

“FROM WASTE TO TASTE”: Exploring The Cultural Significance of Grapevine Leaves in Reggio Emilia to Foster Sustainability and Cultural Understanding

Fatimah Ali Alyami, PhD fellow at UniMoRe, Reggio Emilia,
fatimahali2881@gmail.com

Rosa Buonanno, PhD fellow UniMoRe, Reggio Emilia,
rosa.buonanno@unimore.it

Reggio Emilia, Italy, has a rich history of wine production dating back to the 15th century. However, the global wine industry discards around 42 million tonnes of grapevine cuttings each year by burying or burning them on farms, leading to wasteful practices (Ellis, 2020). This inspired two PhD students with diverse backgrounds to raise awareness of the cultural significance of grapevine leaves in various communities in Reggio Emilia. They argue that grapevine leaves are not only a byproduct of winemaking but also an essential ingredient in many cultures, including immigrant communities, and how this practice aligns with food sustainability and cultural identity. The study draws on the Reggio Emilia Approach to food education, which highlights the importance of food as a medium for learning and explores the power of dialogue and negotiation in constructing meaning. Mealtimes, according to educators in Reggio Emilia, are moments for socializing, expressing cultural identities, and learning new skills and knowledge ((Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998; Rinaldi, 2005) The researchers used autoethnography to demonstrate how grape leaves are used and their cultural significance in different contexts. They interviewed local farmers and communities and held workshops on making Dolma, a dish enjoyed by many nationalities, using grapevine leaves (Dogan et al., 2017). The study emphasizes the power of dialogue and negotiation in constructing meaning and recognizes the interconnectedness between plants and humans in our food experiences and cultural understanding. The findings have significant implications for food education, sustainable practices, and cultural significance in Reggio Emilia and other communities globally (Ozturk, 2022), highlighting the importance of collaboration between individuals from diverse backgrounds in promoting sustainable practices and fostering cultural understanding.

Keywords:

Grapevine leaves, Reggio Emilia approach, cultural significance, food sustainability, collaborative practices, autoethnography.

References

Dogan, Y., Nedelcheva, A., & Pieroni, A.

2017 *The diversity of plants used for the traditional dish sarma in Turkey: Nature, garden and traditional cuisine in the modern era. Emirates Journal of Food and Agriculture*, 429-440.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (Eds.).

2011 *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation, 3rd Edition*. 114-115.

Ozturk, N., Demir, M., & Yavuz, M.

2020 *The importance of cultural significance in social studies education. Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 11(1), 134-155.

Rinaldi, C. (2005). *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, Researching and Learning. London: Routledge. 125-126*

Wong, M. C., Hendrikse, S. I., Sherrell, P. C., & Ellis, A. V.

2020 *Grapevine waste in sustainable hybrid particleboard production. Waste Management*, 118, 501-509.