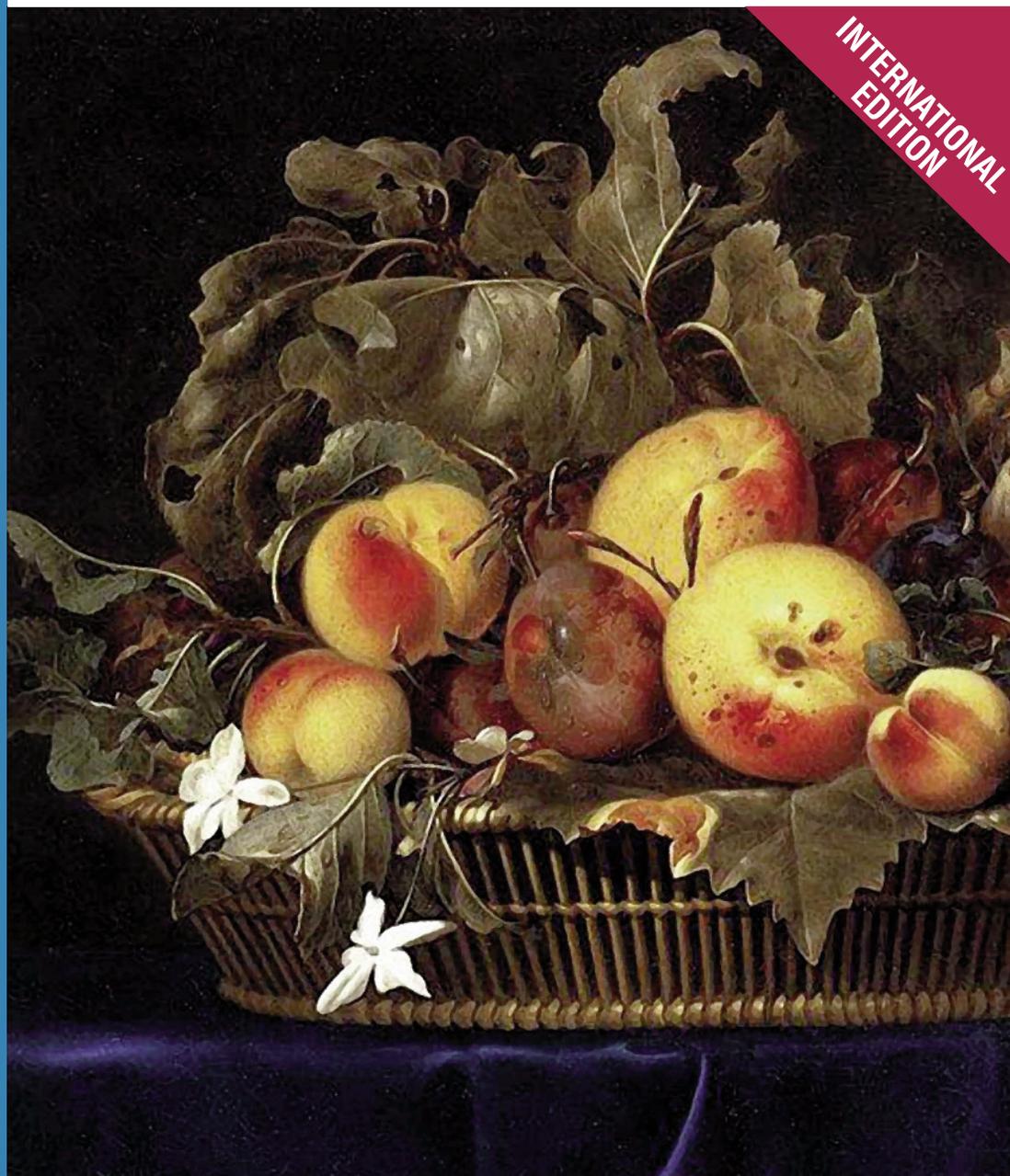


CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

INTERNATIONAL
EDITION



ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

A CULTURAL INSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY
FOUNDED IN 1953 BY ORIO VERGANI

www.accademia1953.it





L'ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA

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DINOVILLANI, EDOARDO VISCONTIDI MODRONE,
WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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INTERNATIONAL EDITION

JUNE 2014 / N. 261

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MONTHLY MAGAZINE
REG. N. 4049 - 29-5-1956
TRIBUNALE DI MILANO



Rivista associata
all'Unione Stampa
Periodica Italiana



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On the cover: graphic reproduction of a detail
from the painting *Still Life with Fruit Basket on a
Marble Table* by Van Aelst Willem (1650).



