

CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
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L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

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WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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EDITOR IN CHIEF
GIOVANNI BALLARINI

COPY EDITOR
SILVIA DE LORENZO

LAYOUT
SIMONA MONGIU

TRASLATOR
NICOLA LEA FURLAN

THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY
Giovanni Ballarini,
Adriana Liguori Proto,
Gianandrea Paladini,
Renzo Pellati,
Paolo Petroni,
Tito Trombacco.



PUBLISHER
ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
VIA NAPO TORRIANI 31 - 20124 MILANO
TEL. 02 66987018 - FAX 02 66987008
presidente@accademia1953.it
segreteria@accademia1953.it
redazione@accademia1953.it
www.accademia1953.it



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On the cover: *At Breakfast*, by Laurits Andersen Ring (1854-1933) on display at the National Museum of Art, Copenhagen, Denmark.



Collecting, creating and using recipes

Italians love to collect recipes. Talking about recipes goes beyond narrow nutritional confines and settles into our subconscious.

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI
President of the Academy

Dear Academicians, recipes continue to elicit a great deal of interest, not only as historical documents but also as a safe harbor for our cuisine. And also as an opportunity to imagine, and dream about cuisines, environments and places associated with a past from which we increasingly feel distant, if not altogether absent.

This complex of sensations becomes especially strong when it regards foods, places and times (always fewer and fewer) that we fear are vanishing forever. Recipes are not only an aid in the preparation of food, but also an evocation that stimulates our memories and becomes food for the soul. This is especially the case when, as happens more and more often, speaking of food and cuisine maintains an identity and reveals subconscious memories of people and places, espe-

cially of the family. Recipes were an important, if not fundamental part of an image of the family and belonging to a local society that is now at risk of becoming blurred, if not disappearing altogether. As such, they should be recovered and preserved for their social as well as general cultural value.

The cultural role of recipes is more important today than ever before. They are custodians of tradition, even though it has correctly been said that everything can be found in a recipe, but it always lacks the essential quality: interpretation.

Cuisine is like music. There is always room for improvisation, but it must be based on, or have, knowledge as its point of departure. That is why music requires a score to be interpreted by the artist. Recipes are the musical scores of cuisine.

We are often reminded that the real recipes, like real stories, are those of our mothers, or of the town's elders, while all others are spurious, if not illegitimate. Not only is this true for strictly gastronomic aspects, but also the human ones of a personal and familial identity, whose importance we become aware of only when we are at risk of losing it.

Therefore there cannot be any stories of peoples' lives, or biographies that at some subconscious level do not take food - whether its preparation or description - into consideration, with all the subtleties of recollection. Not only the descriptive words, but also the odors and aromas, visual aspects, tastes and sensations that a recipe can

evoke in different people familiar with them. Such memories in turn elicit similar, if not parallel, recollections in others, leading to dialogues on the subject of food that not infrequently can lead to greater interpersonal understanding.

Talking about recipes goes beyond narrow nutritional confines and settles into our subconscious. It is an area that is even more important given how little it has been studied. Even the recipes of the recent past resemble old maps that represent forgotten and even lost landscapes. They can help us relive them in our subconscious and impel us on a voyage of rediscovery to the time and place of their preparation. Sometimes such subconscious memories are the most accurate ones. It is a voyage that is no less vivid emotionally just because it resides in our imaginations. It is one in which we seek and renew the family lifestyles of our grandparents and great-grandparents, whose portraits and relics we sometimes retain but whose lives are difficult to imagine without associating them with the table.

Even in the recollections of our imaginations there is nothing more concrete and evocative than a recipe from the past. We can imagine how these dishes were prepared for holidays or for every day, in one season or another, during a winter in the city or a summer in the countryside.

The evocative and often reassuring symbolic value of a recipe in a time of nutritional insecurity and vanishing



traditions can perhaps explain the avalanche of widely disparate recipes that are presented in books, magazines, newspapers, television programs, the Internet and so on.

