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# THE GENESIS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF A PROJECT IDEA WITH A LONG-TERM VISION

**The Roma Mater Vinorum project, promoted by the Department of Agriculture of the Municipality of Rome in collaboration with Iter Vitis, a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, aims to rediscover, celebrate, and promote the viticulture of the Italian capital: both in terms of the native products of the city and its geographical hinterland, and in terms of their potential to provide value in terms of identity, the environment, and tourism and the economy.**

Conceived as a form of 'historical compensation' aimed at restoring the city's leading role in the regional, national, and international winegrowing landscape, the project is structured within a planning vision that guides the city towards reconfiguring its image as a sustainable metropolis, becoming a hub for the diffusion of agricultural and oenological cultivation. These are closely intertwined and synergistic forms of cultivation meant to offer coherent responses both to the growing and internationalised phenomenon of 'urban vineyards', and to the direction of current commercial trends, which point to the recovery of native grape varieties as an effective means of countering food and wine business practices that have a low degree of territorial, cultural, and historical integrity.

Rome and wine are linked by forms of reciprocity and mutual dependence that have existed continuously since the 8th and 7th centuries BC, when, as legend has it, King Numa Pompilius had a grapevine planted in the forum, along with an olive tree and a fig tree. Afterwards, this bond was constantly strengthened throughout the entire duration of the Empire, connected to military conquests, tying in with the right of citizenship, and intertwining with political choices and reasons of state. And while the Empire's collapse in 476 AD marked the end of the geographical expansion of the vine, after it had taken root wherever the legions had arrived and settled, the slow effect of religion, the meticulousness of the monastic orders, and the dietary-recreational needs of medieval and modern Roman society led to Rome being filled with vast expanses of vineyards. This resulted in wine production levels that, at the end of the 16th century, were at around 20 million litres.



*"Numa Pompilius with the nymph Egeria" B. Pinelli, 1839*

A truly extraordinary quantity of production that was a boon for papal taxation and that profoundly shaped the urban fabric within, and beyond, the perimeter of the Aurelian Walls. One can find direct testimony of this in the presence of Monte de Cocci – a deposit of millions of oil and wine amphorae located within the Testaccio district – the cartographic, iconographic, and photographic documentation preserved in the Capitoline archives, and the more than twenty toponymic references still testifying today to how much the vineyards were intertwined with the city's road network, monuments, and squares – before the unification of the state and the advent of Umbertine Rome reconfigured its urban fabric and entirely stripped it of its ampelographic capital.

With such reflections as a starting point, the Roma Mater Vinorum project aims to restore the Italian capital's role as a 'city of wine', reintroducing vineyards not only as practices of urban and proximity agriculture, but also as factors for the regeneration of spaces under the banner of ecology, landscape improvement, and the identity-driven reintegration of a cultural history that for millennia has unfolded sub signo vitis (under the sign of the vine).





Mosaic depicting a Roman banquet scene, Aquileia, 5th century AD.

# THE SAN SISTO VINEYARD AND THE STORY OF ITS CREATION

The San Sisto vineyard is the first productive planting initiative conceived and created for the implementation of the Roma Mater Vinorum project. Located at approximately 30 metres above sea level on the slope of Villa Celimontana, facing the archaeological area of Caracalla, it has a south, south-west exposure and rests on medium-textured soil that tends towards sandy.

Its planting dates back to May 2025 and was performed according to the bush-trained method, considered the most suitable due to the soil's conformation, the climatic characteristics, and the possibility of closely following the evolution of the vineyard.

A total of 1,200 rooted cuttings have been planted, occupying a total area of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>, and they include the following types of native grape varieties:

■ Malvasia Puntinata ■ Nero buono ■ Abbuoto ■ Mammolo ■ Moscato di Terracina ■ Cesanese di Affile ■ Bellone

The choice of the San Sisto site as the starting place for the project to restore Rome's winemaking tradition is connected with reasons that are both practical and speculative. Among the former is the fact that San Sisto, an ancient nursery established by Napoleon to cultivate plants for embellishing the avenues and public parks of Rome, is currently the headquarters of the Gardens Service and the Department of Agriculture, which offers the potential to make use of facilities, equipment, and forms of control that can benefit the agricultural and maintenance practices of the vineyard. In addition to this, there is the important fact that the vineyard itself is located within an ecological corridor that connects the green area of the Circus Maximus and the Palatine Hill with that of Caracalla and the Appian Way and, through the latter, with the hinterland of the Agro Romano and the Castelli Romani.

This fact is of considerable importance if one wishes to connect the Roma Mater Vinorum project with all the other urban planning, regenerative, and tourism initiatives that the Metropolitan City is pursuing in synergy with the various political and administrative bodies. Among the speculative reasons, the dominant consideration is that the area occupied by the vineyard is located in a quadrant of urban space long designated for extensive viticultural practices, as attested by the documents and cadastral maps available for consultation in the public archives of the municipality and the state. This overlapping of locations therefore allows the entire project to be conceived in a 'retro-innovative' key and as an ideal reconnection to a historical past that saw Rome at the centre of the diffusion of winegrowing at the Italian, European, and global scale.

The first harvest is scheduled for the summer-autumn of 2027.



