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Aspergillus ibericus: a new species of the section Nigri isolated from grapes

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As part of a study on the ochratoxin producing mycoflora of grapes, several *Aspergillus* strains were isolated and tested for their ochratoxin A (OTA) producing abilities. *Aspergillus* strains of the section Nigri which did not produce detectable amounts of OTA but which had a similar morphology to *A. carbonarius* were isolated from wine grapes and/or dried vine fruit in Portugal and Spain.

These strains, however, have characters that allow morphological distinction from the other species in the section, particularly the spore size (5 – 7 µm), which allows separation of the species from the two most common biseriate species in section Nigri: *A. carbonarius* (7 – 9 µm) and *A. niger* and its aggregate species (3 – 5 µm). The strains are described here as belonging to a new species, named *A. ibericus*.

The validation of this new taxon is further supported by analysis of the ITS-5.8S rDNA and calmodulin gene sequences and by analysis of the amplified fragment length polymorphism (AFLP) patterns, which were consistent in separating these strains from other species in the section. As the *A. ibericus* sp. nov. strains do not produce OTA, they are interesting for biotechnological exploration as many metabolites with commercial value are produced by other species in the section.

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