

THE HISTORY OF PRUNES IN ITALY

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Even if Italy is the major fruit producer in Europe, dried prunes were never produced in large quantities.

Besides small family productions in several areas of the country, the only real production known since last century, was the prune of Drò, a small village in the Trento region where they dried a small local plum that is still cultivated. They would dry the plums in the sun in the bread ovens.

The cultivation and the drying industry was introduced in Italy in the middle sixties by Mr. LEVI and Mr. MORATELLO that promoted Cooperativa Modenese Essiccazione Frutta in Modena and Cooperativa VE.BA, in Ferrara.

The varieties cultivated since the beginning were the Agen prune imported from France, and the Stanley prune, that was already cultivated in Italy for fresh consumption.

In the early seventies 3 more Cooperatives started drying prunes but after a few years they closed.

Another Cooperative in the Trento region started drying, in small quantities, the old Drò prunes that still are existing in that area.

In more recent years some large farms in Tuscany, members of Cooperativa Modenese Essiccazione Frutta, built some drying plants. Finally since 1990 a large farm in the Sardinia island planted 180 hectares of Agen prunes using varieties and know how imported from the near Corsica island.

The total estimated area of prunes in Italy is of 450 hectares of which only 190 in full productions and 260 of young trees. Consequently the dried prune production should rapidly increase from today 1.000 tons to 2.500 tons in the next 4 or 5 years.