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The Venditti Goatee Man and his Barbera-Barbetta Confusion

There's some confusion about the variety Barbetta-Barbera from Venditti and I wanted to give the proper details. A hearty thanks to the reps who pushed me to flesh out this story a bit. I just got off the horn with Nicola Venditti and it's a fun little anthropological and enological story to spin:

Around the second half of last century, there came such nasty little creatures as *Oidium* (Powdery Mildew), *Peronospera* (Downy Mildew), and the friend of American rootstock, *Phylloxera*.

In those drab times for the native Italian grapes, the government issued a decree, along with some new techniques (e.g. American rootstock), to save the vines. Almost right away, experimental fields were created; one of which was in the valley of Telesina, province of Benevento, around the town of Benevento (where Venditti has vineyards). And, low and behold, one of these rescued varieties got pretty famous for its quality and special character. The variety made a wine that had farmer-conoscenti and others with wide smiles.



They initially called it, **Uva di Barbetta**, because of one of the Venditti ancestors **used to sport a barbetta, or, goatee** (v. illustration and add smile). I don't know about you, but I can't think of another grape named for a person instead of morphological or geographical detail.

Then, came the old one-two punch of syncopation: **Uva di barbetta** got shortened to **uva Barbetta**, then shortened again – confusingly and conveniently-- to **Barbera**.

Conveniently indeed, because in the 50's and 60's Barbera was the cash-crop-grape of choice. By the 70's in Campania there were heaps of national Barbera planted with less than stellar results.

So, even if many began with the real **Barbera-Barbetta**, only Venditti decided to stay the course and not plant the national Barbera. His vines of Barbera-Barbetta went from the experimental fields to the actual vineyard plantings of Venditti in 1968.

Right now the Barbetta is a DOC with the C of Copyrighted instead of a C of Controllata; admittedly, an invented, and terribly confusing, designation given by Nicola Venditti. I'll add there's also the C for Certified Organic (in efforts to be confusingly Italian in my logic).

CAMPANIA



Barbera-Barbetta: a spicy, floral Campanian red for goatee and non-goatee drinkers alike. And, not to fall into the regional-pairing clichè, but it really goes well the sweet and sour dishes one finds there.

Buon vino e Buon lavoro!

Ernest.