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## Scenario Siciliano: **Baglio di Pianetto**

A few weeks ago, I started chronicling my press trip to Sicily, the almost mystical island off the toe of Italy. We started the week on the East side of the island, navigating around Mount Etna, the active volcano that influences every aspect of life. On Day Two of the trip, we headed to Caverna Etnea, the Firriato estate that is just a few kilometers from the volcano. Day 3, we visited Pietradolce, and Day 4 took us to **Baglio di Pianetto**,



the closest winery to Palermo, the capital of Sicily. There were a few aspects to teaching High School that I did not enjoy: interactions with parents (particularly those whose children were not faring well in my class—rarely would they hold their offspring even a bit at fault), writing end of term comments on every student, and when prospective students would come to observe my class. I understood completely the need for such visits, but it caused disruption in the class, pulled my focus away from my students, and made me feel a bit like I was being asked to run a dog-and-pony show. Professionals in the wine industry, though, seem to handle such disruptions in their daily routines much better than I ever did, and such was the case at **Baglio di Pianetto**, one of the larger producers in Sicily (just over 500,000 bottles). We spent the night at **Baglio di Pianetto**, which has several rooms available to the public. Renato di Bartoli, the relatively new CEO at Pianetto and son of famed Marsala producer, Marco di Bartoli, did not seem to mind at all that we were pulling him away from a mountain of paperwork and a lengthy to-do list. Renato met us at Pianetto to first show us around the property and then walk us through a tasting of the winery's vast lineup. Riding shotgun with Renato around the estate. Count Paolo Marzotto, owner of, among others, Santa Margherita and Ca' del Bosco, purchased **Baglio di Pianetto** in the late 1990s from a local grape grower and soon built a winery (completed in 2003) capable of producing 700k bottles (current production is just over 500k). The vineyards average 700 meters above sea level with 90 hectares (225 acres) planted (there are also another 60 hectares planted in southwest Sicily). While much of the focus is on Sicilian varieties (Grillo, Insolia, Catarratto, Frappato, Nero d'Avola), the Count, perhaps due to the influence of his French wife, loves French varieties and planted Viognier, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Petit Verdot. The modern winery, which is powered by solar panels, is nestled in among the vines, which have always been farmed organically, but have

only been certified as such starting with the 2016 vintage. As with many larger wineries. **Baglio di Pianetto** has several brands or lines at various levels of quality and price. The “B.D.P. Y” line represents their entry-level or every day wines, that retail around \$12 in the U.S. 2016 **Baglio di Pianetto** B.D.P. Y Catarratto: The most widely planted grape in Sicily. Yellow on the verge of golden with good citrus and peach. Initially a bit round but then the acidity kicks in to balance it out. Solid. Good to Very Good. 86-88 Points. 2016 **Baglio di Pianetto** B.D.P. Y Insolia: Pale with just a hint of yellow. Elevation here allows the production of Insolia with good acidity. White flower and peach. Quite tart and active. An easy drinking wine. Very Good. 87-89 Points. Admit it—it is fun to say.... 2015 **Baglio di Pianetto** B.D.P. Y Frappato: Translucent and cassis driven. Can serve slightly chilled. Good fruit and acid. \$12? A steal. And “Frappato” is so much fun to say. Very Good. 87-89 Points. 2015 **Baglio di Pianetto** B.D.P. Y Nero d’Avola: A bit darker than the Frappato with a classic dark berry nose with a touch of funk. Good fruit and body. Very Good to Outstanding. 88-90 Points. The **Baglio di Pianetto** line of wines represent the bulk of the winery’s production and generally run between \$18 and \$30 a bottle. 2016 **Baglio di Pianetto** Ficiligno, Sicilia DOC: 50% Viognier, 50% Insolia. Ficiligno is a rock that is abundant on the property. The perfume of the Viognier is really at the forefront. Well balanced with good fruit, nice acid. Lengthy finish. Solid. Very Good. 87-89 Points. 2013 **Baglio di Pianetto** Shymer, Sicilia DOC: 50% Merlot, 50% Syrah. “Shymer” is a hybrid of the two grapes (“Shyraz” and Merlot). Dark red fruit. Good body. Some green notes on the palate. Very Good to Outstanding. 88-90 Points. 2015 **Baglio di Pianetto** Ramione, Sicilia DOC: 50% Nero d’Avola, 50% Merlot. Named after the Baron di Ramione, the previous owner of the estate. Blackberry. Cassis. Fruity, but plenty of acidity with a spicy finish. Very Good to Outstanding. 89-91 Points. 2014 **Baglio di Pianetto** Syraco, Sicilia DOC: 100% Syrah. A bit of a pun as the name is a fusion of Syrah and Siroco, the North African wind. Dark color. Blackberry vanilla and some anise. Rich and fruity with a bit of grip. Outstanding. 90-92 Points. 2012 **Baglio di Pianetto** Cembali, Sicilia DOC: 100% Nero d’Avola. Named after another southeasterly wind. Very nice. Good dark berry fruit, integrated tannins, balance. One of the better Nero d’Avolas I have tried. Yum. Outstanding. 91-93 Points. 2013 **Baglio di Pianetto** Agnus, Sicilia DOC: Retail \$50. Only 4737 bottles produced and only the wine maker knows the blend. Resembles a Cabernet Franc or Sauvignon. Black fruit and a bit green. Good fruit, grippy tannins, could use more time. Nice. Outstanding. 92-94 Points. The hospitality area sits atop of one of the many hills that comprise the vineyard. Many of the rooms overlook the inviting pool... ..which overlooks the vineyards and is the scene of many incredible sunsets. Many thanks to Renato and all the people at **Baglio di Pianetto** who made our stay quite memorable. Here is Renato, no doubt itching to get back to work....