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# VITICULTURE IN ANCIENT ROME

## Rome and the birth of the civilisation of the vine

Ancient Rome not only conquered the Mediterranean, but also laid the foundations of an agricultural culture centred on the vine and wine, profoundly transforming the landscape, economy, and customs of European peoples. During the centuries of the Republic and the Empire, viticulture evolved from a family-based and local activity into a pillar of Roman identity. In the countryside, vines climbed trees in systems called *maritati*, which combined functionality and aesthetics. Every plot planted with vines increased the value of the land and received not only agronomic but also legal attention. Climate played a decisive role. The most flourishing period of Roman viticulture, between the 2nd century BC and the 2nd century AD, coincided with a natural warming phase known as the “Roman climatic optimum.” Milder temperatures and favourable seasons allowed the expansion of viticulture even into marginal areas, from the hills of northern Italy to the banks of the Rhine and even as far as Britannia. Wine became a commodity for consumption, trade, and prestige.

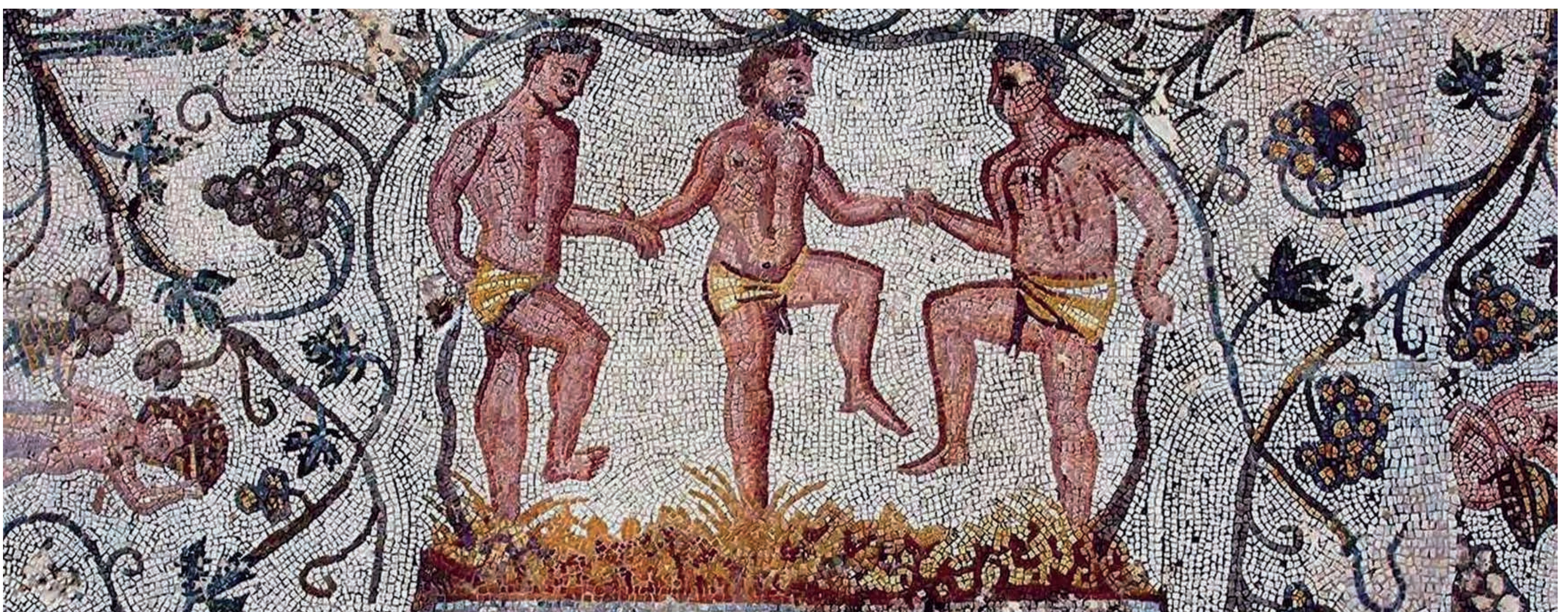
In the provinces, vineyards were planted, *cellae vinariae* (wine cellars) were built, and new vintners were trained: the Empire itself expanded also through the culture of wine. Writers such as Varro, Cato, Columella, and Pliny the Elder have left us a rich heritage of technical and practical knowledge, often based on empirical experience and careful observation of the seasons. From green pruning to harvest, from cluster thinning to soil management, every gesture was codified and ritualised, with an agricultural calendar that integrated lunar phases, religious festivals, and direct observation of the vine. Columella, for example, advised judging grape ripeness by observing the colour of the seeds — a technique still used today.

## Harvests, laws, and rites: the vineyard at the heart of Roman life

The grape harvest in ancient Rome was not just an agricultural activity: it was a sacred moment, marked by religious rites and propitiatory practices. Before a single cluster could be touched, the priest of Jupiter had to offer the first fruit to the gods. The *Vinalia Rustica*, celebrated in August, invoked favourable weather; the *Auspicio Vindemiae* officially opened the harvest. Superstitions were common: fake clusters hung on vines to ward off bad weather, blessings pronounced by vintners, and even ritual games and jokes during harvest days.

The law also gave vineyards a special status. The Laws of the Twelve Tables granted the suspension of legal proceedings for those engaged in vineyard work, considered a priority for collective life. In agrarian contracts, the planting of a vineyard increased the value of the lease and entitled tenants to compensation. Numerous rulings preserved by Roman jurists concern disputes over shoots, boundaries, and ownership of fruit.

