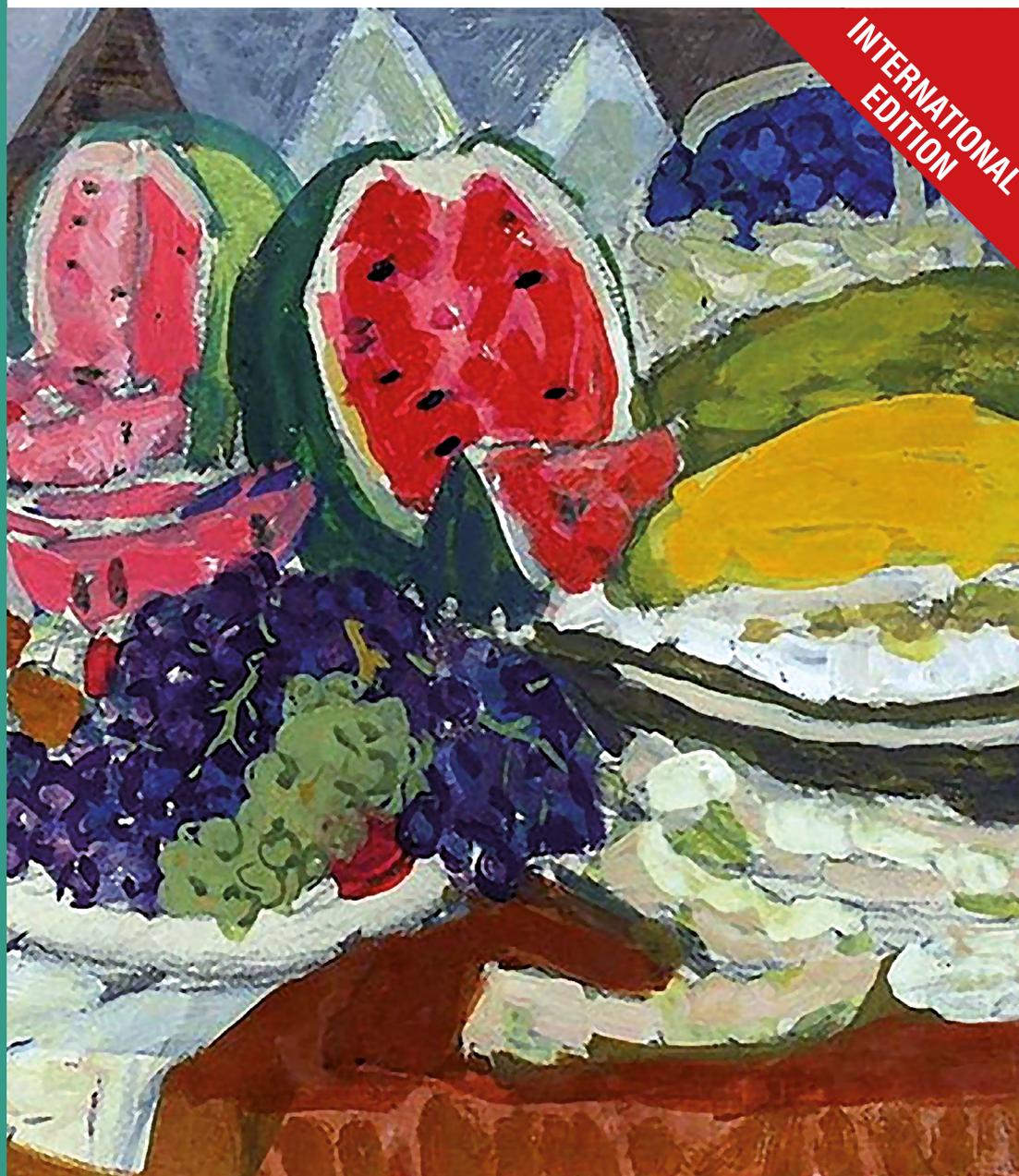


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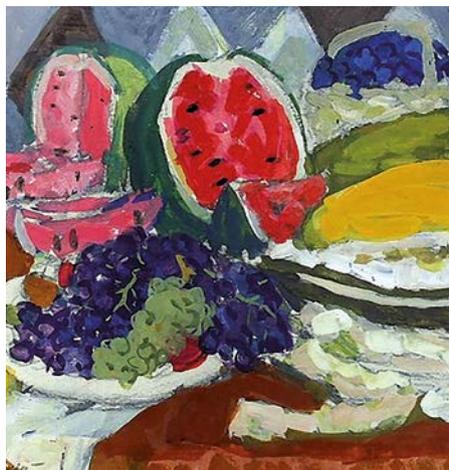
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L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
È STATA FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI
E DA LUIGI BERTETT, DINO BUZZATI TRAVERSO,
CESARE CHIODI, GIANNINO CITTERIO, ERNESTO DONÀ
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BASTONI, ARNOLDO MONDADORI, ATTILIO NAVA,
ARTURO ORVIETO, SEVERINO PAGANI, ALDO PASSANTE,
GIAN LUIGI PONTI, GIÒ PONTI, DINO VILLANI,
EDOARDO VISCONTI DI MODRONE,
CON MASSIMO ALBERINI E VINCENZO BUONASSISI.



On the cover: graphic elaboration of *Still Life with Fruits and Watermelon* (1929) by Pyotr Konchalovsky; State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

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Delta Force on the attack!

by Paolo Petroni

President of the Accademia

Despite the crossfire plaguing our lives, the Academy is resuming its habitual cultural and convivial activities.

From films and beyond, we all know what the **Delta Force** is: an élite corps of the US Army, specialised in anti-terrorism operations abroad, whose motto is: "Surprise, Speed and Aggression!". We, however, are being terrorised every day by another task force: the "**Delta variant**" of the coronavirus.

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse, namely the squabbling, ineffectual, doomsaying virologists, distress us daily with gloomy prophecies, abetted by the mass media which tally up the dead (few, fortunately) and infected, without mentioning that the latter are holding up well and haven't the slightest intention of checking in to hospitals, which luckily are almost empty.

Then we might as well release bulletins of road, heart attack and tumour fatalities and so forth. They told us that vaccines would solve the problem, yet headlines remain identical: surge, boom, hotspots, gatherings, keep your guard up, wretched youngsters, threats against regions imminently returning to yellow and orange. The superlatively useful *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (National Institute of Health) solemnly informs us that "Unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated people may become infected". You don't say! Who would have imagined that? And from the heights of her knowledge, the **WHO's** COVID-19 Technical Lead rules that the "#DeltaVariant will take advantage of unvaccinated people, in crowded settings".

