful confectionery and pastries. A treat for the eyes and the palate. Then there's the chocolate of Modica, in itself worth the journey to this part of Sicily. Here the buildings are decorated like precious pieces of lace, shaped by the skilful hands of artisans who gave free rein to their imagination to create a unique setting against the backdrop of light chalk rock, painted in warm pink tones by the setting sun. The city is so precious that it has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This tour of beauty and flavours has to start at Noto, described as the capital of the Baroque, but it's also the "Stone Garden" that casts an immediate spell over anyone setting foot there - a Baroque treasure chest, culminating in the spectacular staircase up to the cathedral. Baroque art has also left its mark on Modica, although it's the city's chocolate that has made it famous around the world. Nearby Pachino, on the other hand, is known for its PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) tomatoes. Between a taste of the local chocolate with chili pepper and a glass of the chocolate liqueur, when visiting Modica it's also well worth going to see its magnificent churches, especially the Church of San Giorgio, an eighteenth-century cathedral that is one of the island's most beautiful examples of the Baroque style. The Church of San Pietro, the city's other cathedral, is also a striking structure. Modica and Noto vie for the title of the most beautiful city of the Sicilian Baroque. Set among the Hyblaean Mountains, its alleyways are heavy with the sensual aroma of artisanal chocolate and mustazzola, biscuits made with honey and almonds. On via Posterla, in the shadow of the castle and clock tower, stands another compelling destination, the house where Salvatore Quasimodo was born, with the rooms and mementoes recalling this holder of the Nobel Prize for literature. And when the sun begins to sink towards the horizon, make your way up to Ragusa. Viewed from ancient Ibla, the oldest part of the city, the sunset is the final masterpiece of a magical, immortal Sicily.

[www.regione.sicilia.it/turismo](http://www.regione.sicilia.it/turismo)

**DINING AT THE LA MADIA DI LICATA ON THE SICILIAN COAST, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE BAROQUE OF RAGUSA AND THE TEMPLES OF AGRIGENTO**

The stars light up Sicily. The number of Michelin-starred restaurants is growing, enhancing the island's reputation as a gourmet paradise. One example is La Madia Di Pino Cuttaia in Licata, on the Sicilian coast between the Baroque of Ragusa and the temples of Agrigento. Though Licata is off the beaten track for tourists, it should be visited despite its inaccessibility. If not for La Madia and Pino Cuttaia, it may well have remained cut off from island life. Pino and his wife Loredana were both born here and chose to return. They opened their restaurant in 2000 and gave it its name because at one time good, natural things were stored in a cupboard called the "madia". Despite the illustrious accolades, the key theme is simplicity, inspiring a new interpretation of tradition where long-established dishes take on a new form. "One of my most important utensils is my memory. Every one of my dishes contains at least a pinch of memories, and through its simplicity I try to tell a story. Techniques that recall childhood games and episodes of daily life bring to life black and white postcard images that depict a bright, happy Sicily. I try to give classic recipes a new shape so people can rediscover everything tradition has given us".

[www.ristorantelamadia.it](http://www.ristorantelamadia.it)



PINO AND HIS WIFE [LOREDANA](#) WERE BOTH BORN HERE AND CHOSE TO RETURN. THEY OPENED THEIR RESTAURANT IN 2000 AND GAVE IT ITS NAME BECAUSE AT ONE TIME GOOD, NATURAL THINGS WERE STORED IN A CUPBOARD CALLED THE "MADIA"



IN THE CITIES OF THE BAROQUE, THE BUILDINGS ARE DECORATED LIKE PRECIOUS PIECES OF LACE, SHAPED BY THE SKILFUL HANDS OF ARTISANS WHO GAVE FREE REIN TO THEIR IMAGINATIONS, TO CREATE A UNIQUE SETTING AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF LIGHT CHALK ROCK, PAINTED IN WARM PINK TONES BY THE SETTING SUN



**SLEEPING IN AN ANCIENT  
MANOR HOUSE IN THE HEART  
OF THE VAL DI NOTO**

We're in the heart of the Val di Noto, guests at the Masseria della Volpe, a late 19th century building transformed into a Relais de Charme. It's quiet and relaxed here, the farms reflect the island's typical agricultural structure in materials and shapes, and when the sun is high in the sky the soil takes on the colours of North Africa and the sea sparkles the horizon - but sunset clothes all this in gold. The estate's rural heart is also expressed through the traditional Sicilian dishes served in the restaurant, made with local products. The farm contributes organic ingredients, including olive oil produced on the estate. This is also the starting point for exploring a magical land. You can start with the Etna trail, then go on to visit nature and wildlife reserves like the Vendicari, see the Alcantara gorges or go as far as the Torrente Cava Grande, with the island's largest canyon, studded with crystal lakes. Not far from "home" we can find untouched beaches and rocks like Calamosche or Portopalo di Capo Passero, and cities of art full of Baroque treasures like Noto, Ragusa Ibla, Modica and Scicli.