Yet cultivating vines was not only an honour. From the 1st century AD onwards, overproduction and food supply concerns led Emperor Domitian to issue an edict banning new vineyard plantings in the provinces and ordering the destruction of half of those already existing: an economic control measure, but also a symbol of the centrality of viticulture. The edict was revoked two centuries later by Probus, who officially recognised the right to produce wine for peoples such as the Gauls and the Spaniards. Over time, the Empire’s difficulties were also reflected in its vineyards. Heavy taxation and economic crisis led to the abandonment of many plantations. Cassiodorus recounts that some winegrowers even cut down their vines rather than pay taxes. And yet, the imprint of Roman wine culture proved indelible: techniques, words, and landscapes shaped by the vine have reached us today. Rome, *mater vinorum*, has left us a legacy that we continue to celebrate and renew.



Harvest mosaic. Detail depicting three men pressing grapes to obtain must. Roman house of the Amphitheatre, 3rd century AD. Mérida, Spain.



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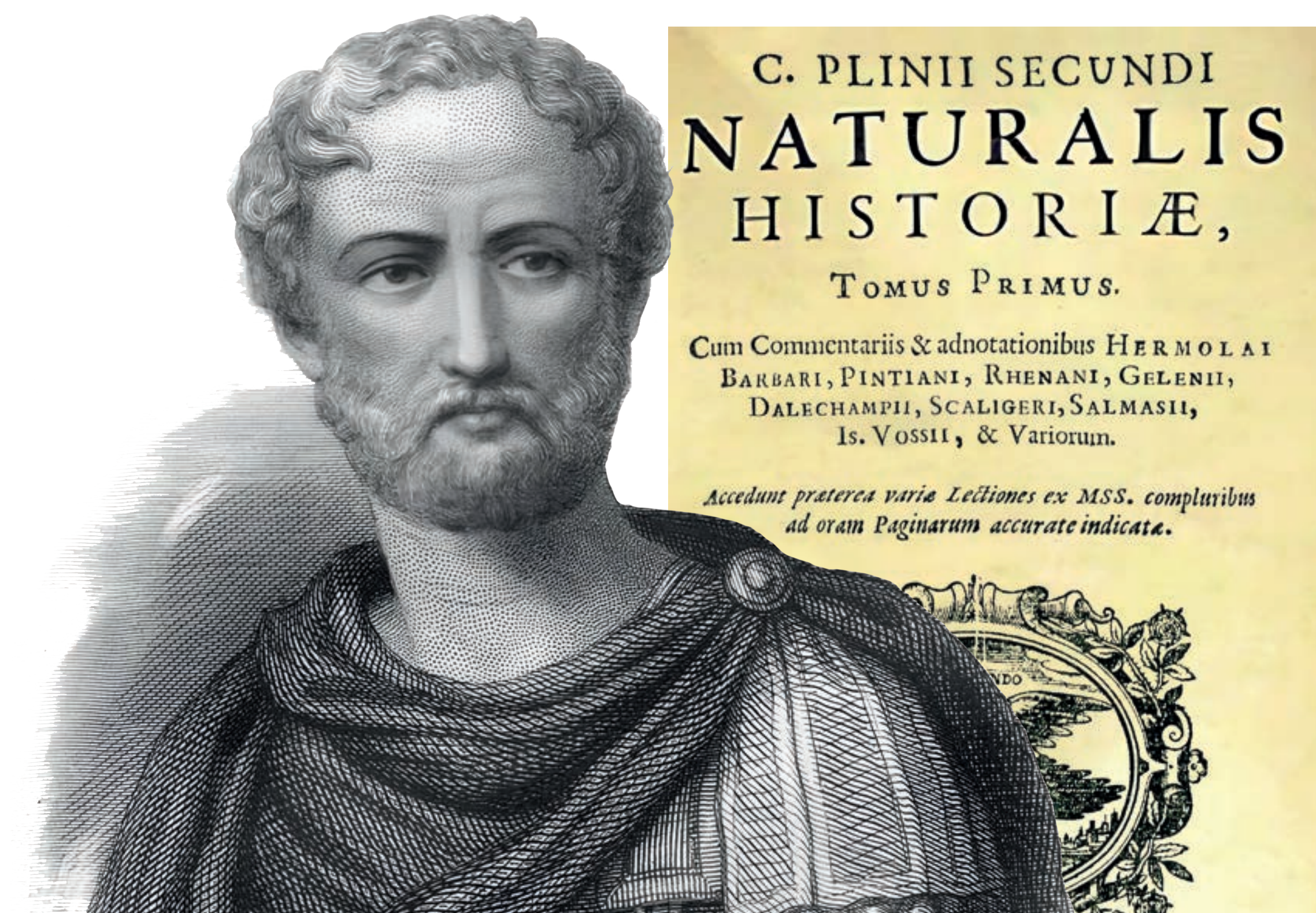
# BELLONE

## The grape of the ancient Romans

**A white-berried grape grown mainly along the Lazio coast, particularly in the territories between Anzio, Nettuno, and the Castelli Romani, Bellone is distinguished by its medium-sized, conical-shaped bunches, with golden berries and a thick, resistant skin.**

This structure makes it particularly suitable for cultivation in coastal areas battered by the winds and salt spray of the Tyrrhenian Sea, and it adapts well to the sandy and volcanic soils that characterise the Lazio landscape. Its hardiness and adaptability were already known in ancient times: according to several ampelographic studies, Bellone could be identified with the ancient uva pantastica, mentioned in Roman sources as a grape "that fattens", that is, capable of producing full-bodied and abundant musts. It was appreciated for its aptitude for providing robust table wines, capable of accompanying the richest dishes, especially those based on fish, typical of the Lazio coast. Bellone is also known by the dialect name Cacchione, which is still in use today, especially in the Nettuno area. There are various etymological hypotheses for the origin of this curious name: some derive it from the full and rounded shape of the bunches, others from the Latin term caccabis, which indicated a saucepan or a terracotta container used for cooking or serving wine.

