

# THE FAIRYTALE OF SANFORTE FROM BORGO PRUNATELLI

*“The story of Sanforte from Borgo Prunatelli reads almost like a fairytale.*

*It all began on August 8th, 2002, just two days after an unprecedented meteorological event struck the area of Pontassieve, Rufina, and part of the Val di Sieve. On August 6th, a violent tornado—something unheard of in living memory—devastated vineyards and countryside alike, making national news.*

*In the aftermath of this catastrophe, Roberto Bandinelli, an ampelographer from the University of Florence, arrived to begin what would become a long scientific collaboration. This partnership was formalized through a research agreement titled “Recovery, Conservation and Valorization of Viticultural Germplasm in the Chianti Rufina Territory.”*

*On that August morning, the research team—Roberto Bandinelli, researcher Elisa Masi, Luca Rossi, Giannino Norcini, and the author—walked among the olive trees and old vines near the hamlet of Prunatelli. Giannino Norcini, who had cared for these lands for over forty years, stopped in front of a very old vine and confidently identified it as Sangiovese Forte. Bandinelli tagged it as Sangiovese Forte Prunatelli 1.*

*Roberto described this vine in precise ampelographic terms: leaves resembling Sangiovese more than the Lamole type, pointed buds, hazelnut-colored shoots, short internodes, and a very compact, uneven bunch. This vine became number one of a research project that, over more than ten years, would catalog 410 vines across the Chianti Rufina area.*

*That same day, the team identified 19 particularly interesting vines at Prunatelli, including two more Sangiovese Forte plants (Prunatelli 2 and 3). Later, in Vetrice, two additional Sangiovese Forte vines were found—one similar to the Lamole type, the other exceptionally productive despite hurricane damage.*

*Over a decade of field research, 16 Sangiovese Forte vines were identified in total within the Val di Sieve.*

*Historical sources added depth to the discovery. In 1965, Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry published “Principali Vitigni da Vino coltivati in Italia,” in which Breviglieri and Casini classified Sangiovese Forte as a biotype of Sangiovese. Modern genetic research has since proven this incorrect: Sanforte is neither a Sangiovese biotype nor related to it at all, but a distinct and independent grape variety.*

*The variability observed among the vines, combined with historical references, led to the conviction that Sanforte is indigenous to the Val di Sieve, and possibly originated there. This belief gave rise to a dream: one day creating a new denomination—Sanforte di Rufina.*

*Historical texts also linked Sangiovese Forte to the evocative name Ingannacane (“the deceiver”), referring to grapes that appear fully ripe while retaining remarkably high acidity.*

*Inspired by this discovery, in September 2002 the team carried out a micro-vinification using grapes from just five identified vines. Only 10 liters of wine were produced—fragrant and pleasant—during what was otherwise the worst vintage imaginable due to excessive rain and the tornado. This modest experiment is considered the first vintage of Sanforte.*

*Genetic analysis later confirmed Sanforte’s uniqueness, leading to its official recognition. On September 19th, 2007, the variety was entered into the National Register of Grape Varieties under the name Sanforte.*

*As part of the collaboration with the University of Florence, a Vitiarium (collection vineyard) was established, planting four vines from each identified mother plant. These were later used to create new vineyards, including half a hectare of Canaiolo Bianco and 6,700 square meters of Sanforte. After the experimental 2002 vintage, Sanforte was vinified again in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024, and 2025. Due to extremely low yields in the earlier years, the 2024 vintage is the one currently presented.*

*Today, the Sanforte vineyard is certified organic, and since 2024 it has also embraced electroculture—but that, as the story goes, is another tale... perhaps another fairytale.*

*Good night 🌙“*

