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Candongga Strawberries

Fragaria vesca L.



Beautifully formed in a passion-filled red, with an explosion of fragrance and flavor. These unique qualities have led to Candongga strawberries being dubbed “red gold”. Thanks to a mild climate and painstaking work on reclaimed land, the strawberries are produced for six months a year in the Metaponto area. Packaged in the fields into attractive baskets and loaded onto lorries, the strawberries head off to the fruit and vegetable markets to tempt and delight Italian and European customers carefully selected by Club Candongga, and the entire supply chain is regulated because protecting the red gold is paramount.

Shape and Color

Famous for their elegantly even, elongated conical shape, Candongga strawberries are equally renowned for their bright red color and tiny seeds, known as achenes, on the outside of the fruit. The flesh is firm and crunchy with a sweet yet aromatic flavor.

Growing season

With the highest production levels in Italy, Candongga strawberries are easily found in stores for an entire six-month period from January to June. They are also less susceptible to spoilage than other strawberries, so they have a better shelf-life and retain their original organoleptic properties longer.

Properties

Few foods manage to combine such an irresistible flavor with so many health benefits. Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C, folic acid, potassium, fiber, polyphenols and flavonoids, yet low in sugar. They also stimulate the production of serotonin and melatonin.

Fun Facts

Strawberries belong to the rose family and are known as a “false fruit”. The achenes are actually the real fruit, while the red, fleshy part is the inflorescence. According to mythology, the tears shed by Venus over the death of Adonis fell to earth and turned into strawberries.





Carmela Suriano

(Red) Gold Fever

The Metaponto Plain is a strip of land overlooking the Ionian Sea in what was once the heart of Magna Graecia. The area has such a rich, fertile soil that it is known as the California of Italy and is perfect for growing strawberries: the red gold which has made the region famous the world over.

Carmela Suriano works in the modern offices of the **Suriano & Casalnuovo Farm**. After moving to Spain as a young girl, Carmela became involved with the experiments conducted by a private farm on fresh strawberry plants, which were unknown

in Italy at that time. **Carmela immediately realized that this innovation could reduce the costs of managing strawberry beds, bring forward production and avoid the costs and time involved with refrigerating plants.**

«The plants in Spain continued to bear fruit for six months», remembers Carmela. *«Whereas those that were refrigerated, as we were doing in Italy, only allowed for a yield over a maximum of forty-five days.»* **So, the Suriano farm became the first in Italy to import fresh strawberry plants.**

«Against all odds», emphasizes the businesswoman. The sector underwent a real revolution. So much so that now 98% of strawberries came from these plants. **A resounding success and an excellent example of how you can encourage and then implement change.** With truly outstanding results.

Carmela Suriano set up **Club Candonga®** and became its president in 2013.

With a select number of top growers, the club helps to protect their profits and safeguard

the right to keep investing in innovation.

«Candonga is the trade name for the Sabrosa cultivar», explains Carmela Suriano. «These are the strawberries that our area has transformed into a product of excellence, which is now recognized by every market. Designed to promote the strawberries and maximize the production process, our Club allows us to market and sell the strawberries directly to customers. **This means that the growers receive a fair economic return for all their hard work.**»

«These are the strawberries that our area has transformed into a product of excellence.»

Carmela Suriano



«What makes me most proud is that we started from nothing.»

Aldo De Pascalis

Twenty-two farms are now members of Club Candonga®. **BASF helps to make this entrepreneurial enterprise a success by providing qualified people and products.** It shares its experience and expertise and offers sustainable agrochemical solutions as well as study trips, seminars, and meetings all aimed at promoting “Made in Basilicata” products of excellence.

Managed by brothers Aldo and Giuseppe, the **De Pascalis Farm** is one of the Club Candonga® “magnificent 22”.

In a little over twenty years, the De Pascalis family have advanced from just growing strawberries to marketing their product as well.

«We don't have bank holidays or Sundays off here,» says Aldo, «We work 365 days a year.

What makes me most proud is that we started from nothing and have managed to build a farm that works really well.»

Meanwhile, they are picking, selecting, and packaging the red gold in the family's fields. Every step is done by hand by expert pickers. Only women do this job as the delicate fruit needs to be picked carefully and with skill. Resisting the temptation to try the strawberries is impossible; it's also difficult not to stare: **the strawberries are gorgeous, glossy, and fabulously fresh. The flavor is rich and strong, while their fragrance envelops you with its heady scent. «Our land is reclaimed so it is perfect for growing Candonga Fragola Top Quality®, while the mild climate takes care of the rest,»** Giuseppe explains.



The women work feverishly, indifferent to the constant buzzing in the background. The buzzing comes from the “bombs”: insects live in the cardboard hives, spread out along the rows and are friends to the strawberries and pollinate the flowers. This ensures that production is consistent and the fruit is of the best possible quality. **Intensive farming and nature go hand in hand here, with a mutual respect that maintains a seemingly extraordinary balance.**

Fe.Vi Frutta is another important farm in the agribusiness of the Metaponto area. One of the owners is **Antonio Ferrara** who is also the Vice-President of Club Candonga® and has dark, gleaming eyes sparking with passion when he discusses his work. In addition to the strawberries,

Antonio grows and markets peaches, apricots, and a range of vegetables.

Antonio markets fruit and vegetables from the farms of many other small growers as well. **«Everything that you see here is the fruit of our hard work,»** Antonio tells us. *«We did it all on our own without any help or funding.»*

The Candonga strawberries also play a key role in the business of the Fe.Vi Frutta farm. Production has increased exponentially over the past five years, almost monopolizing the market and **«providing a substantial contribution to the GDP of the Basilicata Region.»**

The key customers are primarily in the fruit and vegetable markets. *«The foreign market, particularly Germany, is very strong»* says Antonio.



«The future should be built together with industry.»

Retailer

Agrochemical distributors in Basilicata are real goldmines of information and invaluable partners for the farmers.

Here in Basilicata everyone agrees how innovation has contributed significantly to defining the face of modern farming. «Our job is to always give our clients something extra» they say.

«Supported by companies like BASF, we need to take innovation out into the fields.

The more high-value information we manage to convey to farmers, the faster and more efficient their growth will be. **The future should be built together with industry using shared know-how and expertise.»**



On the right: Antonio Ferrara



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