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Aspri Spirits to market Italian wines, launches five premium brands in India

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Donnafugata, a premium Sicily-based wine manufacturer, has now teamed-up with Aspri Spirits to market its range of products. Aspri spirits has introduced five labels from the Donnafugata range. These are Mille e una Notte DOC (Nero d'Avola, Ben Rye (Passitto), La Fuga DOC (Chardonnay), Anthilla IGT Sicilia and Sedara IGT Sicilia.

Aspri Spirits has developed one of the largest sales and distribution networks in India covering 22 states. It supplies to the star category hotels, restaurants, bars, up-market wine shops and airlines.

The Sicily-based wine company has been exporting wines to Asia including Japan and India for a decade. Factors like changing lifestyles, increasing disposable income, amplified wine marketing and influence of western culture which contributed to a growing wine consumption in India. In order to maximise its sales, Donnafugata opted to associate with Aspri Spirits going by its capability in this space, Ms Giulia Lazzarini, Export Manager, Northern Europe, Asia & Oceania, Donnafugata, told F&B News in an e-mail interaction.

For Donnafugata which competes with wines from all over the world pins its strength on quality and tipicity. The latter is attributed to its grapes grown on the clayish soil in Contessa Entellina on the hills of Western Sicily and the volcanic soil of Pantelleria island which have contributed to the production of excellent wines. Some of the Donnafugata wines are refined in French oak.

The range of wines are priced between Rs 2,000 and Rs 8,500 in Bangalore. Aspri Spirits is targeting the fine restaurants in luxury hotels across the country and in Bangalore since wine retail is growing fast, it would tap the sector too.

Over 75 per cent of Donnafugata wine market is Italy and parts of Europe chipping in the remaining revenues. The growth in the Asian markets is recent. However, the company is facing dual challenges. With regard to Europe, currently there is limited potential for growth resulting partially out of the recent economic crisis. In Asia, the market is nascent with minimum exposure. Therefore, we are looking to educate the people here to appreciate quality wine. The effort would take a while, but we are confident of the growth potential. Asia, including India, will be a major source for future sales, stated Ms Lazzarini.

In India, wine consumption is triggered mainly by its status as a luxury and trendy product. Another observation is that Italian food is the second choice after Chinese for Indians exposed to international cuisine. The Italian restaurants here have been asked to pair the meal with wine which has helped to create an awareness.

However, the key growth driver for red wine consumption in India is driven from a health benefit angle. The low alcohol content has made it popular among women and teetotallers.

On the issues affecting marketing of global wine brands, Sumedh Singh Mandla, CEO, Aspri Wine Division, said that high duty was a deterrent. In 2008, Hong Kong witnessed a boom in wine sales only because all duties were slashed. She expects a similar move takes place in India where tax cuts could drive sales from the sub-continent.