Italian illiteracy at the table

Nutritional illiteracy is a scourge of modern Italian society and should be a topic for study by the Academy.

BY GIOVANNI BALLARINI
President of the Academy

Dear Academicians, nutritional illiteracy is a subject that seems to have little relevance.

Few people seem to be interested in it, other than to complain about an increasing lack of culture in cuisine and at the table.

According to the widely accepted definition a person is considered illiterate when he or she does not possess the essential knowledge and competence to enable them to participate fully in the activities of their society and their community. There are many varieties of illiteracy, and this in turn makes a functional approach particularly relevant. An illiterate person, therefore, is someone who is unable to “read” or “write”. Above all they do not understand and go about their business without knowing what to do in a given environment, thus rendering them “functionally illiterate”.

Functional illiteracy can also refer to cuisine and dining. In a word, it includes those people who, even though they are able to prepare food with the appropriate techniques and can appreciate the flavors of the good table, do not understand why, and they lack background knowledge about what they are doing. The meaning and cultural value, transformation and uses of the foods they create are also more or less completely foreign concepts to them. In other words, they are totally outside the civilization of the table. Even though we do not have precise and detailed research on the level of nutritional illiteracy in Italy, some broader elements have emerged that demonstrate how widespread nutritional illiteracy is in our country, and that there is an abundance of completely bizarre ideas about food and cuisine. There is no other explanation for the popularity and spread of outrageous diets and nutritional models. At the same time we are witnessing the inability of a large portion of the people living in Italy (not just Italians) to understand the information that appears on food labels. This is tantamount to a functional illiteracy, where the only information that people seem able to comprehend is how much something costs.

In Italy today there is a pervasive cultural landscape regarding nutrition and cuisine that is characterized by ignorance that in turn encourages the creation of bizarre ideas concerning the origin and nature of foods. A great superficiality and childish imagination dominate the way people read about

and embrace strange ideas. Similarly, without underestimating the phenomenon of the popularity of traditional products and research about places where traditional foods are produced, we cannot overlook the apparently unstoppable spread of falsification and counterfeit products (and not only foods) or their meaning and use which is often hidden behind claims that they are “vintage” or local foods.

The condition I have described seems at odds with the idea, or perhaps the popular refrain, of Italy as a land of good traditional cuisine. We forget or pretend to forget the disappearance of the very role of the traditions themselves that by their own authority served an educational role. At one time there prevailed a kind of localized nutritional illiteracy within a society that was primarily peasant and not bourgeois. This was kept private, or within the family rather than public (*ad populum*). Many things, if not everything, began to change with the unification of the Kingdom of Italy. And while many have exalted the role and success of Pellegrino Artusi’s book, there has been less discussion of its role in the nutritional education of the new bourgeois class that was growing, while the new urban social class that formed during the second half of the 20th century became fertile ground for pervasive nutritional illiteracy - an unanticipated endemic scourge of the new Italian society.

During the same period the idea of nutritional education was born and spread with the firm belief that illiteracy was based on two cultural extremes that



developed along totally different paths: the “medical” pole and the “regional” pole. We began to speak of diets and local products, kilometer zero, etc.

The two poles of educational nutritional culture are disconnected in terms of the choice of foods and their uses. This results in a sort of social bipolar disorder that leads to doubts and uncertainties, and a lack of consumer confidence that is encouraged by the mass media that tend to theatricalize the information they present and do not help create functional literacy.

In addition, we must understand that nutritional illiteracy is just one of many kinds of illiteracy. But it is one that has a strong impact on Italian society in the 21st century. At the same time we must not underestimate the fact that our nutritional culture is based

on knowledge and experiences that have customs and norms, both internal and external, and a uniquely Italian social and historical dynamic that pervade and modify it. Along these lines we must understand the almost non-existent role of an eventual and often evoked nutritional education that may be developed in schools. It foresees a hypothetical hour of instruction similar to the predominantly technical and professional rather than cultural role played by Italian public and private culinary schools such as the Hospitality Institutes.

An historical understanding of nutritional illiteracy is not a simple task. We must begin with its origins, because they reflect a population that lives in Italy and which is substantially pluralistic and at the same time does not

posses the tools to address, intervene, and resolve the problem.

