



CONTE ZARDI

IL SAPIENTE
Sangiovese
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Sangiovese

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The diffusion of viticulture in Romagna can certainly be traced back to the **Roman era** when, after the foundation of the *Forum Cornelii* (today's Imola) all the surrounding territories were destined for agriculture. In addition to the production of foodstuffs necessary to sustain the population of the new urban centre, **wine production occupied a position of absolute importance** because, as well as trying to extend the consumption of wine to the most humble of the urban social classes and even to slaves, **the drink also found other uses in daily life** in the form of painkiller and disinfect-

ant as well as, naturally, an offering pleasing to the gods. In this context a production of wine was developed that was orientated more to great quantity than to great quality, with yields reaching almost 30,000 litres per hectare.

Following a period of crisis, during which it was replaced with substitutes of the most varied order, in the **Middle Ages** wine quickly became popular again - and regained its popularity as the common drink in the daily life of the rural population - thanks mainly to its liturgical significance. After all, it is to



the early-medieval ecclesiastical hierarchies - which in Romagna exercised significant power – that we attribute a valuable contribution to the conservation and propagation of viticulture: there were numerous incentives to extend the vineyards in the reclaimed areas, and even taxes could be lightened for wine makers and cultivators of vineyards. A Bolognese statutory provision of 1259 even introduced the **obligation to guarantee the presence of two *tornatura* of vineyard** (about 2/5 hectares) supported by at least ten fruit trees in each agricultural estate.

Although not with the same intensity of the Early Middle Ages, wine in Romagna continued, over the centuries, to play an absolutely leading role within rural everyday life, being used as much by the monks providing hospitality for pilgrims as by local lordships as an important source of income, but **also playing a leading role in the popular symbolic system, in permanent balance between the sacred and the pagan sphere.**

An example are the so-called “*sagre*”, popular festivals originally celebrated in front of the Churches (hence the term “*sagrato*” for churchyard) that celebrated, at more or less regular intervals, communion between men and the sacred, but also to celebrate a harvest or promote a local product. On such occasions the **eno-gastronomic dimension played a leading role** and wine in particu-

lar was a **fundamental part of the celebration.**

Even today, firmly entrenched in the cultural baggage of the populations of each specific region, can be found customs and symbols that testify to these ancient traditions. Romagna, a region with an identity strongly, and equally proudly, preserved and handed down, is certainly no exception. **It thus continues to give wine a pivotal role within its own symbolic apparatus.**

If Romagna, therefore, represents an area whose geographical boundaries have been debated for centuries without ever arriving at a unanimous definition, it nevertheless finds a common thread in its history and in the character of its people. The historian **Lu-
cio Gambi** wrote that “*romagnolity is primarily a state of mind, an island of feeling, a way of seeing and behaving*”, **to be defined not with physical or administrative limits but rather through human behaviour**, such as an area in which, asking for a drink, the spontaneous offer is wine and not water.





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