The link between Bellone and Roman history is not only linguistic: among the vineyards of this variety, archaeological finds such as fragments of wine amphorae, retaining walls, drainage channels, opus signinum pavements, and even entire rustic villas from the Republican and Imperial eras are often discovered, testifying to the agricultural continuity of the territory. The remains of the Via Severiana, an ancient consular road that ran parallel to the coast, cross the very areas where Bellone is cultivated today, making this grape variety a sort of tangible common thread between past and present. Evocative clues can also be found in Latin literature: Pliny the Elder, in his *Naturalis Historia*, praises the winemaking skill of Latium, defining it as a "land of strong vines and wines worthy of Rome", while Horace, in a famous epistle, describes the grapes of the area as "blonde and sun-kissed, born to gladden the tables without excess".



*Nineteenth-century portrait of Pliny the Elder*

Finally, Martial refers to wines that are "sincere and kissed by the sea", which many scholars associate with the coast of Anzio, at that time a favourite holiday resort for the Roman elites.

Bellone, therefore, is not just a grape variety, but a true living cultural testimony, a symbol of the symbiosis between nature, history, and farming knowledge.

Each bunch carries with it centuries of cultivation, handovers, harvest rituals, and stories passed down from father to son.

Rediscovered and enhanced today, also thanks to genetic research and projects to protect the ampelographic heritage of Lazio, Bellone represents one of the identity pillars of regional viticulture and an ideal bridge between contemporary taste and the millennia-old legacy of the Roman world.



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# CESANESE

## The red soul of Lazio

**A black-berried grape cultivated for centuries on the hills of central-southern Lazio, Cesanese is the most representative of the region's native red grape varieties. Its presence is rooted in three main areas: Piglio, Affile, and the Roman area, where over time the variety has taken on slightly different but always recognisable characteristics.**

The bunches are compact, with blue-black berries that have a substantial, pruinose skin, concentrating intense aromas of wild berries, spices, and undergrowth. It is a variety that requires attention in the vineyard and care during vinification, but it can offer elegant and profound expressions, capable of surprising even the most demanding palates. Cesanese has ancient roots, attested by ecclesiastical and cadastral documents from the 13th and 14th centuries that mention "Cesanese red wine" as a product of excellence in the possessions of the Church and in the countryside between Rome and Anagni.

Some scholars hypothesise a genetic relationship with grapes already cultivated in Roman times, although the name "Cesanese" would only appear much later. The origin of the name could derive from "cesa", meaning cleared or cultivated land, a term used in medieval agricultural toponymy to indicate reclaimed areas planted with vines. For centuries, Cesanese was a "festive" wine, often consumed young, in taverns, accompanied by porchetta, at the fraschette of the Castelli, or during religious and civil celebrations.

In the Affile area, for example, the registers of local confraternities report the use of Cesanese wine for processions and votive offerings. During the 20th century, the cultivation of Cesanese progressively declined, partly due to competition from more productive varieties and the socio-economic transformation of the Lazio countryside. A concrete recovery process only began in the 1990s, thanks to new ampelographic research, clonal selection, and the work of wineries that chose to invest in the quality and recognisability of the grape.

The recognition of the "Cesanese del Piglio" DOCG in 2008 marked an important stage in this process, certifying the oenological vocation of the area and stimulating a new generation of producers to employ this variety as a single-varietal wine.

Today, Cesanese is the subject of growing interest even beyond the regional borders, thanks to its ability to express, depending on the areas and vinification styles, complex aromatic profiles, well-integrated tannins, and surprising longevity.

No longer just a "rustic" wine for local consumption, but an identity-defining red, capable of interpreting the evolution of Lazio viticulture in a contemporary key, without losing its deep connection with the landscape and tradition.



*"In a Roman Osteria" Carl Bloch, 1866*



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# MALVASIA PUNTINATA

## The aromatic elegance of the Roman hills

**A white-berried grape typical of the Castelli Romani and the countryside around Rome, Malvasia Puntinata is recognisable by its golden berries dotted with small brown spots (the "punte" from which it gets its name), a distinctive sign of its ripeness and identity.**

Historically cultivated in the territories of Frascati, Grottaferrata, Monte Porzio Catone, and Marino, this variety has for centuries been the basis of the most famous Roman white wines, already appreciated in the papal era for their freshness and fragrance. Compared to other Malvasias, the Puntinata variety is distinguished by its fine and floral aroma, with notes of white peach, aromatic herbs, and honey, and by its thick skin, which also makes it suitable for producing wines with light withering or late maturation.

Despite the name "Malvasia" suggesting a Greek origin, Malvasia Puntinata is a well-characterised Lazio variety, the result of centuries of selection by local winegrowers. It was cultivated in vineyards using the Roman pergola system, alongside Trebbiano and other minor varieties, and harvested by hand during the first weeks of October, often amidst songs and community rituals. Its cultivation is documented as early as the Renaissance, as reported in the archives of the Apostolic Camera, which recorded the tithes and revenues from the vineyards destined for the pontifical palaces.

During the Baroque period, wines made from Malvasia Puntinata were in great demand in Roman taverns and were served in the classic straw-covered glass flasks, becoming a convivial symbol of the city. Among the symbolic places in its history are the area of Colonna, from which carts loaded with barrels would depart for Rome, and the residence of Castel Gandolfo, where Malvasia was cultivated in the papal vineyards. Remains of ancient presses, must containers, and stone drainage channels are still visible in some historic cellars of the Castelli, testifying to the long oenological tradition of the area. Today, Malvasia Puntinata is being rediscovered and vinified as a single-varietal wine by a growing number of producers, who enhance its typicality and versatility, bringing it back to the centre of the regional oenological scene. A refined symbol of Roman agriculture, Malvasia Puntinata is the most elegant and fragrant expression of the hilly landscape of Lazio.