We are fed up with useless, vacuous words

All in all, we are fed up with useless and vacuous words. We cannot aim for zero deaths, zero infections and zero variants (over 120 have already been identified): the virus will circulate, constantly mutating. Instead of predicting calamity, fourth waves and various catastrophes, let them get cracking on those vaccines, as vaccinations have reached a mere 45% of the population, with dim prospects after setting aside (will



they be discarded?) the AstraZeneca and Johnson&Johnson doses which, after millions administered, nobody wants now. Honestly, enough already! Let us live; **not letting us live is grotesque!**

The Academy has resumed its activities; the 'machine' is ready to roll

Notwithstanding the concentric attacks of our home-grown 'Delta Force', the Italian Academy of Cuisine has resumed its cultural and convivial activities. Following our Delegates' Assembly, the Academic Council has elected the President's Council, which in turn appointed Delegates, Regional Coordinators and the members of the Franco Marengi Study Centre, who themselves elected the Regional Study Centre Directors. A somewhat lengthy procedure, now at an end thanks to everyone's collaboration.

The 'machine' is now ready to roll again, and we can already witness this through the pages of this magazine, dedicated to those Academic activities which are telling us once more about our Delegations' many initiatives in Italy and abroad, where, as in previous years and with a concerted effort and the Foreign Ministry's support, the Academy will provide its habitual, substantial contribution to the success of the International Italian Food Week.



The long history of *cassoeula* ...continues, even in Singapore

by **Maurizia Debiaggi and Alberto Martinelli**
Singapore-Malaysia-Indonesia Academicians

The Valtulina family has brought authentic Brianza cooking to the city-state.

Cassoeula is Lombardy's traditional 'poor food' par excellence: the ancestor of 'leftover cuisine': if it were invented nowadays, it would per-

fectly fit the 'circular economy' trend, which transforms food industry waste products into new foods thanks to technological solutions concocted by start-ups with or without blockchain! *Cassoeula* has prosaically peasant origins; **it has a long history and probably a double genesis.** Since Italy is after all the land of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, let us recount the two origin stories which, besides being intriguing, seem diametrically opposed.