Nutritional illiteracy is a scourge of modern Italian society. It is just like any form of illiteracy but it is particularly serious in a “warm” society undergoing a rapid evolution and in a multifaceted context in which Italy finds itself today: globalization; a European Union with the free circulation of people with their own customs, nutritional habits and foods; a continuous influx of populations that speak different languages, practice different religions and have different nutritional ideas.

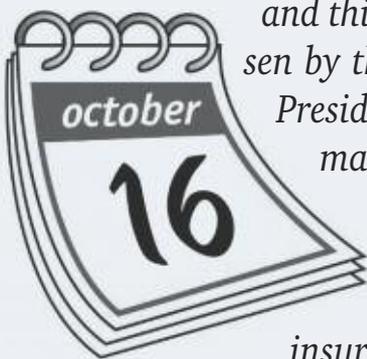
Today as never before the phenomenon of Italian illiteracy at the table should be studied by the Italian Academy of Cuisine and its magazine *Civilization of the Table*.

GIOVANNI BALLARINI



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 Marenghi” 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.

The protection of good health is entrusted to an excessive number of agencies with no coordination

The laws and the numerous guardians of health should be able to protect us from counterfeiting; unfortunately they operate without synergies.

BY PAOLO PETRONI
Secretary General of the Academy

Not a day goes by that newspapers and television programs don't report about food counterfeiting perpetrated by industries and small companies in Italy. This phenomenon has devastating effects on our image and our trade with other countries. The favored products of our counterfeiters are olive oil, mozzarella and cheeses in general, wine and fish. Recently, the *New York Times* published an article entitled "Extra Virgin Suicide - the Adulteration of Italian Olive Oil", with a series of fifteen vignettes detailing how the production of extra virgin olive oil was in the hands of a group of con men protected by political players. The adulterations that reach the market are often difficult to discover, while chemistry and physics help the con men more than the inspectors. In fact, there are inspectors galore and many laws are supposed to "protect" us. A panoply of national and European laws should make us feel secure. At this time, we should be protected by an incredible number of guardians of our health. On the front lines, we think of the Command of Carabinieri created for the protection of health that comprises 38 Centers for Health and Anti Counterfeiting (NAS, as they are called). Over one thousand Carabinieri - a service branch with police functions - have the mission of Sanitary Inspectors. They are good at what they do but they have a hard time exercising control over all those places that are engaged in the production, distribution, stocking or sale of products that are destined for human consumption.

Among the branches of the Carabinieri police one finds the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of the Environment, for Agricultural and Food Policies and the Protection of Labor,

that report to a bunch of ministries such as those for Health, Environment, Agricultural Policies and Labor. In addition, the list includes the Forestry Corps (that oversees not just the woods but oil and butchering), the Harbor Masters (that operate in the mountains as well if fish is sold there), the local sanitary agencies that provide veterinary services as well, the Custom Agency (whose laboratories control products in the import and export flow), the Fiscal Oversight Agency, the Annonary Police (the Municipal Police that oversees commercial establishments and markets to verify the validity of commercial licenses and the observance of regulations concerning prices and hygienic/sanitary impositions). And that's not all. There are controls entrusted to the Consortia of IGP and DOP products, to the Large Organized Distribution and to the Consumers' Association. The list of controllers never ends. In our modest opinion, most of the time all that would be needed are controls over purchasing documents of raw materials and sales of finished products that would reveal the violations. Unfortunately, there is no coordination. Every agency works by itself, with no knowledge of what is done elsewhere. There is no national autonomous authority to receive all the information produced by the individual ministries. There are functions and missions that overlap with no coordination whatsoever. In theory, a modest shop owner or an unlucky restaurateur or a small producer can be subject to daily controls by a dozen different inspectors acting under the same code: protecting our health. It reminds us of Cicero who said: "*Summum Jus, Summa Iniuria*", that is "too much justice is tantamount of injustice".

THE ACADEMY SILVER PLATE



An elegant silver plated dish engraved with the Academy logo. This symbolic object may be presented to restaurants that display exceptional service, cuisine and hospitality. Delegates may contact the Milan Headquarters (segreteria@accademia1953.it) for more information and orders.



A meeting that surpassed the imagination

Two important recent events, the Special Assembly and the Delegates' Forum, bear witness to the cultural energy that thrives within the Academy.

DI SILVIA DE LORENZO

Imagine a convention hall packed from the first to the last row with occupied chairs, where 182 Academy Delegates from all over the world who up to now only knew each other by name were able to meet and exchange ideas and experiences. Now picture the convivial meetings, including a gala dinner enlivened by happy voices, smiles and laughter and the thousands of different conversations of more than 300 people seated at large round tables celebrating together a truly unanimous convivial event with joy, satisfaction and the simple pleasure of being together. And now we can open our eyes because this was no dream, but the reality of the Delegates' Forum - a meeting that surpassed the imagination in every way.