"Ottobrate Romane" Jørgen Sonne, 1840



Wine cart from de Alvariis collection





# MOSCATO TERRACINA

## The aromatic grape of the Lazio coast

**A white-berried grape cultivated along the coastal strip between Terracina, Fondi, and the Circeo promontory, Moscato di Terracina is distinguished by its compact, golden bunches with a thick and highly fragrant skin, often covered by a light waxy bloom.**

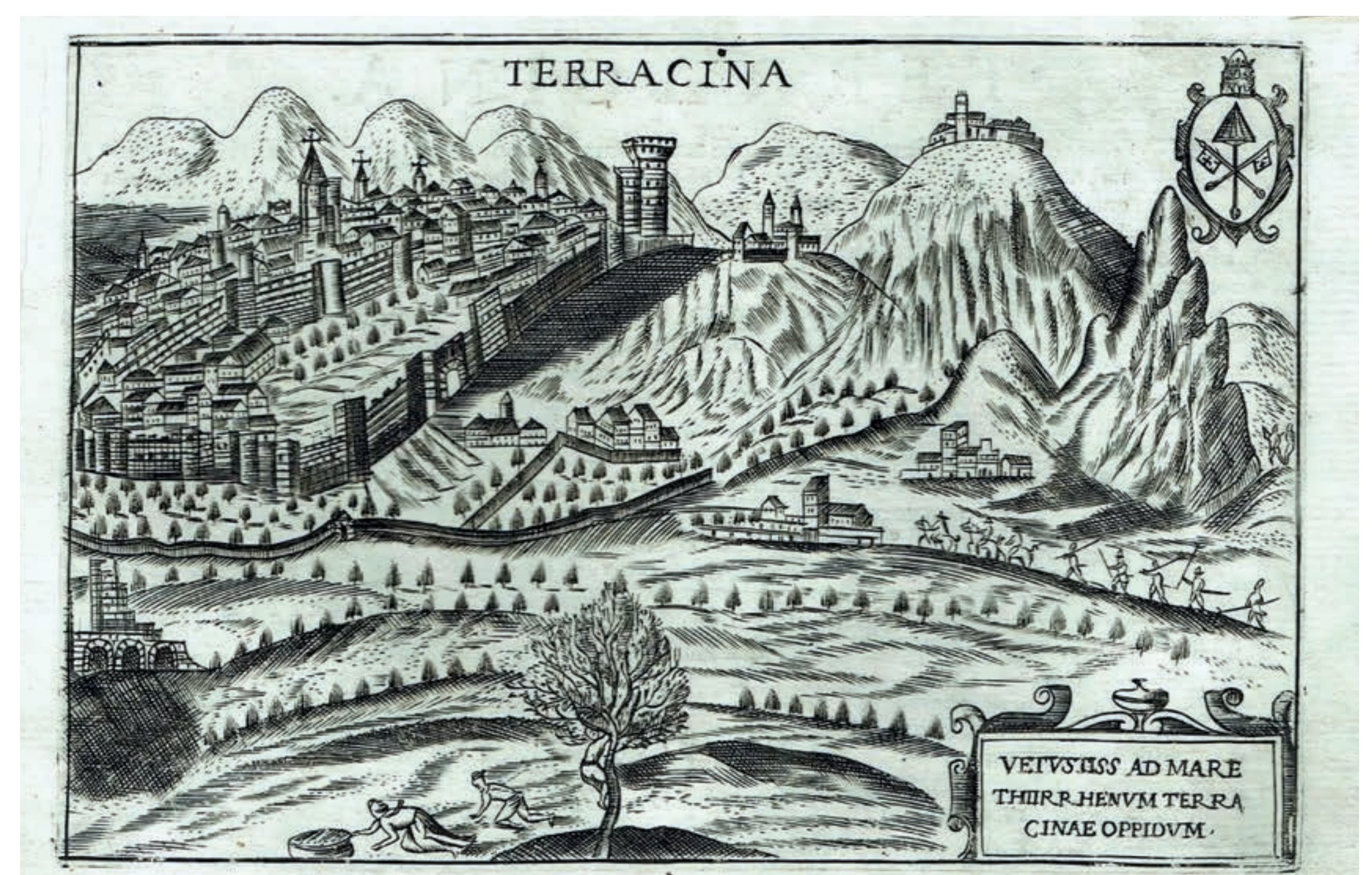
It is a variety that tells the story of a specific landscape: marine sands, salt-laden breezes, sunny exposure, and a mild climate that enhances the grape's aromatic profile. It is a very ancient variety, documented as early as the 17th century as "moscatello di Terracina" in agrarian registers and travel chronicles, where it was described as a sweet and intense wine, consumed in local courts and also in demand in the ports of the Kingdom of Naples. According to some ampelographic hypotheses, Moscato di Terracina is native to the area, genetically distinct from the more widespread Moscato Bianco, and therefore a unique Lazio variety.

Its steady presence in the Pontine area is also supported by Bourbon-era cadastral sources and 19th-century sale deeds, in which one reads of plots of "moscatella" or "moscato gentile" cultivated between Monte San Biagio, Sonnino, and Terracina. The latter, already an important commercial hub along the Appian Way in Roman times, still reveals archaeological remains in the vineyards that produce Moscato, such as opus signinum channels, sections of paved road, perimeter walls of rustic villas, and fragments of transport amphorae. The production area overlaps with that of the ancient villae maritimae, which combined agricultural and residential functions, often equipped with cellae vinariae (wine cellars).

