

Baglio Diar's Dhakira

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We announced it last March: Baglio Diar was working on its first passito made from Zibibbo. Today that project is a reality; it's called Dhakira, and it's an exclusive production, fewer than 2,000 bottles.

I had the chance to meet and visit the winery last year, and I was immediately captivated by its young owner, Nicola Di Girolamo. Nicola combines two traits that are not easy to find together in the wine world: great expertise and passion on one hand, and great humility on the other. It's humility, in fact, that makes the difference, because it helps you grow and want to learn something new every day.

Nicola's expertise comes through clearly in this passito. A great passito rests on two pillars, sweetness and freshness, and here both are present in the same sip. This is what gives Dhakira a drinkability that's rare for the style, and it's no

coincidence. A first batch of grapes is harvested in mid-August and left to dry in the sun for about thirty days. The second batch arrives in mid-September: very gentle pressing, fermentation at 17 degrees, and, during fermentation, the addition of the dried grapes. Thirty days of maceration follow, then at least six months in tank and another five in bottle. It's in this interplay between fresh and dried grapes that the wine's balance is built. And with a yield of dried grapes of about 10 quintals per hectare, it's easy to understand why there are so few bottles.

In the glass, the colour is golden yellow, with amber and orange highlights. The nose is what you'd expect from a great Zibibbo: extremely aromatic, complex, intense. At first, honey notes emerge, followed by dates, dried figs, and pleasant citrus hints too. Then, in the background, Mediterranean scrubland and a touch of cinnamon and black tea. On the palate it isn't overly sweet, but warm and enveloping, carrying its 15 degrees with ease, while the acidity and an almost briny sapidity, born from sea breezes, keep it taut and lighten it. The finish is long, leaving a pleasant aftertaste of candied orange and fresh notes of black pepper. One sip calls for the next, and for a passito that's no small detail.

The name deserves a mention too. Dhakira, in Arabic, means memory. And the same root opens one of the most celebrated poems ever written about Sicily. It was written around 1100 by Ibn Hamdis: a poet born in Noto, exiled from the island after the Norman conquest, who died without ever seeing it again. From afar he dedicated verses to it that have become the elegy of Arab Sicily:

"Ho ricordato la Sicilia, e il dolore ridesta nell'anima la sua memoria. Se pure sono stato cacciato da un paradiso, io ancora ne racconto le storie. E se non fosse per il sale delle lacrime, avrei creduto che il mio pianto fossero i suoi fiumi."

"I remembered Sicily, and the pain stirs its memory in my soul. Even though I was cast out of a paradise, I still tell its stories. And if it were not for the salt of my tears, I would have believed my weeping to be its rivers."

These are the verses that run along the label. Not an Arabesque ornament, but an exact literary quotation, written in classical Arabic calligraphy and arranged in a spiral, the shape in which memory envelops and folds back on itself.

I'm convinced this new arrival from Baglio Diar will truly be remembered, especially since it has everything it needs for excellent longevity.

As we always do in our tastings, we'll close with a pairing. The winery suggests dry pastries, Sicilian cannoli, tuna products, and blue cheeses. We took that last route and followed it all the way: we brought the Dhakira with us to friends in Cameri, in the province of Novara, the capital of Gorgonzola. The sweetness of the passito on one side, the savory, creamy strength of the blue cheese on the other, and the wine's freshness cleansing the palate with every bite. It was a wonderful match.

Company Profile

Sicilian winery located in Marsala born in the early '50s thanks to the dedication and commitment of the Di Girolamo's family. Baglio Diar has conformed to certified organic production for 20 years to guarantee the quality and safeness of its products. In the vineyards are grown mainly native grapes and Baglio Diar respect the environment following sustainable practices. The bottles stand out by an exclusive design to represent the Sicilian culture also on the label. The most prestigious selection by Baglio Diar is called Wine Art and celebrates the combination between the Sicilian literature and the native vines of the island, thus the names and the graphics are inspired by the romances of Pirandello

and Verga.

BAGLIO DIAR

Via Lipari, 13 – 91025 Marsala (TP) Sicily – Italia

+ 39 351 884 6370 – info@bagliodiar.com

<https://www.bagliodiar.com>