Two hypotheses about the origin of the dish

According to Toni Cuman, the unforgettable **food and wine journalist** of the go-getting, heavy-drinking 1980s, ***cassoeula* originates in northern Europe and partially in central Asia** and was apparently **brought to Italy by Gaulish tribes**. The dish is connected with *choucroute*, or sauerkraut with sausage, and the nomads' habit of cooking mutton and vegetable stews. This explanation is bolstered by the similarity of the word *cassoeula* to the French term *cassoulet*, a typical dish of Languedoc, based - perhaps not coincidentally - on pork and beans, and the fact that in Alghero (Sardinia), one of Italy's Catalan-Celtic cities, there is a dish called *sa cassola*.

The other origin story of *cassoeula*, perhaps more interesting and reliable, traces it to the manifold **culinary contaminations** occurring over the centuries in Italy, and a series of fascinating and riveting events and vicissitudes.

It starts with the Moors, who dominated Spain from 711 to 1492, leaving, as part of their cultural inheritance, a **culinary device called *qasula***, whose name of course phonetically recalls the protagonist of this story. The Arabs used this internally glazed terracotta container **for cooking chicken, beef or mutton stews with vegetables**; it was greatly appreciated at the time since it could be used for both cooking and transporting food and also re-heating small portions. In that era, **the many Jewish communities** inhabiting the flourishing and



Alma and Valentino Valtulina



Cassoeula in Singapore's Da Valentino restaurant

The story of **Valentino Valtulina** and the eponymous restaurant is a tale of success for a large Lombard family who, with passionate determination, lots of hard work and faith in their capabilities, followed him from Italy 16 years ago, embarking on the audacious adventure of **introducing Singapore to the cuisine of Brianza, as authentic as it is simple**. Mother Alma, who embodies the true soul of traditional cuisine at least where *cassoeula*, stews and *ragù* are concerned, says: "Each family makes *cassoeula* in its own manner, and I follow the recipe of my family, from Meda: scant *musino* (flesh from the face), abundant ribs, cinnamon, cloves, and Savoy cabbage - the kind that comes from Italy in winter, whose strong taste comes from the winter frosts. I always prepare it the day before!". Alma speaks proudly of her family's tradition and how here, near the tropics, she began cooking a typically Lombard winter dish: "I wanted Alberto [her son-in-law], who adores *cassoeula*, to feel the warmth of home, and also reassure his mother that he was being fed properly - and Italian-style". She laughs.

In their Da Valentino restaurant, this 'special seasonal dish' is vastly popular among the local regulars, who love the strong taste of cooked cabbage, vegetable soups and pork. "A regular of ours" - explains Valentino - "likens *cassoeula* to *mei cai kou rou*, a Sichuan pork belly and mustard green dish. Singaporeans like its texture and potent flavour and the fact that it is served piping hot, like many of their own dishes. It arrives at the table still boiling". Could this commonality between such distant cuisines be the true secret behind the success of *cassoeula* in Singapore? Perhaps - but also aided by this family's strength and determination, and generous helpings of typically Italian passion!

**Maurizia Debiaggi,
Alberto Martinelli**

tolerant Arab domains in Spain had a traditional dish which was easy to prepare, combining mutton flesh and broth, chickpeas and cabbage: *adafina*.

In Spain, Jewish converts to Christianity replaced traditional meats with pork

In 1492, an event seems to have triggered the use of pork, namely **the edict of Jewish expulsion from Spain**. Jewish converts to Christianity, called *Marranos*, hurriedly **demonstrated their sincere conversion and abjuration of Judaism** by replacing the traditional meats used in Mediterranean cooking with pork, stewing it with vegetables in that innovative Arab vessel, the *qasula*. **The first written reference** to this dish is by **Robert De Nola**, a Catalan cook at the court of king Ferdinand I of Naples, who in 1520 wrote one of the first cookbooks, *Libre del Coch* (*Cook's Book*), calling the recipe *cassola de carn* (meat *cassola*). This new dish, which began spreading among all the Spanish domains and along the main commercial routes, became particularly popular in Occitania, merging with the Languedoc tradition of *casseulets*.

That account still lacks the history of the last ingredient: **Savoy cabbage**. This yields another surprise, as it **arrived from southern Italy, more specifically Benevento**. Indeed, **the Longobard (Lombard) kingdom** of 568-774 AD, **with Pavia as its capital, in fact governed** a substantial portion of the Italian penin-

sula including parts of **Campania, Puglia and Calabria**. It was *Longobardia Minor* which brought the addition of Savoy cabbage, one of central and Mediterranean Europe's few autochthonous vegetables. The Longobards also initiated **the tradition of linking cassoeula with St Anthony the Great**, protector of domestic animals, on the day marking the end of hog slaughter, the 17th of January.