How then should we judge these recipes? A large part of them are a reflection of a society based on fleeting images rather than on a lasting reality. Then there are an increasing number (at one time inexistent) of “advertis-

ing recipes” that are aimed at selling a given product. Unclear, untried and erroneous recipes abound, and there are many “garbage recipes” that can be discarded without regrets.

In the midst of this “great sea” of recipes, however, we should all be aware that there is still a need for serious books and magazines with good recipes that prove that Italian cuisine is alive and well and capable of pro-

moting ideas, scenarios and above all values that will last over time. And as in the past, only the best ones will survive. Recipes constitute a cultural domain that is essential to serious and knowledgeable academic research, and therefore not immune to its difficulties. Conducting such research requires wisdom, balance, and above all a critical sense.

GIOVANNI BALLARINI

EXPO 2015 TO REINSTATE LOCAL NUTRITIONAL SYSTEMS

Expo 2015 has the mission of “Feeding the Planet”, a theme that correlates the access to resources, the availability of food for humanity, sustainable production and environmental safeguards. A package of needs that requires profound modifications not only in production, but in consumption and alimentary patterns as well, as Olivier De Schutter pointed out in his address of January 24, 2014 at the Human Rights Council of the United Nations under the title “A Report on the Right to Food”, available on Internet.

According to De Schutter, the Reconstruction of Local Nutritional Systems is of particular interest in sustaining an eco-compatible and sustainable rural development, a reduction of poverty among farmers and a slowing down of migrations from the country to the cities that by 2050 will be populated by more than six billion people.

Local nutritional systems are of vital importance for city dwellers who must be connected with local producers in ways that go beyond the unclear and generic “zero kilometer” concept, and most importantly with their production thereby reducing rural poverty and alimentary insecurity.

By promoting access patterns and direct connections between producers and consumers, small scale agriculture may be strengthened on a small local scale, typical products of the territory may increase their value, dependence on imports may be reduced, while alimentary traditions and those of local cuisine, bound to products of the territory and old traditions may be safeguarded.

The local nutritional systems also reduce energy consumption and the environmental impact of transportation, thus favoring the sustainable value of the global alimentary system and at the same time improving the environmental knowledge of city dwellers.

Local alimentary systems connect the traditional patterns and cuisines that enrich and differentiate Italy insofar as its traditions must be protected by making sure that they improve starting from better knowledge, a principle that our Academy has been upholding from the day of its foundation.

AGREEMENT PROTOCOL BETWEEN THE ACADEMY AND THE AGRICULTURAL CONFEDERATION

The Italian Academy of Cuisine and the Agricultural Confederation (Confagricoltura) have signed a protocol that has a common objective, that of enhancing the Italian traditional gastronomic patrimony in view of Milan’s Universal Exhibition (Expo) in 2015.

The two organizations will collaborate in developing the theme “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” by cooperating toward the success of this great event, both in the preparation phase and during its course.

*The Agricultural Confederation asked the Academy to be its **partner** on account of the Academy’s patrimony of knowledge, studies and professional wealth that underpin the safeguarding of a cultural patrimony such as that of Italian gastronomy with a large variety of regional cuisines and typical productions.*

*The protocol calls for implementing a series of **initiatives** aimed at studying the problems of gastronomy and the civilization of the table.*

The Academy's Year of Rice closes with serious production problems

Lacking a requirement specifying both the product's quality and provenance, Italy is importing a large amount of low cost rice, of all types, that have nothing to do with Italian excellence.