After the welcome dinner of the previous evening, The Special Assembly of Delegates met in the convention rooms of the Grand Hotel in Rimini. The meeting was held to discuss and

approve the changes in the some articles of the Statute that had been previously examined and approved by the Academic Council.

President Giovanni Ballarini began by greeting the Delegates, many of whom had traveled to Rimini from abroad, and thanked them for their participation. Their presence was an indication of the strong sense of belonging and desire to be increasingly active participants in Academy initiatives, especially that of renewing and adapting the founding principles of the Academy while remaining true to them.

After the reading of all the articles of the new Statute by notary Giovanni Santagata, a number of passionate speeches were presented by: Ettore Bonalberti (Venice-Mestre), Luigino Grasselli (Cortina), Mauro Frascisco (Turin), Cesare Bisantis (Padua), Roberto Pirino (Albenga and Western Liguria), Vincenzo del Genio (Naples), and Pietro Aresta (Ancona). Cettina





Academy's work and authority. Energy, an exchange of ideas, questions, clarifications, and experiences in Italy and abroad. The themes that the Forum revolved around were myriad and were illustrated by various speakers: Roberto Ar-

graduato with a degree in philosophy visits the Savoy (where Carnacina works) and orders the most expensive dish. He is served two eggs. Chef Carnacina then informs him that the two eggs he has just eaten represent the patrimony of knowledge of the entire staff,

iani told us everything we need to know about the business administration of the Delegations. Roles, tasks and activities inside the Delegations were discussed by Severino Sani. What is the best way to organize a convivial meeting so that it becomes a major event? What are the rules for guests, seating arrangements and attire? Mimmo d'Alessio also tackled how to organize conferences.

Princi Lupini (Reggio Calabria) concluded by summarizing the presentations and ambience of the meeting, emphasizing the passion that unites the Academicians like members of a large family. The Academy is a melting pot of ideas and initiatives aimed at protecting a tremendous patrimony within a happy and lively environment. The Statute was unanimously approved by roll call.

from the selection of the food eaten by the laying hens to the choice of frying pan, cooking method and how the dish is presented. Thus we see that we can even find all the knowledge and culture of high level cuisine in the preparation of a couple of eggs. This, concludes the President, is what the Academy studies: the cultural aspects that are at the foundation of every gastronomic creation.

Why is our *Restaurant Guide* so important in comparison with the other better known published guides? And why is it so important for the visibility of the Academy itself? Alfredo Pelle demonstrated how information is updated in real time and emphasized the high number of hits it receives on the internet, cell phones and tablets: The website is the Academy's display window to the world. And speaking of the website, Sara Benincasa illustrated some new aspects and explained how to access the section reserved for Delegates and how it simplifies and expedites internal communication.

The Delegates' Forum began with President Ballarini's recounting of "The Parable of the Young Gastronomer" as a response to the question of what the Academy does. A young gastronome (Veronelli perhaps?) who recently

This theme was also addressed by Secretary General Paolo Petroni. He emphasized the importance of the Delegates' Forum that, through the contributions of its members enriches the

It was an intense day; dynamic, constructive activities underlined by the Delegates' energy and desire to participate in the work of the Academy. The energy culminated with the enjoyment of a convivial gala "surf and turf" dinner at the Grand Hotel Rimini's *Dolce Vita* restaurant. The delightful evening concluded with President Ballarini's farewell wishes to the numerous participants that came from around the world, and homage to chef Claudio Bernardo and his staff with the conferral of the Orio Vergani medal.

SILVIA DE LORENZO





Princes in armor

King Crabs are considered by connoisseurs to be the royalty of the sea.

BY ALFREDO PELLE

Academician, Apuana Delegation,
"F. Marengi" Study Center



Just forty years ago the Russians introduced the King Crab, originally from Scandinavia, to the Barents Sea. From that moment on their fame spread far and wide, and it was no longer lobster but the King Crab that earned the appellation "His Majesty of the Sea".

Jagged coastlines, and rocky terrain with steep bluffs overlooking the fjords; turbulent seas with icy waters that incorporate both salt and fresh water that runs off from many glaciers provides the perfect pristine and unpolluted environment for this crustacean. These rich waters provide all the essentials for the lobster, shrimp and crabs that populate these low temperature waters of varying salinity, and make their flesh especially firm, dense and flavorful.