A final, crucial ingredient: tradition!

Contamination, innovation, experimentation, and more besides. One last, crucial ingredient must be added to this recipe and to the history of *cassoeula* itself: tradition! It was, indeed, **Lombard tradition** which transmitted this dish from one generation to the next, **proudly keeping it alive throughout their territory, with local variants**: in Milan, *testina* (meat from an animal's head) is used; in Pavia, only ribs are used; in Brianza, *cassoeula* is paired with polenta; in Varese they use small sausages; in Como, a glass of white wine is added; in Bergamo, the dish is rather dryer.

And in Singapore? Yes, cassoeula is even prepared in Singapore. This tradition is kept alive by **the Valtulina family in their restaurant, Da Valentino**, where the beloved, quintessentially Lombard *cassoeula* has been prepared for over fifteen years, despite the humid heat of a city-state that is 80 miles from the equator - what could their secret be? Not air conditioning, certainly!



Sugared almonds: 127 years of history

by **Pinuccio Pomo**

Puglia Association of Agrifood Journalists

The Sugared Almond Museum in Andria is located within the historic “Prize-winning Factory of Giovanni Mucci”.

The Sugared Almond Museum in Andria, located within the venerable manufacturer’s historic site only paces away from the cathedral, is dedicated to **Giovanni, son of Nicola**

Mucci, who founded the sugared almond factory in 1894, initiating a long history of successes. It was to Giovanni that Nicola entrusted his confectionery ‘secrets’, later inherited by his children and grandchildren. This family saga has spanned four generations and witnessed the birth of a fifth in the first quarter of the 21st century. When, in the final quarter of the 19th century, fourteen-year-old Nicola moved to Naples for an apprenticeship with Cafilisch, the celebrated Swiss chocolatiers’ school, besides his ingenuity and lively imagination, he brought with him scant money, a smidgen of hope, many dreams and one certainty: he would eventually return to Andria.

Son of Raffaele, who owned a bakery café, he left for Naples while still in schoolboy shorts. There he specialised in the ancient art of sugared almonds and in preparing sweets and chocolate. Returning in a double-breasted pin-striped suit, with a pleated shirt, a celluloid collar, a polka-dotted bow tie and a nut-brown moustache, he resolved to found his own ‘House’ of delights, with its name emblazoned in gold on a dark sign, and he established his ‘factory’ in the family abode. **He combined the dexterity of artisanal chocolatiers with the traditions of Puglia.** At the height of the Belle Époque, prelude to a heady ‘Short Twentieth Century’, Nicola **created a speciality which enchanted the beau monde:** chocolates, liqueurs, elixirs, bonbons. And **sugared almonds, made using the superlative almonds grown in the lands round Andria.**

Andria: the culture and cultivation of almonds

Almond orchards once vied with olive groves and vines in the countryside around Andria. The warm springs were heralded by the white and pink of almond trees in bloom. In late August and early September, the city changed colour: pavements were painted ochre by the hulled almonds drying in the sun. In early autumn, farmhouse doorways resounded with the rhythmic beat of the iron implements with which women’s gentle but strong hands broke open the woody almond shells on white stone slabs called *chianche* to extract their fruits.





Almond trees are rarer today, but the crop retains its excellent quality, with **numerous cultivars, all highly prized**. *Mollese (m'ddisk)*, whose tender shells can be cracked with fingers alone, is eaten toasted on winter evenings or at festive gatherings. *Fra Giulio*, with its delicious flat and slender fruit, is also known as "*Avola di Puglia*". *Tuono*, *Genco* and *Corrente* all boast extraordinary organoleptic properties and are widely used in baking. Mucci sugared almonds **use the Puglia almonds called Filippo Cea, also known as Toritto Almonds, and the Sicilian Pizzuta d'Avola, the world's most prized.**

Petresciata: a sweet declaration of love

Andria also has the tradition of *petresciata*: **throwing sugared almonds towards one's beloved**, which, recalling the agricultural act of sowing, serves as a declaration of love. Indeed, Mucci sugared almonds have figured in illustrious weddings, including that of Italy's last king, **Umberto II, with Marie-Josè of Belgium**. As evidence of the ancient sugared almond tradition in Andria, we have the testimony of **Cesare Malpica**, who wrote in 1840 in his *Il Giardino d'I-*

talia - Le Puglie (The Garden of Italy - The Lands of Apulia) that: "...a substantial portion of the sugared almonds thrown at weddings throughout Europe are procured from the Andresani [people of Andria]".