BY PAOLO PETRONI

Secretary General of the Academy

Soon, with our annual Ecumenical Dinner on October 16, the Academy will celebrate the end of our "Year of Rice". Cooking rice is the subject that the "Franco Marenghi" Study Center has explored throughout the year. Unfortunately this event will not coincide with good news on our national production front. As has been noted before, Italian rice, primarily the *japonica* variety, is ideal for making Italian risotto, soups, and desserts. And obviously it is primarily consumed in Italy. Long grain *indica* rice instead, is excellent for the salads and side dishes that are so popular in Italy today. Local producers have adapted and are cultivating, even in Italy, these rices (such as *Basmati*), but it is clear that the majority of the production is in Asia and its importation, (after forgiving the excise taxes) given its low cost from countries like Cambodia and Myanmar has increased by 700%. Which has in turn resulted in the demise of Italian producers.

The serious problem of not requiring the provenance of the rice to appear on the label is sensationally evident. What is more, the name of the variety of the rice is not required either. And this is an even graver problem when you consider the large consumption of instant pre-packaged pre-cooked rice "Milanese" style, with mushrooms, asparagus, etc. and a label that only states: "parboiled rice". We now know that as a result of petitions filed by producers, almost anything can be contained in the package without requiring specific labeling. So far, we have been lucky. Italy is Europe's largest producer of rice, and we have always produced an excellent quality product. There are calls for educating the consumer to choose the correct rice for a given dish, but they have gone unheeded. As usual, the labels protect the producer rather than the consumer.



PS: In the June issue we described how Italian health regulations are in the hands of too many agencies with too little coordination. The end result is a fruitless pursuit for the enforcement of too many contradictory rules. Recently, an editorial of the *National Daily*, signed by the well known economic writer Giuseppe Turani and entitled "The Jungle of Controls", dealt with this subject at a general level. Turani wrote: "One of the mainstays of corruption in Italy is the extraordinary abundance of regulations, people and institutions in charge of controls... just by opening judicial proceedings, a great deal of trouble can be created for persons and firms under scrutiny". A solution will have to be found somehow and at the end, one can bet, the control over health issues will be entrusted to an investigative joint committee that quite possibly may bring about another new Authority.



Getting to know our roots

Notes about the Academy from its origin (part 3)

Continuing our search for the Academy's roots after its foundation in 1953, why do we call it an Academy?

Dino Villani recounts a trip to Suzzara where for the first time Vergani described his idea. The name "club" was quickly dismissed "because in Italy it does not enjoy the prestige that surrounds it in other countries while the term Academy seems too compelling if not hyperbolic". Some time later, however, during a new meeting at Milan's Continental with the industrialist Ernesto Donà dalle Rose, an agreement emerged over that term. Undoubtedly, it was a happy choice insofar as Academy stands for an institution that pursues elevated studies and the enlargement of knowledge at a high level underlying scientific and artistic endeavors, leaving no doubt that cuisine and gastronomy are science and art.

The term "academy" comes from Greece and denotes the philosophic school of Plato that was founded in 387 AD and was situated just outside the city walls of Athens. The name is linked with the hero Academos who had donated to the Athenians a plot of land that became a garden open to the public. This is where Plato wrote his Dialogues and Aristotle came to hear his master.

Due to this origin of the name, the Humanists called academies the insti-

tutions for their new model of culture. From the mid-17th Century onward, many European states established academies based on the Italian model, thus filling an important vacuum in cultural organization. The academies played a decisive role in promoting the birth of experimental science, the study of languages and artistic teaching.

Cuisine and gastronomy are arts as well and Anthèlme Brillat Savarin concocted a tenth muse for them, Gasterea, in his book *The Physiology of Taste* of 1825.

As far as the denomination of academy is concerned, it is interesting to point out that Academos, the mythical hero of Attica, reveals to Castor and Pollux the place (Afidne) where their sister Helen was hidden, after being abducted as a child by Theseus. Helen, the daughter of Zeus, is the symbol of beauty. When Academos makes her discovery possible, the academy that takes its name from him embodies the place devoted to the discovery of beauty in all human activities, among them those involved in cuisine and gastronomy.

In sum, Academy is a lofty definition that must be safeguarded and protected, imbued with the symbol of the Greek temple that recalls the one dedicated in Athens to the hero Academos, a temple that now personifies our Academy. It certainly is a symbol more becoming than the one adopted at its inception.





