**Olive groves in Veneto, Northern Italy? A story that can be heard throughout the centuries.**

*Il Mercante d’Olio's olive groves are located between the villages of Anzano and Montaner.*

*Nearly three hectares of land have been converted for olive farming for the production of oil in a completely natural manner. With his ‘il Mercante d’Olio’ olive farm, businessman Moreno Barel has restored olive growing to a land that had been home to olive groves for centuries. It’s a story that promises a future while reflecting the past.*

Once upon a time, Olive trees grew on the land now home to Prosecco. While that may sound like the beginning of a fairy tale, it’s nothing but an almost forgotten truth, and these hills (some of which are now UNESCO sites) have a lot more stories to tell than we are used to hearing.

In this area, olive growing is a tradition so deeply rooted in the culture of the land, reaching back as far as Roman times, that it has even left its mark in the names of local places. For example, Ogliano, near Conegliano, was named for the olive trees that once grew there. Sadly, the grey-blue expanses that once stretched between Conegliano and Vittorio Veneto have suffered tremendous damage over the centuries as a result of years of a changing environmental landscape. Unprecedented frosts and other factors slowly killed the once widespread olive groves, resulting in their gradual disappearance from the face of the region.

As a result, agriculture took on a new direction, transforming the appearance of these hills. Yet old traditions die hard, and in recent years, things have taken yet another turn thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of the people determined to bring back a centuries-old tradition to the hills where it once flourished.

Thus new olive groves were planted in the Vittorio Veneto area, particularly in the villages of Anzano and Montaner (in the towns of Cappella Maggiore and Sarmede). A new generation of oil will be produced on these plots, bearing the evocative name *Il Mercante d’Olio* (The Oil Merchant): a name which harks back to ancient Venetian merchants and their endless spirit of discovery and adventure. Growing a typically Mediterranean plant in Northern Italy is indeed a challenge that Moreno Barel, the man behind *Il Mercante d’Olio*, has taken on. The varieties of olives chosen for these lands are Frantoio, Leccino, Pendolino and Coratina. Olives grown in these soils yield a unique oil that is markedly different from that produced from the same olives grown in other parts of Italy, and when stored properly, this extra virgin olive oil perfectly retains its extraordinary, world-famous taste.

The product is as unique as the approach to olive farming: no pesticides are used, but instead a mixture of essential oils and 100% natural products. This is a path less travelled, winding among vineyards that are often in the limelight due to the widespread use of chemicals that ensure abundant production every year. From the first harvests, this commitment has proved effective and may indeed pave the way for a new trend that focuses on sustainability; not just in the olive growing business but also in other types of agriculture.

With *Il Mercante d'Olio,* Moreno Barel is bringing a centuries-old tradition back to the Vittorio Veneto land, reviving biodiversity and giving the land a new lease of life.

*MDO®*

*Via Rive di Anzano, 10 · 31012*

*Cappella Maggiore (TV)· Italy*

*All the olive trees grow on the hills between Anzano and Montaner in the heart of Veneto, a region in Northern Italy, and are treated exclusively with a mix of essential oils and natural products.*

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