

Lumière du Jour presents

VITIS PROHIBITA

a film by **STÉPHAN BALAY**



**RESISTANT GRAPES
COMING OUT
OF THE SHADOWS**

www.vitis-prohibita.com

SYNOPSIS

This is the incredible true story of six “innocent” grape varieties that were deemed outlaws by the French government. Their grapes were falsely accused of being toxic when made into wine. Selling their wine was prohibited.

Their crime? They were grapes of resistance. Resistance to pests and diseases that, for more “noble” grapes, must be controlled with chemical sprays.

In spite of laws specifically banning these grapes from European soils and attempts to demean their wines, rebellious farmers have defended their value and defied their prohibition.

Resistant grape varieties may yet have the last word.

This film takes you inside stunning rural landscapes in France, Italy, Austria, Romania and the United States where the resistant vines are living history and their unique wines have a passionate following.



Gilbert Bischeri
association Fruits Oubliés Réseau
Cevennes - France



AUTHOR'S NOTE

« In recent years clandestine sales of unauthorized wines have tended to disappear, becoming instead, open declarations of independence: protesting formulaic norms for personal taste, demanding farming that is respectful of the environment, and insisting on removing a prohibition founded on baseless, unjust and obsolete laws.

In this film, I wanted to give voice to the elders who have maintained the tradition of making wine from their outlaw family vines; to young people with a clear vision of the potential future for the varieties in the marketplace; and to the activists who champion these historically maligned grapes and their wines ».

Stéphane Balay



Lucie Morton
viticultrice
USA

NEW GRAPE VARIETIES FOR A VITICULTURE WITHOUT PESTICIDES

Aware of the limits of traditional organic farming, winegrowers are choosing another approach: replacing traditional varieties with new ones.

These new grape varieties are multi-species, the result of many crosses between European and rustic American vines. They are naturally resistant to powdery and downy mildews.

Vineyards with these new varieties will need very few or no fungicide treatments.

Meet here the winemakers already using these grapes. Hear the excitement of young winemakers about varieties new to the vineyards of Europe.



Vincent Pugibet
Domaine La Colombette
association Piwi France



WINEGROWERS RENEWED QUEST FOR RESISTANCE AND EXCELLENCE

The renewed interest in breeding for new sustainable varieties that make enjoyable wines has at its roots an intermingling of vines originating from different continents (Asia, North American, Europe) and from genetically distinct ethnicities (*V.amurensis*, *V.aestivalis*, *V.sylvestris*).

Thus celebrated European grapes like Chardonnay and Cabernet franc combine with complex French-American crosses from the past or with Asian *Vitis* from the Amur Valley in Russia and China.

These entirely new grapes being created around the world now present new opportunities for future winemakers.



Pierre Galet
ampelographer
France

REPRESSION IN EUROPE, FREEDOM IN THE US

Although the European Union prohibits the culture of resistant Euro-American grapes in all member countries, rebellious wine growers continue to find ways to make and distribute their wines. An example is the Clinton grape that crossed the Atlantic in the 19th century and spread across Europe only to be banned 1934. Here we visit Clinton growers in Italy's region of Treviso where it is officially taboo.

To conform with the rules of the EU, Romanian grape growers are being forced to destroy their resistant grape varieties. In addition to being ecologically unwise, this has caused tremendous socio-economic hardship to farmers.

Austrian producers have banded together to win a partial victory to produce their very popular Uhdler wines made with forbidden fruit!

We visited the US where east of the Rocky Mountains there are many thousands of hectares of resistant vines producing many millions of dollars worth of grape juice and wine each vintage.



«This is a movie that starts from a very small corner of the Cevennes in France and takes us to the United States to learn with precision, detail and intelligence, what is a resistant grape and a hybrid or multi-species vine, but also what is an act of resistance, an act of responsibility, an act of freedom, an act of love for wine. Here is a film that made us laugh and moved us, and which, while telling us about the past and the present, is talking mostly about the future.»

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