An aroma sought for centuries

Why has mankind always craved the spicy taste of pepper?

BY RENZO PELLATI

Academician, Turin Delegation
"F. Marengli" Study Center



Among Christopher Columbus's many objectives on his journey of discovery to the Americas, there was also the quest for precious spices such as pepper. In those days, the merchandizing of spices constituted an important business: spices slowed the decomposition of food and enhanced its flavor. There were no refrigerators in centuries past and sterilization by heat was unknown. There was only salt, vinegar and oil, and the preservation of food created enormous problems which required resorting to spices that disguised taste and made it difficult to tell fresh food from spoiled food. Some historians maintain that spices also constituted a kind of gastronomic status symbol for the upper classes; they were used to prepare expensive and exotic dishes. In fact, in addition to tribute of gold and silver, Alaric, the king of the Goths also demanded that the defeated Romans give him pepper.

History also provides us with another disconcerting episode that took place on May 18, 1498. After having passed the Cape of Good Hope, the Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama landed on the Malabar coast in Calcutta in India with four ships and the cry of "*Christos e espiciaras!*" (for Christ and Spices). The sailors were well aware of the riches they would amass if they controlled the spice trade, and yet the local inhabitants and merchants unexpectedly put forth their own outrageous demands: gold in exchange for spices, especially pepper!

Vasco Da Gama was forced to make an about-face, but he returned to India

four years later with 21 armed ships and 800 men bent on carrying off as much spice, especially pepper, as would fit in their holds by whatever means necessary. Thus began the Portuguese monopoly of the spice trade that lasted several years.

These episodes help explain the delusion of the Spanish monarchs when instead of finding black pepper in the New World, Christopher Columbus "discovered" whole red pepper (cayenne) that initially was mistaken for black pepper. Disaster was avoided when the hot red peppers immediately found a welcoming habitat in Europe (including Italy) and elsewhere that enabled them to take root easily. Thus its fruit was instantly popular among that segment of the population that could not afford the costly spices. And the price of black pepper fell precipitously.

Why have human beings always liked and sought the hot, spicy flavor of pepper? There has always been much discussion regarding the effect of spiciness on the human organism precisely because very little was known about its gustatory mechanism. Popular beliefs about hot peppers (their aphrodisiac quality, for example) were frequently confused with contrary medical indications that were not supported by objective pharmacological experience.

Until fairly recently, we were only aware of the cellular structures (papillae or taste buds) responsible for the four primary tastes: sweet (found toward the front of the tongue), salty (sides of the tongue), acid (sides and



center of tongue) and bitter (base of the tongue). More recently, Japanese neurobiologists discovered the “*umami*” (meaning delicious) taste receptor. It responds to the characteristics of glutamate, (MSG) an amino acid that is used in relatively large quantities in Asian dishes to enhance their flavor. It is also found in our instant broth cubes.

Today there has been another advance that regards the perception of the spicy or hot tastes, a flavor enjoyed by millions of people around the world. We now know that “spiciness” is a secondary gustative sensation that occurs not as a result of a specific interaction of a molecule with its own receptor (as happens with sweetness or bitterness). It is actually a non-specific physical response of the thermic receptors (known as vanilloids) in the presence

of a particular kind of compounds known as capsaicinoids.

Capsaicin alkaloids are characterized in part by a molecule that is similar to vanilla (thus the name vanilloid) and in part by one classified as alkylamides. The major capsaicinoids are capsaicin (present in red peppers) piperine (present in black peppercorns) and gingerole (present in ginger).

These molecules come in contact with the vanilloid receptors in the mouth and on the tongue known as VR1 and VRL-1. In turn they are able to recognize thermal stimuli (that warn the central nervous system when food is too hot) but can also be activated by capsaicinoids, which provoke the pleasant burning sensation.