"Tenerelli" among the traditional products of Puglia

Around 1920, Nicola Mucci invented the "**Almond Imperial**", a **new sugared almond** made of peeled Bari almonds robed in lightly sugar-coated white chocolate. In the 1930s this evolved into the famous "**tenerelli**", or '**tender-hearted**'

sugared almonds, combining *Filippo Cea* almonds from Toritto (Puglia) with PGI hazelnuts from Piedmont and a double chocolate coating: **a unique recipe still kept secret** by the Mucci family.

In 2008, a Decree of Italy's Agriculture Ministry **added tenerelli to the PAT (Traditional Agrifood Products) list for Puglia**. Currently, **over 200 sugared almond varieties** are prepared in a modern facility, using painstakingly selected ingredients of top quality from all over the world and ancient, and still secret, original recipes. With their excellent ingredients and exclusively natural flavours and colours, these are truly tiny masterpieces of the confectioner's art.

Pinuccio Pomo





Ghirardelli of San Francisco

by **Claudio Tarchi**

San Francisco Delegate

The huge sign dominating the square overlooks a complex of shops and restaurants, originally the chocolate factory founded by the Ligurian Domenico Ghirardelli.

Aged only 20, Domenico departed for South America, residing in Montevideo, Uruguay, for a year, and then in Lima, Peru. The youthful Ghirardelli opened a shop selling various goods, especially chocolate. In 1848 the Gold Rush had just begun in San Francisco and a friend persuaded him to move again, this time to **California, where he opened a shop selling sweets, liquor, coffee, spices and of course, chocolate.** In 1852, having lost his shop in a fire, **he founded the “Ghirardelli Chocolate Co.,” the first chocolate factory in California** and the second in the USA, after Baker’s Chocolate, founded in 1780.



sack of cocoa seeds left in a warm room: this could easily be ground and sweetened **for use in chocolate production.** This extraction procedure would be named ‘Broma process’, from the Greek *Theobroma*, meaning ‘food of the gods’, *Theobroma cacao* being the scientific designation of the cocoa plant. The company perceived this product’s commercial possibilities: **easily transportable, slow to spoil, soluble** for hot chocolate, and ideal for baking.

In 1894, during a long holiday in Rapallo, Ghirardelli succumbed to influenza. **His son, Domingo Jr.,** took over; alongside his brothers **Joseph and Louis** and sisters **Elvira and Angela**, he imbued the company created by his father with family-based continuity. Following various industrial and ownership changes, **the company remains part of California’s manufacturing scene**, having been purchased by the Swiss chocolatiers Lindt & Sprüngli in 1998. Ghirardelli’s numerous products can still be enjoyed in the company’s own retail outlets and bought in many shops across the USA.

Chocolate Chip Cookies are an American classic. Many restaurants offer them with dessert or gift them to diners after their meal.

Ghirardelli: in monumental, illuminated letters, this is the first sign one sees when sailing into the San Francisco Bay. Few know what it is, and even fewer pronounce it correctly. **Domenico Ghirardelli was born in Rapallo in 1817;** he initially apprenticed at Romanengo, a historic confectioner’s shop in Genoa.

The fortuitous discovery of a use for cocoa butter

Around 1865 one of his workers, whose name has not been recorded, discovered **cocoa butter slowly dripping from a**

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Ingredients (for 48 biscuits): 225g softened butter, 180g white sugar, 180g brown sugar, 2 eggs, 2 tsps vanilla extract, 500g flour, 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda, ½ tsp salt, 450g Ghirardelli baking chocolate or chocolate chips (60% cocoa), 225g walnuts (optional).

Method: combine the flour, bicarbonate of soda and salt; leave to rest. In a terrine, whisk the butter and sugar together at a medium speed, mixing them thoroughly. Add the eggs and vanilla, at a low speed, until evenly mixed. Gradually combine the two mixtures and add the chocolate (chopped) or chips and walnuts (if used). With a spoon, form roughly round biscuits and position them on a baking tray. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°C (392°F) for 10 minutes or until the chocolate pieces are almost melted.



When food is a response to emotions

by **Floro Bisello**
Pesaro-Urbino Delegate

Habitual comfort eating stems from psychological distress to be recognised and treated.

