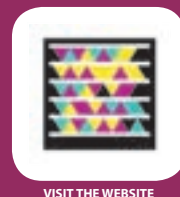


MONTALBANO'S OIL AND WINE

One could say that oil is the true gold of Montalbano. No small feat, but, as seen from the etymology of place-names like Larciano and Cecina, people have probably worked this land since Etruscan times, using its oil for alimentary as well as other purposes. For example, it must have been used in *farrago*, a typical dish of vegetables and cereals from which our adjective *farraginoso*, or farraginous, is derived. Under the Lorraine grand duchy, and especially under a ruler imbued with physiocratic ideas like Pietro Leopoldo, olive cultivation was encouraged, as recorded in the nineteenth-century "*Storia dell'agricoltura toscana*" ("History of Tuscan Agriculture") and today is promoted at a European Community level.

And of course, Montalbano's other well-known product is its prestigious wine, which appears not only in ancient treatises on agriculture, but also in literature, as in the Francesco Redi's delightful dithyramb, "Bacchus in Tuscany", some verses of which mention this very wine from these hills: "*Del buon Chianti il Vin decrepito / Maestoso / Imperioso / Mi passeggia dentro il core, / E ne scaccia senza strepito / Ogni affanno e ogni dolore*" [but] "*È bruttissimo peccato, / Bever il Carmignan quando è innacquato*" [because] "*Chi l'acqua beve / Mai non riceve / Grazie da me*", ("Like a king, / In his conquering, / Chianti wine with his red flag goes / Down to my heart, and down to my toes... [but] For mighty folly it were, and a sin, / To drink Carmignan, with water in..." [because] "...He who drinks water, / I wish to observe / Gets nothing from me". From the 1825 English translation by Leigh Hunt).

The so-called Mediterranean triad (bread, oil, wine) is today recognized as a model of healthy and tasty cooking: a not unimportant element of Montalbano's tourism policy, which feeds tens of thousands of visitors annually.



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ITINERARIES OF ART AND HISTORY

QUARRATA, FROM AN ANCIENT VILLAGE TO AN INDUSTRIAL CITY



**AGENZIA
PER IL TURISMO**
ABETONE PISTOIA
MONTAGNA P.S.E



Intervento realizzato all'interno delle azioni previste dal progetto interregionale (L.135/2001 art. 5) "Valorizzazione comprensorio sciistico tosco emiliano" cofinanziato da Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per lo sviluppo e la competitività del turismo - e dalla Regione Toscana

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**QUARRATA,
FROM AN ANCIENT
VILLAGE
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CITY**

According to the most likely interpretation, the name Quarrata could refer either to a square block of land used in the area's Roman centuriation or to a station along the road system whose main axis was the Via Cassia. After the classical age, this system, which served the settlements of the centuriation itself, declined as a result of the repeated flooding of the water system thus requiring in fact extensive public works during the Communal period. Otto III's famous diploma of 998 recalls the parish church of Quarrata as being part of the Diocese of Pistoia; other documents from nearly a century later tell us that there was a hospice for travelers near it. The claims of local feudal lords extended also into the Quarrata area, one which provided the Church in Pistoia with a good income. Testament to this is a protest document – issued in 1132 under the name of "memoriale di Ildede-



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brando" – with which the old Bishop (who died the following year) raised his voice against the "terrible men" who wanted to "steal" the ecclesiastical holdings.

The fact is that, at the height of Pistoia's Communal era, the Quarrata area was demographically very rich. *The Liber focorum*, a 1244 register of households surveyed for tax purposes, tells us that there were 775 families, with a population of just under 4,000 individuals in the large area consisting of the area's four

main districts: Quarrata, Vignola, Tizzana, and Montemagno. If the entire territory of Pistoia was estimated at 34,000 residents, the economic and demographic importance of Quarrata is easily grasped. Why were not all of its "fuochi", or families able to pay their taxes, but the number of *pauperes* was reduced / low.

Since that time and through the modern and contemporary eras, Quarrata continued to maintain its agricultural nature for a long time with the valuable products coming from the plain and Montalbano. The harsh conditions of the settlements, burdened by sharecropping agreements, experienced substantial improvement with the creation and development of the *Casse Rurali*, rural banks for cooperative credit. The first *cassa rurale* (1901) was created in Ferruccia, thanks to Father Orazio Ceccarelli's enterprise; three years later, his example was followed by Father Ceccarelli's follower and emulator, Father Dario Flori, who set up the "small bank" of Vignole. The cooperative actions brought relief in terms of personal loans to the colonies, which

until then had been fleeced by usurious interest rates. These rural banks provided the means necessary, through the acquisition of production and processing machinery and equipment as well as insurance against fire, hail, livestock disease, to achieve modern economic growth. After the Fascist repression, the rural banks welcomed craftsmen in the post-war period, thereby becoming *Casse Rurali ed Artigiane*. The resultant growth soon led Quarrata to take the lead in furniture manufacture and sales, becoming a center that attracts business from the province and beyond. The road leading to the city of Quarrata – acquiring that title in 1969 – is now dotted by furniture showrooms.