Some of these structures are visible at the archaeological area of the Temple of Jupiter Anxur or along the terraces overlooking Lake Fondi. Moscato di Terracina has always enjoyed a great reputation for its aromatic intensity: scents of orange blossom, sage, citrus fruits, and peach make it immediately recognisable. It was once vinified almost exclusively in its sweet or passito (dried grape) version, according to a tradition passed down orally for generations, linked to the celebration of harvests and patron saint festivals.

Today, thanks in part to the recognition of the Terracina DOC in 2007, the grape is also being cultivated in a dry version, maintaining its aromatic characteristics but with a fresher and more savoury profile, suitable for new gastronomic pairings. Recent studies conducted by ARSIAL and the University of Tuscia have confirmed the genetic uniqueness of Moscato di Terracina, contributing to its protection within the regional ampelographic heritage.

Moscato di Terracina is therefore not just an aromatic grape, but a living testimony to a long agricultural and commercial history in which landscape, archaeology, rural knowledge, and historical memory intertwine. It grows among coastal sands and Roman walls, between Saracen towers and consular paths, the bearer of centuries of care, adaptation, and continuity. Its rediscovery is an act of restoring value that is not only oenological but also cultural and territorial.



*Perspective plan view of Terracina, Francesco Bertelli, 1629*





# NERO BUONO CORI

## The ancient grape of the mountains and tuff soil

**A black-berried grape cultivated for centuries in the territory of Cori, a town of ancient origins nestled in the Lepini Mountains, Nero Buono is a rare and identity-defining grape variety, rediscovered and promoted only in recent decades.**

Its compact, cylindrical bunches are characterised by bluish-purple berries with a thick skin rich in pruina: an excellent natural defence that makes the plant suitable for resisting windy climates, significant temperature variations, and the volcanic and tuffaceous soils of the area, which are rich in potassium and highly draining. Nero Buono is a variety that has its roots in the ancient history of southern Lazio. In Cori – the ancient Volscian Cora – viticulture was already practised in pre-Roman times, as demonstrated by the wine transport amphorae and production facilities unearthed near the current vineyard areas. Among the most emblematic discoveries, a Roman-era rock-hewn wine press, carved directly into the rock and still visible among the vines today, testifies to an uninterrupted winemaking tradition.

Both Strabo and Pliny the Elder, in their descriptions of Latium vetus, mention the excellence of the wines from this hilly area. A curious anecdote concerns the survival of the grape variety during the 20th century: in the 1960s, while Lazio's viticulture was focusing on more productive varieties, Nero Buono survived almost exclusively in the mixed-row vineyards of Cori's farming families, who used it to strengthen their homemade red wine or to vinify it in demijohns. One of the local farmers, Giuliano D'Ercole, used to say that Nero Buono "must never be uprooted, because it gives few but good grapes, and the old folks always wanted it to make the wine for celebrations".

It was precisely thanks to these micro-transmissions of oral knowledge and the preservation of old vines that a project to recover the grape variety began in the 1980s, with the collaboration of the Experimental Institute for Viticulture. The name itself – "Nero Buono" (Good Black) – reflects the direct and affectionate approach of the farming culture, where the adjective "buono" indicated not only the flavour of the grape but also its behaviour in the vineyard and cellar: reliable, resilient, bountiful.



*"View of the Temple of Hercules in the city of Cora" Brun Giovanni, 1800-1850*

Today, Nero Buono is the protagonist of numerous agricultural and cultural enhancement projects: it has become the symbol of the Lepini winemaking identity, often featured in historical tastings, in educational tours among vineyards and temples, and on the menus of restaurants that promote traditional Cori cuisine.

In the agricultural landscape of Cori, where vineyards, olive groves, and dry-stone walls alternate, each Nero Buono plant is a silent guardian of an ancient memory. Among the rows of vines, it is not uncommon to come across votive stones, ceramic fragments, or chamber tombs that tell the story of the overlapping of cultures over time.

It is this continuous dialogue between nature and civilisation that makes Nero Buono not just a grape variety to be safeguarded, but a true "living witness" to the agricultural and cultural history of Lazio.



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# ABBUOTO

## The strong grape of ancient Lazio

**A black-berried grape variety with mysterious and fascinating origins, Abbuoto is traditionally cultivated in lower Lazio, particularly in the area of Formia, Fondi, and Itri, between the Aurunci Mountains and the Tyrrhenian Sea.**

Its bunches are of medium size, with spherical berries that have a thick skin, rich in pigments and aromatic substances. The plant is vigorous, resistant to drought, and suited to the loose, calcareous soils of the coastal hill belt, where it benefits from the influence of the sea and the protection of the mountains.

Many scholars believe that Abbuoto is a direct descendant of the grapes cultivated in Roman Campania Felix, perhaps related to the varieties used for the celebrated Caecuban wine, praised by Pliny the Elder, Virgil, and Horace as one of the best in the Empire. Caecuban wine was produced precisely between Fondi and Terracina, in the area that today corresponds to the municipalities where Abbuoto survives.

According to some sources, Abbuoto could even be the last witness to that imperial oenological tradition. The link with history is confirmed by the archaeological finds in the area: among the vineyards, there are remains of villae rusticae, amphorae, presses, and drainage channels for fermentation, confirming the long agricultural and winemaking vocation of the territory.