Unlike the molecules responsible for the primary tastes (sweet, bitter, salty, acidic, umami) that can only be reco-

gnized by the specific receptors found inside the mouth (lingual epitheliums, soft palate, pharynx) the sensation of spiciness can also be recognized in other parts of the body, and that is why the capsaicinoids alkaloids are also used as counter-irritants (in pomades for muscle aches).

What we generally refer to as taste is actually “flavor”, or aroma that is a complex of many different chemical substances, odors, consistencies and temperature. It has been proven that even our taste preferences depend on the interaction of many factors: 80% of what we perceive as taste is actually odor. The human organism can distinguish almost 20,000 different odors (thanks to the olfactory receptors located in the nasal cavity and the back of the oral cavity) with at least ten levels of intensity for each one.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MAGAZINE

Contributions to the magazine by Academicians are not only welcome, they are indispensable. However Academicians need to keep in mind some essential guidelines, so that their effort and passion are rewarded by rapid and thorough publication.

● **Articles:** It is essential that **articles be sent electronically**, in Word format (not pdf) to the following email address: redazione@accademia1953.it

● **Article Length:** To avoid cuts that are irritating for both the writer and editor, articles should be between **4,000 and 6,000 characters** (including spaces). Your computer provides character counts.

● **“From the Delegations” Column:** For ease of reading, **maximum length is limited to 2,500 characters including spaces.**

● **Convivial Dinner forms:** it is equally important that the “notes and comments” section of the rating sheets **respect the 800 character limit** (Maximum 1,000 characters) include spaces, in order to avoid cuts and errors. Rating sheets that arrive at Headquarters more than 30 days after the event will be discarded.

● **Please do not send reports on convivial dinners held outside the territory of your Delegation, or on those held in the homes of Academicians or places other than restaurants and public settings, as they will not be published.**

● **By observing these simple guidelines Academicians can be reasonably assured of rapid and accurate publication, thereby avoiding painful cuts.**

● **Obviously, the Editors reserve the right to edit all articles and publish them according to available space.**





Caviar from Crucoli

The secret of the unmistakable taste of Crucoli's sardella (baby sardines) is in the skilled dosage of its ingredients and its treatment and conservation in places that are not damp and are sheltered from light.

BY ADRIANA LIGUORI PROTO
Delegate of Crotona



Crucoli, a small hamlet in the province of Crotona, numbers about four thousand inhabitants and goes back to the times of the Normans. It sits on a hill (its name is possibly derived from *curuculum*, that is, "put on top") but with the passing of time the town spread down the coast to the point that nowadays it boasts a beautiful beach and a sea to boot. This place has become famous not just in Calabria for the preparation of its "sardella", or baby sardines. In this place of panoramic beauty one finds a dedication to healthy living and a respect of traditions in a primitive array of smells and flavors: a mix of humor and aromatic essences from the land and the sea. Crucoli's cuisine, savory yet simple and healthy, is based exclusively on the genuine products that come from its territory. The do-

minating and unfailing component of its cooking is the "putaparò", a truly hot pepper that made the sardella a celebrated food, worthy of an historical treatise.

The origin of this renowned fishing preserve may be attributed to the customs of ancient peoples of the Mediterranean who consumed a great deal of fish, particularly the blue variety, that was dried in the sun and preserved with salt. In his treatise on natural science devoted to fish, Apuleius uses the term *quisquiliae* to indicate the small whitebait that Romans used to prepare a kind of sauce. We owe to the Greeks, however, the invention of a sauce made with the entrails of various fish, mixed into spicy and aromatic substances, better known as *garon*, later renamed *garum* by the Romans. This specialty was kept in large





ceramic amphorae that facilitated its transport, and it was destined to become a quite popular product in imperial Rome. It is likely that the *garum* tradition was handed down to us from the time when Greeks and Romans lived in this territory, leaving traces of their presence through culinary customs and practices. The fishing of the baby sardines that were quite abundant along the coastline on the Ionian Sea has certainly influenced the preparation of sardella that by virtue of its taste cannot truly be compared to *garum*, which Pliny the Elder described as a mush of rotten fish. The earliest descriptions of the preparation and preservation of sardella go back to the beginning of the 15th