His Majesty the King can easily grow to be 4 kilos (almost 9 lbs.) and the sweetest meat is concentrated in its claws and long legs. It can be prepared in a variety of ways: boiled, accompanied with drawn butter for dipping, grilled, braised or fried. The latter is prepared in Italy with our small *moeche* and *masanete*, elsewhere in the world with *molecanti*, and in the American state of Maryland, with their slightly larger blue crabs, fried in butter and served with tartar sauce on the side.

In the year 1222 the Venetian Doge Zani proposed moving the capital of La Serenissima onto the mainland because only "cappe, granzi e pésseti ménudi" (little crabs and tiny fish) grew in the waters of the lagoon. And three hundred years later, Bartolomeo Scappi provided us with a recipe for making "a tender crab pie". On the other hand, the Vene-

tians' fascination and facility with this crab is also demonstrated by the existence of the *Fondamenta de Cao Molecca* wharf in Venice.

And what about lobster? How can we deny this crustacean the glory that only the seas surrounding Sardinia can bring to it? Other varieties come from African or Cuban waters, but none of them can compare to the gastronomic sublimity of the Sardinian lobster; the meat of other crabs is tougher and less flavorful. And precisely because in addition to their unique genetic characteristics the flavor and consistency of Sardinian lobsters derive from the food they find in the deep waters of the island's rocky shoreline. Only 300 quintals (30,000 kilos/66,000 lbs.) of them are harvested each year.

In Alghero they make a dish called "catalana" that developed out of the fishermen's way of preparing fish aboard their boats: the lobster were boiled and served with a sauce made of tomatoes and onions - the only ingredients that could easily be stored onboard to quickly cook the small pieces and tidbits of lobster that remained in the net and were not sellable.

On the other hand even today lobster does not make for an abundant meal. Less than 30 percent of the lobster's weight is edible. What is more, lobsters weighing more than 2 kilos (5 lbs.) are too old and consequently their meat is rather stringy.

Another peculiarity of the lobster is that its reproductive organs are on one side of the body. Females are recognizable because they have a double row of fins under their tail to hold their eggs.



Mediterranean lobsters (from Sicily, Sardinia and Spain) can be identified by the light spots on their shells that do not appear on the Atlantic or Cuban variety. They live at a depth of 200 meters (656 feet), and feed on small fish and crustaceans and seaweed. They have two sworn enemies: the octopus and the moray eel. Once fertilized, the female can carry between 120,000 and 150,000 eggs. They live 50 years on average and during their youth they shed their shells two times a year, remaining without a shell for eight days. If a lobster weighs one kilo (2.2 lbs.) it is probably about forty years old. An interesting notion: it is believed that the Italian dish "Lobster Bellavista" originally referred to the elegant way the dish was prepared (sliced into disks and covered with vegetables and aspic). However in reality the name comes from the castle of Bellevue in France, where the Marchioness de Pompadour first served lobster prepared in this manner to the Sun King Louis XIV! And we can eat it with no guilt at all: 100 grams (4 oz.) of lobster has only 86 calories!

And yet I believe still another crustacean - the shrimp - constitutes an incredible contradiction. It may walk backward, but the forward impact it has had on our tables is immense. From the microscopic *schie* of the Venetian lagoon to the sturdy *carabineros* of Argentina, from the *mazzancolle* baby lobsters to giant prawns, shrimp have become the leading character in thousands of recipes, especially in the summer.

Few other foods can boast such gastronomic and geographic ubiquity (shrimp can be fished everywhere, from Norway to Polynesia). They are used in small tarts, sandwiches, savory pastries, *risotti*, countless soups and in both hot and cold pasta dishes. They are as supple as they are versatile: they can be roasted, boiled, grilled, baked, sautéed, stewed, marinated, raw, fried, steamed, skewered or covered with a mayonnaise sauce.

This reminds me of the American film *Forrest Gump*. The title character, played



by Tom Hanks, declares that "You can do everything with shrimp", and subsequently makes a fortune with his fishing business. And in a market where 2.5 billion kilos (over 5 billion lbs.) of shrimp are consumed each year, the logo of the popular and successful seafood restaurant and market the *Bubba Gump Shrimp Company* depicts an image of a smiling shrimp wearing a top hat. Their popularity is so widespread that not even the insipid little farm raised shrimp can satisfy the demand: They are sold pre-shelled, headless, frozen and precooked. Thank goodness we still have wonderful fresh prawns, with their

silky meat that can even be eaten raw with a dash of salt just before serving, preferably at the table.