In Itri and Fondi, some wineries have recovered old, centuries-old Abbuoto vines, which were abandoned in the post-war years in favour of more productive grape varieties. The name "Abbuoto" is as peculiar as it is debated. Some trace it back to the dialect verb abbuotare, which in some areas of southern Lazio means "to fill, to satiate" – perhaps a reference to the bountifulness of the grape or its ability to produce full and intense wines.

Others connect it to an archaic Latin term related to the vigorous growth of the plant. During the 20th century, Abbuoto was long used to give colour and body to local wines but was rarely vinified as a single-varietal wine. Only recently has it been rediscovered and promoted, thanks to the work of small producers and genetic research that has confirmed it as a distinct and native variety.

Today, it represents a distinctive element for those who wish to tell the story of the agricultural and historical identity of southern Lazio. Each vine is part of a landscape that has witnessed Roman legions, medieval monks, and farmers who still harvest according to the phases of the moon.

Abbuoto is not just a grape: it is a living agrarian memory, a bridge between the ancient Caecuban wine and the contemporary viticulture of Lazio.



*The land of Cecubo (Cecubum Ager), Jean-Benjamin de La Borde, 1786*



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# MAMMOLO

## The fragrant grape that tells the story of Lazio

**Mammolo is a red grape variety native to Lazio, renowned for its distinctive aroma that strongly recalls the violet flower (mammola), from which it takes its name. It is a variety rooted in the hilly landscape of the region, particularly in the volcanic areas of the Castelli Romani, Veliterno, Corano, and the Artena area, where it has been cultivated since the 19th century.**

For a long time, Mammolo played a secondary role, used in small percentages to enrich local wines thanks to its aromatic power and its ability to soften the tannins of more vigorous grapes. It was considered “the grape that perfumes the wine” and was often planted alongside more structured varieties such as Cesanese or Montepulciano, almost like a botanical spice in the vineyard. Although today it is sometimes confused with Tuscan Mammolo, with which it shares some genetic traits, the Lazio Mammolo has over time developed its own identity. The tuff soils and the warmer, drier climate of Lazio give it a sunnier, less austere profile, with early ripening and fairly consistent yields. Its clusters are moderately compact, with small, deep blue berries with thin but resistant skins.

The vine is rustic, well adapted to poor soils, and shows good tolerance to drought. An agronomic curiosity is that, despite being an aromatic variety, Mammolo is not classified as “aromatic” in the technical sense, like Moscato: its aromas derive from glycosidic precursors that are expressed mainly during fermentation. In 19th-century agrarian records, Mammolo is cited among the “gentle and pleasant” grapes grown in the mixed vineyards of the Lazio hills. A document from 1879 preserved at the Royal Agrarian Institute of Portici praised its fragrance and its ability to enhance easy-drinking wines destined for urban consumption.

It was a time when grape varieties were almost never vinified on their own, yet Mammolo already had a clearly recognisable identity. With the advent of industrial viticulture and the standardisation of taste, Mammolo was gradually abandoned.



*“Interior of a tavern in Rome, ai Monti” Bartolomeo Pinelli, 1820*

Only recently have some winemakers rediscovered its value, launching experimental micro-vinifications and seeking to reintroduce it into the catalogues of recommended varieties for viticulture in Lazio.

Another curiosity concerns its name: in the countryside of the Frosinone area, it was sometimes called “violet grape” or “grape of perfume,” and in some places it was even thought to have relaxing properties. Older generations used to say that hanging a few bunches of Mammolo under the porch was enough to perfume the whole house during autumn.

Mammolo is today one of the symbols of the silent, patient viticulture that once characterised the Lazio countryside before modernisation. To recover it means not only to enhance an ancient genetic resource, but also to rediscover a more respectful and identity-driven way of thinking about wine – one made of delicate aromas, layered landscapes, and stories handed down among the vineyard rows.



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Cultural route  
of the Council of Europe  
Itinéraire culturel  
du Conseil de l'Europe



# ITER VITIS - CULTURAL ROUTE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## Vine, wine and cultural landscapes as a shared European heritage

**Iter Vitis is one of the 48 Cultural Routes recognised by the Council of Europe, certified in 2009, which promotes the enhancement of the material and immaterial heritage linked to the cultivation of the vine and the culture of wine. It now brings together 26 countries, with the aim of strengthening collective awareness of Europe's common roots through the study, conservation, and transmission of historic wine-growing landscapes, agronomic knowledge, and oenological traditions.**

From the Azores to the Caucasus mountains, from the Balkans to the Moselle, from Ukraine to Israel and Lebanon, Iter Vitis connects a network of historic wine-growing territories, traditional wineries, archaeological sites, museums, pilgrimage routes, and typical local products. The vine, cultivated for millennia, represents a constituent element of the European rural landscape and a powerful vehicle for local identity, innovation, biodiversity, and sustainability.

