

# DOC and IGP: what they really mean on the label of a Sicilian wine

scritto da Emanuele Fiorio | 30 Giugno 2026



*DOC and IGP labels on Sicilian wine are not bureaucratic formalities but markers of genuine production choices, including lower yields, selected grape varieties, and defined territories. Cantine Birgi bases nearly 80% of its output on these designations. Yet Sicilian denominations lack the market recognition of comparable Piedmont or Tuscan labels, a gap producers are working to close through authentic storytelling.*

Every time someone buys a bottle of Italian wine, they inevitably come across an acronym: DOC, DOCG, IGP, IGT. For many consumers these are enigmatic abbreviations, names to be learned without understanding what they mean. **Yet these acronyms tell something precise.**

In the case of Sicily, the system of designations has undergone a profound transformation over the last decade. The [DOC Sicilia](#), established in 2012, represented a turning point: for the first time the entire island had an internationally recognizable denominational identity, capable of functioning as an umbrella for very different varieties and territories. **The result was immediate: Grillo and Nero d'Avola, once marketed simply as anonymous varieties, became wines with a certified origin and a verifiable production specification.**

For [Cantine Birgi](#), designations are not a formality. Almost 80% of production falls between DOC Sicilia and IGP Terre Siciliane: 42% belongs to the first, 37% to the second. This means that the large majority of the wines produced are made with lower yields than generic wines, with grape varieties selected according to specification, in delimited areas with specific territorial characteristics. **The production cost is higher, but the perceived quality, and the real one, is superior.**

“Designations are a competitive tool in international markets,” observes commercial director Salvatore Marino. **“Foreign buyers, especially in Germany, Switzerland and the Nordic European markets, explicitly look for wines with a designation of origin.”** It gives them a certainty that varietal indication alone does not guarantee.

There is, however, an unresolved issue, which the most serious producers acknowledge without difficulty: the perceived quality of Sicilian designations is not yet proportional to the actual quality of the wines. **In other words, the market does not pay for DOC Sicilia the way it pays for a Piedmontese or Tuscan designation of equal level.**

Closing this gap requires time, consistency, and above all authentic communication, not promotional, but narrative. Telling the story of the territory, the people, the production

choices. Making sure that the acronym on the bottle is not an administrative constraint but a recognizable story. This is exactly the direction that Cantine Birgi has chosen to follow.



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## Key points

1. DOC Sicilia, established in 2012, gave the whole island an internationally recognizable wine identity.
2. Nearly 80% of Cantine Birgi's production falls under DOC Sicilia or IGP Terre Siciliane.
3. Designations mean lower yields, selected vines, and delimited territories, raising both cost and quality.
4. Foreign buyers, especially in Germany and Switzerland, actively seek wines with designation of origin.
5. Sicilian DOC wines still lack the market recognition of equivalent Piedmontese or Tuscan designations.