[www.masseriadellavolpe.it](http://www.masseriadellavolpe.it)



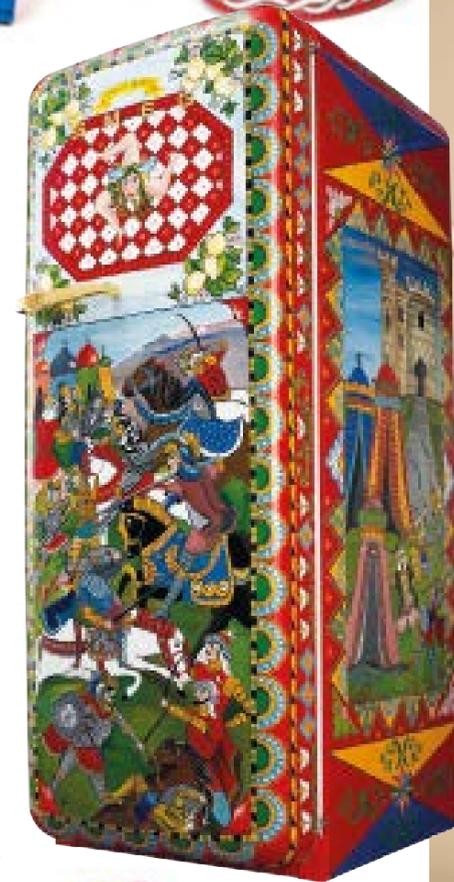
MASSERIA DELLA VOLPE, A LATE 19TH CENTURY BUILDING, HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A RELAIS DE CHARME THAT REFLECT THE ISLAND'S TYPICAL AGRICULTURAL STRUCTURE



**DREAMING WITH MARIONETTES,  
SICILIAN CARTS AND FRIDGES**

"Sicily is Italy. In fact, it's Italy cubed!" said Pietro Germi. It's a sentiment shared by Domenico Dolce from Polizzi Generosa and Stefano Gabbana from Milano, who have the island in their DNA. They have followed different paths, but are united by a vision of innovative fashion and exquisitely feminine women. The marked Sicilian influences form a sensual matrix that hovers between the sacred and the profane - and black reigns supreme. The black bras and dresses like the slips worn by the Sicilian neorealist divas, and black like the women's hair and eyes. Their past campaigns, too, in black and white - unsettling images of of Mediterranean women shot by exceptional photographers. Now they have changed register, and black is now joined by a torrent of colours, especially in the accessories. An allegory of small objects - candles, frames, jewellery boxes, notebooks - make up the Carretto collection. The Carretto is the typical Sicilian cart, and this icon of Italian folklore that could be described as the quintessential symbol of a much-loved Sicily. Now it is joined by other motifs in the collection. The Sicilian cartwheel and the marionette theatre, its stage crowded with mediaeval ladies and knights, are constant elements in the Dolce&Gabbana aesthetic. And as "Women live from more than fashion alone", there's a special edition of the SMEG FAB28 fridge, "clothed" by Dolce&Gabbana - a sumptuous work of art, almost a salon piece. Only 100 are to be produced, and the first examples will feature at the next Salone del Mobile in Milan, painted by Sicilian artists with the island's typical decorative subjects, from lemons to knights, triangles and cartwheels - the brand's symbolic motifs.

[www.dolcegabbana.it](http://www.dolcegabbana.it)



AN ALLEGORY OF SMALL OBJECTS MAKE UP THE CARRETTO COLLECTION. IN TRIBUTE TO THE TYPICAL SICILIAN CART, AND THIS ICON OF ITALIAN FOLKLORE THAT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS THE QUINTESSENTIAL SYMBOL OF A MUCH-LOVED SICILY



THE HOME-MUSEUM RETAINS ALL THE CHARM OF A BYGONE ERA, THANKS TO THE PERIODE FURNISHINGS AND THE MANY MEMENTOES OF THE GREAT REALIST WRITER