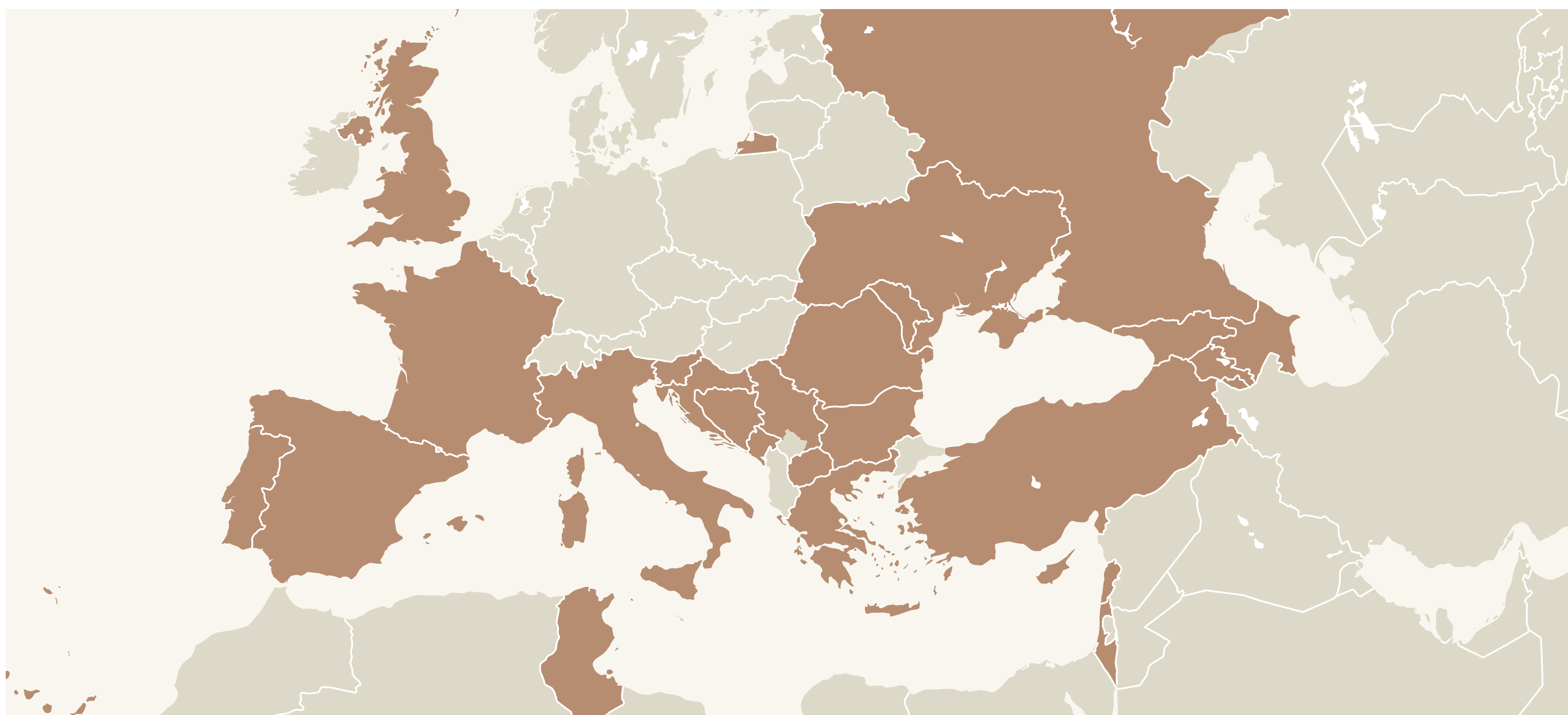
One of the key areas of the work of Iter Vitis work is the promotion of ampelography, the scientific study of grapevine varieties. Ampelographic research makes possible the recognition, classification, and promotion of native genetic heritage, offering new perspectives for the conservation of varietal diversity and the cultural narrative of the territories.

Many local itineraries include setting up ampelographic gardens, germplasm banks, and educational paths for schools and visitors. In addition to its agricultural value, Iter Vitis underlines the cultural and symbolic dimension of wine: a ritual drink, a social element, an object of exchange, and a source of artistic and literary inspiration. The path of wine is also that of the languages, religions, agricultural practices, and forms of conviviality that define Europe.

In the local territories that take part in this project, wine museums, interpretation centres, and historic cellars are an active part of the story being told.



[www.itervitis.eu](http://www.itervitis.eu)



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# SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

**Among the partners that have made the San Sisto vineyard unique is Citiculture, an innovative startup founded in Turin in 2019 with the idea of using the vine as an engine for urban regeneration and the spread of scientific knowledge. Its research combines two complementary approaches: on one hand, in-ground plantings, ideal for historic parks and monumental gardens; on the other, modular vineyards in pots, based on lightweight, perforated containers that allow rows of vines to be set up even on paved surfaces or roofs, without any negative impact on existing structures.**

In both cases, the vine becomes the protagonist of a landscape that combines aesthetics, biodiversity, and agronomic functionality. Citiculture brings with it the fruits of its collaboration with the Polytechnic University of Turin, where a vineyard-laboratory built by the startup integrates climatic sensors, agronomic surveys, and educational paths open to students, demonstrating that urban viticulture can and must engage with the world of research. The experimental data collected in urban vineyards provide valuable insights for urban planning, enabling local administrations and communities to replicate these generative places.

The goal of this approach is clear: to generate tangible, measurable impact, accessible to the public. Each row of vines becomes a tool for climate mitigation, capable of absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>, lowering summer temperatures, and attracting pollinating insects. At the same time, it becomes an open-air laboratory where residents and visitors, experts and the merely curious, can observe natural processes and their impacts on the urban environment up close.

Cutting-edge environmental and agronomic sensors have been installed in this vineyard, powered by an autonomous system with a solar panel, battery, and charge controller.

The devices monitor numerous parameters in real time:

- air temperature and humidity,
- light intensity and wind direction,
- atmospheric pressure,
- the presence of fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10),
- leaf temperature and humidity.

This data provides a living and continuously updated picture of the vineyard's state of health, the interaction between the vine and the urban microclimate, and the environmental benefits generated by this ecosystem in the heart of the city.