Food is, naturally, a pleasure, but some people **suffer from emotional eating, confusing emotions with hunger** and responding by ingesting food instead of identifying the nature of those emotions and **seeking alternative strategies to deal with stressful feelings and situations**. Emotional eating can manifest as sudden attacks which may strike at any time irrespective of when food was last eaten, or as a continuous urge to graze throughout the day, outside meal times, usually accompanied by a sense of boredom or emptiness.

The most serious cases can be classified as compulsive overeating or bulimia, which are eating disorders and therefore

must be treated with psychotherapy and, if necessary, medication, on a case-by-case basis following a specialised physician's prescription.

Transient emotions and food

The use of food not as nourishment but as a means of dealing with emotions is a phenomenon which **may temporarily affect** most people, who may occasionally experience periods in their lives when **hunger suddenly strikes** without any relation to time or recentness of meals.

These are generally periods **characterised by negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger or sadness**, which the sufferer cannot psychologically resolve, rerouting the resulting sense of helplessness and frustration through food.

When emotional eating is no longer occasional

Emotional eating **becomes pathological** when it is not occasional and occurring only within specific periods, but rather is a symptom of underlying psychological anguish persisting over time and accompanied by other symptoms and/or significant distress which the sufferer cannot face and for which the assistance of a psychologist or psychiatrist has not yet been sought; this must be recognised and treated as a disorder. During emotional eating episodes, sufferers respond to anxiety by self-sooth-



ing through food. This clearly ineffective method keeps them physically busy with an activity bereft of usefulness in that moment, which distracts them and provides pleasure and satiation.

Sweet and high-calorie foods (junk foods) are often **chosen to 'cure' boredom, solitude and a depressed mood:** they provide intense gratification but also encourage addiction and prodigious overconsumption, **whose unpleasant aesthetic and health consequences** cause even more misery when sufferers perceive obvious weight gain and changes in their physical appearance.

Those who experience emotional eating attacks triggered by rage direct their anger through food because they cannot (and may not even try to) address the cause of that anger: this creates disappointment and dissatisfaction. **Food therefore becomes a means to reduce tension through physical chewing,** or even to reroute aggression aimed at oneself or others. An example is a woman seeking revenge against her partner who gains weight through overeating to cease being attractive to that partner.

Sometimes this disorder is established in childhood

Sometimes this mechanism is established in childhood, for instance **if parents use food in response to the baby's negative emotions,** such as boredom, pain or anger. Feeding a baby to alleviate discomfort, no matter what its nature, **sends the message that eating is the solution to physical and psychological distress,** leading to hunger attacks in adulthood when facing stress and unpleasant feelings. These future adults may **become obese** or may not, but in either case they **will have enormous difficulty distinguishing and recognising different emotions because they did not learn this at the right time,** namely during childhood. Therefore, importantly, parents should not come running with food the mo-



ment children cry or show discomfort, but rather should strive to understand what those children are feeling, thereby teaching their children the same skill, bearing in mind that the children's discomfort may be psychological and not merely physical.

The scientific perspective

A recent study on rats has **clarified the mechanism underlying the link between stress and hunger.** It found that ghrelin, the hormone regulating hunger, affects not only appetite but also the transmission of impulses to areas in the brain associated with pleasure and compensatory behaviour (gratifying actions to offset stress or pain). Stress causes ghrelin spikes, because that hormone regulates both hunger and the search for gratification, encouraging ingestion of calorie-dense 'compensatory foods' which counteract tension, helping to reinstate contentment. When ghrelin increases, depression and anxiety symptoms are attenuated, **as if the search for satisfying food entirely absorbed the individual's energy,** thereby temporarily alleviating distress. The researchers consider this model applicable to humans too, because what they observed in the laboratory is also evident in emotional eaters.

How to face the problem

To solve this problem, **we must first recognise the feelings masked by emotional eating,** which are placated through food consumption. This is facilitated by keeping a diary noting when hunger attacks occur, what we eat in response, and how we feel before, during and after this process. Those affected by this problem can thereby **increase their self-awareness,** gain a clearer understanding of what is happening and notice any pattern in hunger attack occurrence, potentially triggered by external circumstances. Having identified the conditions responsible for emotional hunger attacks and the unpleasant feelings we experience during them, our first step can be to **seek alternative strategies to manage what is causing the stress,** anger or frustration. In some cases this is impossible without help, so we should seek a psychologist's assistance to assess the situation and investigate the causes of the problem in order to solve it. An indispensable element for fighting emotional eating is the sufferer's willingness to **recognise that this is not a food problem,** at least not primarily, **but a psychological issue** which must be identified as such before the appropriate actions can be taken.

Floro Bisello