**IN THE HOME OF GIOVANNI VERGA**

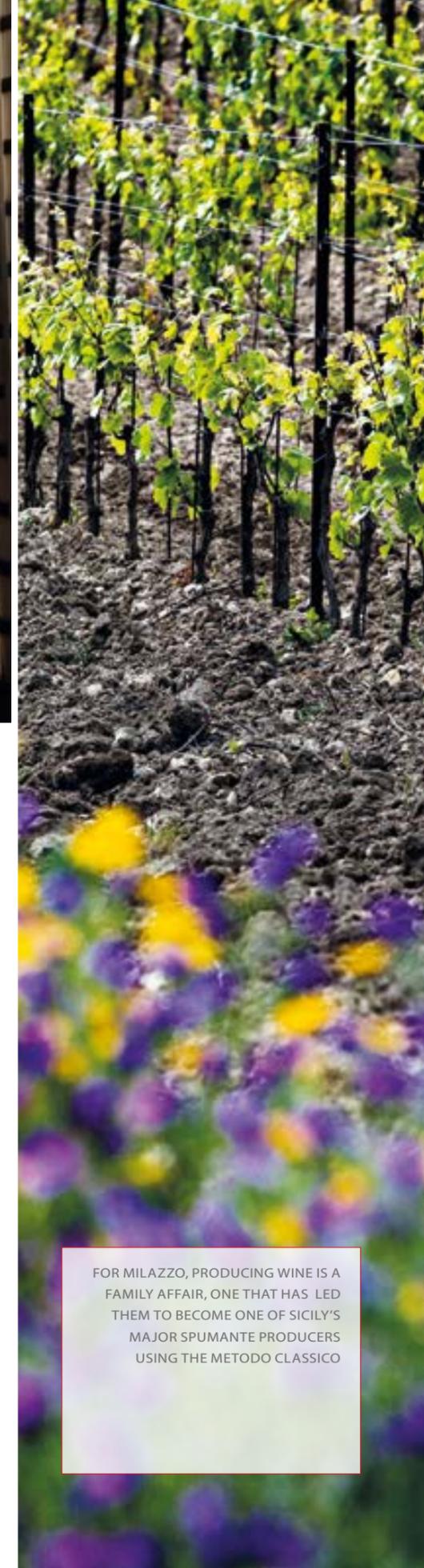
On the second floor of a lovely residence in Catania that dates back to the late 18th century, at via Sant'Anna 8, a stone's throw from the Baroque Piazza Duomo, are the rooms where Giovanni Verga spent the greatest part of his life. Reopened after a long restoration on 8 March this year, the home-museum retains all the charm of a bygone era, thanks to the period furnishings and the many mementoes of the great realist writer. The visit begins at the entrance, with the desk the artists used during his stay in Milan, then enters the drawing room and library. This room hosts a large table, six carved walnut bookcases holding over two thousand books and a portrait of the writer by Amedeo Bianchi. One of the three cupboards in the dining room contains a concealed dumb waiter with bell, connected to the kitchen on the floor above, the only luxury in a jealously-guarded bachelor existence. In the bedroom visitors can admire the iron bedstead and family portraits and photos. The main attraction, though, is that as you walk around the rooms of the Verga home-museum, a place where everything evokes the writer's personal connections and everyday life, it's still possible to breathe the spirited atmosphere of 18th and 19th century Catania, when it was populated by great artists, poets and composers. Tel. 095.7150598



**THERE ARE BUBBLES HERE, TOO**

There's a place in southern Sicily where innovation and tradition merge to create winemaking excellence - the Azienda Agricola G. Milazzo in Licata was founded in the 1960s, and is still driven by the passion and energy of Giuseppina Milazzo and her husband Saverio Lo Leggio. For them, producing wine is a family affair, one that has led them to become one of Sicily's major Spumante producers using the metodo classico. Their vineyards cover an area of around five square kilometres called the Terre della Baronia, with a variety of terrains and microclimates, comprising eight districts split into subdivisions so vineyard, variety and product can be precisely identified. The selected grapes - Nero d'Avola, Nero Cappuccio and Perricone for the reds, Inzolia and Catarratto Lucido for the whites, Chardonnay and Inzolia for the metodo classico - give rise to stupendous wines. The Milazzo's philosophy is based on artisanal winemaking techniques backed by a knowledge of the soil, vines and manual production methods. A pioneer of organic agriculture, among the first to try the spumante method in Sicily and committed to restoring old varieties, the estate is now recognised as one of the island's most prestigious winemaking centres and has won over 270 accolades in the world's major winemaking competitions, including the "Premio Speciale Gran Vinitaly 2015", the most important award at the 22nd Vinitaly International Winemaking Competition.

[www.milazzovini.com](http://www.milazzovini.com)



FOR MILAZZO, PRODUCING WINE IS A FAMILY AFFAIR, ONE THAT HAS LED THEM TO BECOME ONE OF SICILY'S MAJOR SPUMANTE PRODUCERS USING THE METODO CLASSICO