

Propagation of endangered grapevine cultivars: some reasons to recover and protect this patrimony

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Endangered grapevine plants of uncertain origin may represent a target for safeguarding. Current regulations guarantee the propagation of selected plant material following clonal procedures with the aim of excluding the most dangerous plant viruses. Thus, rare grapevine plants that survived the nineteenth-century plagues may be characterized by interesting epigenetic features. Their progeny could take on an important role with regard to today's viticulture: consider how these individuals could represent an important source of genetic material that not only possesses biological, historical, scientific and educational value, but also the qualitative potential to attract interest from the most demanding markets.

Moreover, in recent years, the recovery of ancient grapevines has been reassessed with the use of plants more than a hundred years old to produce new wines, and for which novel characteristics may be described on the label. In this context, in the last few years, intense research has been undertaken to evaluate forgotten plants and as a way to utilize old plantings. The 'Associazione Partriarchi' of Forlì was the first to apply this approach to save a group of ancient vines that had been abandoned for decades. 'Uva Caveccia' and 'Uva Morta' were the vines involved: these very old vines have close ties to the Romagna plain in Italy where they were cultivated in connection with maple or elm, and often with almond, pear or plum. In another case, the trunk of a century-old, white grape vine has surfaced recently near Aosta (Moriondo *et al.*, 2010). Genetic analysis was undertaken to determine its parentage: a descendant of Prié. The historical data, morphological measurements and parentage with Prié lead to the conclusion that the surviving plant belongs to the Blanc Commun variety. These are not singular examples of the use of old vines from the pre-*phylloxera* period. For instance, there has been interest in Valdobbiadene toward 100-150 year old plants located on steeper slopes between Farra di Soligo and Valdobbiadene. The Senarum Vine project has made it possible to discover, also in Tuscany, ancient examples of century-old autochthonous/minor vines that have survived, essentially forgotten, up to the current day. Among the identified vines, we can mention 'Gorgottesco', 'Tenerone', 'Salamanna', 'Occhio di Pernice' and 'Rossone'.

In addition, another interesting application for old grapevines may derive from their use as ornamental plants, as suggested by some examples within the monastery of S. Maria Maddalena in Bologna or in the Olivetani cloister of the church of S. Maria in Regola in Imola.

References

MORIONDO G., SANDI R., VOUILLAMOZ J., 2010 - *Identificazione del Neret di Saint-Vincent, antico vitigno valdostano*. - L'Informatore Agricolo, 5.