Century, when a new kind of pepper, red and spicy, was imported from America. It was dried and made into a fine dust, thus becoming the principal ingredient of the renowned preserve made with small whitebait. Professor Giuseppe Virardi, an historian of popular culture and an inexhaustible source of historical and literary information on the subject, defines Crucoli's *garum*, i.e. the sardella, as a harmonious marriage of smell and flavor, the fruit of gifts from the land and the sea. He goes as far as comparing it a jewel of great value by stating: "a necklace of rubies (the peppers), made precious by small drops of emerald (wild fennel) would not make a great show of itself on the beautiful chest of a woman if the single stones were not mounted in the precious surrounding of gold (oil) and silver (sardella) that frame, support and bind the composition in a synergy".

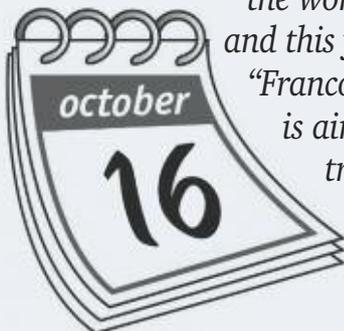
Apart from his metaphor, Virardi claims that Crucoli's sardella is a specialty that is unique in the world: The secret of its unmistakable taste is in the skilled dosage of the utilized ingredients, in its treatment and conservation in places that are not damp and that are shelte-

red from light. Its fragrance and its intense and persistent perfume are enhanced by a ripening period of six or seven months in clay containers (terzaluri) or wooden barrels (tined-dri). The preserve is also known as "mustica", a term that may be derived from Greek, signifying the container used, or from the Arabic *mustika*, meaning piquant sauce. Another name given to the preserve is "rosamarina", a term that takes from the Latin locution *ros marinus*, meaning sea dew. On account of its fine grain and rather creamy content, besides the excellence of its taste, the sardella has been compared to the celebrated caviar, so much so as to deserve the definition of "the caviar of Crucoli".

This "cream of passion", as the physiologists of taste have praised it, is thought to spread fire through the veins to the point the in past centuries it was used as a magic potion and love filter. Apart from such beliefs, it is scientifically proven that the preserve is a sort of a long life elixir, due to the combination of blue fish with hot red pepper, two elements of proven health benefit which attribute to this product the alchemic value of a drug.

2014 ECUMENICAL DINNER

The convivial ecumenical meeting, that brings together all Academicians in Italy and around the world at the virtual table, will take place on October 16 at 8:30 pm, and this year's theme will be The Cuisine of Rice. This theme, chosen by the "Franco Marengi" Study Center and approved by the President's Council, is aimed at rediscovering the cuisine of the many varieties of rice using traditional recipes that may have been long forgotten and that are part of our regional culinary patrimony. We will also examine some new culinary trends involving rice. Delegates are responsible for insuring that the ecumenical dinner be accompanied by an appropriate cultural presentation that illustrates the importance of the proposed theme, and that a menu devoted to the chosen theme is followed.





Cum grano salis (With a grain of salt)

There is a strong and unbreakable link between salt and humanity.

BY GIANANDREA PALADINI
Academician, Pisa Delegation

There are so many sayings and proverbs associated with salt. One of the most famous comes from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount to the Apostles: "You are the salt of the Earth, but if that salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" (Matthew 5:13). There are others, such as "The salt of patience seasons everything", "Give neither counsel nor salt until you are asked for it." And so on. We can even speak of its symbolic value, as in "pact of salt" (exchange) in which salt symbolizes stability and fidelity in marriage, political accords and economics.

