



Etruscan grape seeds shed light on pre-Chianti era

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Grape seeds found in the depths of Etruscan wells in the woodlands of [Badia a Coltibuono](#) have been described as “reshaping the history of viticulture in the Chianti area”, according to the estate. The seeds, which were unearthed at the Etruscan-Roman archaeological site of Cetamura in the municipality of Gaiole, were discovered by archeologists from Florida State University between 2012 and 2016 and have pushed documented evidence of wine grape cultivation here back to at least the third century BCE.

Moreover, recent genetic analysis of the seeds, conducted by the University of York with the support of the Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico, has revealed that both during the Etruscan period and the later Roman era, the same predominant white variety was widely cultivated and used for winemaking in what is now the red-dominated Chianti region.

The evidence suggests that while some red varieties were grown, whites were by far in the majority, with further findings confirming such practices as vegetative propagation – the reproductive cuttings technique still employed today – revealing that the Etruscans had “advanced viticultural knowledge” as far back as 2,300 years ago.

The belief is that the grapes were most likely deposited in the wells as part of some votive ritual. The Stucchi Prinetti Family, which owns Badia a Coltibuono estate and its woodlands, and which has been an ardent supporter of the long-term excavations at the site, emphasised in a statement the “importance of findings that link the estate’s history to the earliest roots of Chianti viticulture”.

Ongoing research is now looking to discover whether there is a genetic relationship between those Etruscan seeds and grape varieties still used today.

Badia a Coltibuono has also said that it could look to bring back cultivation of the grapevines that grew back in the Etruscan era, long before Sangiovese came to define the wines of what has much more latterly become the Chianti Classico DOCG.

“It would offer an opportunity to restore a part of Chianti’s deepest identity, transforming an extraordinary archaeological discovery into a tangible viticultural renaissance,” said Andrea Cabib, CEO of Badia a Coltibuono.

“In this endeavor, Badia a Coltibuono would not merely serve as the custodian of the memory of these lands, but as a leading force in shaping their future.”