What is it that so profoundly and solidly ties man, or better still, life itself, to salt? In chemistry, salt is an electrically neutral compound made up by the union of many ions (anions

and cations) generally deposited within a crystalline lattice and joined by a fairly high ionic link that is able to create, or better still, facilitate and preserve, life.

Simply put, we can confirm that life originated from a hydro-saline solution contained in our primordial seas.

It is likely that the Earth's first inhabitants' appreciation for salt predates their earliest permanent settlements, but when man abandoned hunting and gathering activities in favor of agriculture, thus creating permanent settlements and cultivating crops, salt became a fundamental element in human history. The cultivation and consumption of cereal grains, which are low in salt gave a new impulse to the uses of salt, including as a means of preserving foods, cheeses and salamis.





It was only later, with man's changing taste, that salt became indispensable for seasoning food.

In its natural form, salt can be collected from mines, and this type is known as halite, or rock salt. It can also be extracted from seawater (by far the most common method) through a process of boiling or evaporation. Obviously boiling is a costly and seldom used process except for some types of cooking salt that are prized for their particular characteristics of tastiness, color

and aroma. But the kind of salt that we use most, both in terms of production volume and its availability around the Mediterranean basin, is salt achieved from open-air evaporation such as the salt from Cervia and the upper Adriatic and Trapani in Sicily.

The Romans were the first to use salt commercially, exporting it from its places of production all across the empire. The use of salt was primarily confined to the conservation of fish, and already in the first century Pliny affirmed that a civilized life was impossible without salt. Cassiodoro, a 5th Century Roman historian and writer declared that "We can do without gold, but not without salt".

Salt was the "fifth element" for medieval alchemists, along with water, earth, air and fire.

Considering the high value it carried salt soon became used in commercial trade instead of gold. It became known as white gold, and was also used in votive offerings.

The Romans built roads to facilitate the marketing of salt, starting with the via Salaria that joined the production centers of the Adriatic (Porto d'Ascoli) with the Eternal City, from whence it was distributed internally along the peninsula.

During the reign of the Sun King in France, salt was an important element in the coffers of the state: 60% of the royal income came from salt.



One of the many wars fought over salt took place in 1540 between the Papal States and the city of Perugia which refused to pay Rome three times the price for salt as that paid by Siena. That war led to Perugia's total loss of liberty for more than three centuries. The war between Ferrara and Venice for the customs control over the waters of the Po was also a memorable episode associated with the salt tax.

The city of Salzburg was also the theater of a war over this product. The city and its bishop-count enjoyed enormous riches coming from the salt mine that gave the city its name. But the jurisdictional battle with Bavaria that had remained dormant for many years, violently erupted with the Bavarian conquest of the mines. The mines were a source of contention because while the mine itself lay in Bavarian lands the entrance was in Salzburg territory. And finally, a more recent example. Gandhi's non-violent march of 1930 was provoked by the imposition of a salt tax by the British. The 24-day march culminated with the protesters' arrival at the salt pans on the shores of the Indian Ocean to collect a handful of salt to symbolically represent its possession in the name of all the people of India.

We have discussed the "salt roads" but it is perhaps more interesting to examine the "paths" of salt that were used for centuries by the smugglers

of this product. An infinite network of paths that crisscrossed innumerable Italian borders from the Papal States to the Kingdom of Naples, from Venice to Austria, and even Switzerland, from Tuscany to the Marche and so on.

And now for some scientific data. Salinity is measured in Baume degrees with an instrument (aerometer) invented in 1700 by Antoine Baume. The salinity of the Mediterranean measures on average 3.5/3.6 degrees

Baume, or about 34-36 grams of salt per liter. The Adriatic is slightly higher in salinity than the rest of the Mediterranean. At the beginning of the 20th century, the annual world production of salt was around 10 million tons; in 1987 it had already reached 187 million tons. Fifty percent of the product is absorbed chemically, so halite or rock salt is preferred for the greatest purity. But whether made from sea salt or rock salt, the "refined salt" used in cooking is the most widespread and economical. But there is also raw salt, rich in minerals, as well as iodized salt for thyroid conditions and a low sodium variety for people with hypertension. And of course there is an infinite variety of smoked, spiced, volcanic and colored salts produced through boiling. Producers of Danish smoked salt or Hawaiian red volcanic salt, like other similar niche products, pay closer attention to their composition and presentation in dishes than to their availability and organoleptic properties. Salt enhances taste and makes food more enjoyable. Tuscan tradition calls for coarse salt to be used on grilled *fiorentina* steaks to create a pleasant contrast on the palate.

Easy to find, simple, economical and universally enjoyed, salt has played an important role in the culture, economics and lifestyle of each and every one of us.



The well dressed *tagliatella*

With the passing of time, beside the classic Bolognese ragout, it acquired a rich “wardrobe” to appear at the table as dressed by a wealth of diverse condiments.

BY TITO TROMBACCO

Academician, Bologna Bentivoglio Delegation



The *tagliatella*, whose birth is lost in the depths of time, is the result of an elementary mixture of water and flour that is obtained by squashing and pounding the seeds of plants that man found in his territory. Such a mixture is one of the simplest foods that man has exploited for his nutrition; with time, women learned the process of spreading and flattening the mixture out, thus generating the progenitor of the sheet of dough that in turn produced various kinds of pasta and soup. The Romans were the first to enrich the mixture with eggs, a creation that was abandoned because of the poverty of the times, particularly in the dark ages at the end of the first millennium. In the 12th Century the first evidence emerges of the use of the dough, still a simple mixture of water with flours obtained by milling the seeds of various plants. The mixture was then

cut into strips of different width. Later, as the knowledge spread, recipes “to make *tagliatelli*” began to appear. It was only as late as 1400 when the egg was added: this is where the development of our *tagliatella* started, accompanied and dressed with different type of sauces. The classic and typical *Bolognese tagliatella* took off at the beginning of the

1800s with the bourgeois cuisine as the result of combining tradition and industrialization. The technological benefits of the industrial revolution are related to the present process of making *tagliatella* by working it by hand, on a wooden platform, mixing water, wheat and eggs, and then rolling it, still by hand, with a wooden pin in order to give shape to a thin layer of dough. Once the dough is wrapped around a cotton cloth it rests for a short time. It is then rolled again, cut up into strips of a certain width thus producing the *tagliatella* in its “golden format” of 1972; subsequently, since 1982, it is properly dressed with the classic *Bolognese* ragout. Beside the classic ragout, in time the *tagliatella* acquired a rich “wardrobe” and made its appearance on the dinner table while dressed, from time to time, with onion sauce, with prosciutto only (for the *tagliatella Romagna* style), prosciutto and asparagus, garlic and walnuts, with a shade of lemon, porcini mushrooms, coffee, giz-

zards and chanterelle, chicken liver and ovarina, and duck. At times, the *tagliatella* itself can change structure and composition; by introducing chestnut flour in the mixture, dressing it with pancetta sauce and romano cheese, or by mixing in nettles and spinach, boiled or crushed, thus producing a green dough for a green *tagliatella* with prosciutto sauce or zucchini flowers.

Looking at the long history of *Bolognese tagliatella* and the many ways that it was dressed by sauces at various times, we can state that it represents a cultural event. In this case, culture signifies knowledge of tradition from its origin and its farthest roots. The *tagliatella*, in all its vestments, reinforces its reputation of a first course that brings honor to Bologna and its cuisine.

Recently, by initiative of a group of the Friends of *Tagliatella*, among them several members of the Bologna Delegation, The Eno-Gastronomic “The Well Dressed *Tagliatella*” Association came to life in Bologna. The new association takes its place alongside the historical “Learned Confraternity of Tortellino” for the defense and enhancement of the typical essence of the classic *Bolognese* cuisine.