This little crustacean inhabits all the seas of the world and even the pristine fresh waters of many rivers. They only require deep, dark waters and their shell protects them from the pressure of the depths. However these days mass trawling with nets is destroying the marine ecosystem: for every kilo of shrimp fished, five kilos (12 lbs.) of other small species and organisms are brought to the surface. The percentage is quadruple that in tropical seas. The result: the sea floor is being depopulated and the small fishermen are going out of business.

The European Union has literally tightened the net by halving the allowed allotment of fish. So in the end we are left with "fewer but better" from our own waters. So go ahead and serve them with champagne but be careful: if you serve them with mayonnaise, go easy on the lemon!

ALFREDO PELLE

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St. John's snails

A food that stimulates “good thoughts” for its symbolic values.

BY ROBERTO DOTTARELLI

Academician, Rome-Castelli Delegation



After a hiatus of some years, Romans have restarted their celebration of the feast of St. John the Baptist on June 24, in the square that faces the basilica of the same name. Once upon a time, the square was occupied by the stands of itinerant vendors, but when evening came, the sidewalks of nearby streets filled up with tables and people came to ingest kilo after kilo of snails drowned in a sauce prepared with garlic, oil and tomato, and enriched by a few mint leaves. Obviously, someone felt a rush of nostalgia for the tradition that went back more than a century, and for the celebration that took place at the time of the summer solstice.

Why is the feast for St. John the Baptist associated with the snails that in fact are out of season since snails come out of their holes during the rainy and temperate periods of the year, that is to say in the spring and autumn? Let us start with the feast itself. First of all, there are two feasts of St. John. The first, and most famous, falls on June 24 and is related to the Baptist. The second comes on December 27 and is related to the Evangelist. It cannot be a simple coincidence that both feasts of St. John are celebrated at the time of a solstice, and it is interesting to note that before Christianity came around a pagan divinity was associated with the two solstices. It was the two-faced Janus, the god of passage. Georges Dumézil writes that any passage incorporates two places, the one that is left behind and the one that is entered into. Janus was set upon the threshold of the houses, near the doors, and

watched over their opening and closing (*The Archaic Roman Religion*, 1977). René Guénon reminds us that Janus was often represented with two keys: “these are the keys of the two doors of the solstice, *Janua Coeli* and *Janua Inferni*”. Two entrances that according to tradition allowed man to ascend to the sky through the “way of the gods” and to descend underground through the “way of the ancestors” (*Symbols of the Sacred Science*, 1975).

We understand then how the *Janua Inferni*, that coincides with the summer solstice, is associated with potential negative values, since in a rather brief period of time the door that linked the world of the living to that of the dead and infernal deities stayed open, albeit under the vigilant eye of Janus, with the risk – still feared in our times – that some witch would elude “Janus’s control” during the night of St. John and would roam the city.

But why is snail the typical dish of the feast of St. John? This tradition allows us to recall the contrast between the “good to eat” of Marvin Harris and the “good to think about” of Lévi Strauss. Undoubtedly, snails are a dish for gluttons, most of all because of the “little shoe” (*scarpetta*), used to scoop up the sauce left on the dish by using one or more morsels of “unsalted bread”. We could answer the previous question by saying that snails are eaten on the day of St. John simply because it is the right season and they are good to eat. However, we noted that the end of June is no longer the season of snails. Thus the choice must have been influenced by the fact that they are “good



to think about” owing to two peculiarities. Snails are endowed with two symbolic elements that are linked to each other: the horns and the spiral. The horns are a lunar symbol and in the minds of many ancient populations, the moon was “the land of the dead”. For example, in India, Greece and Iran the souls of the dead rested on the moon while they awaited reincarnation (Mircea Eliade, *Treatise on the History of Religions*, 1999). The snail’s shell represents a spiral. The spiral has a close relationship with the labyrinth. Both symbols have been present for a long time and in a wide area that extends from the Mediter-



ranean regions to Northern Europe. They are portrayed on the outside of tombs to prevent the escape of evil

powers or drawn on the house walls to keep malignant spirits from entering. The presence of symbolic elements that are connected or in part conflicting with the underworld and ill-fated influences explains why snails were thought to be a food where the extremes are neutralized, in other words some kind of viaticum. Cooking and eating them in a night associated with dark presages was tantamount to inoculating and preserving oneself from bad luck and the evil eye. It is a pity that we are no longer superstitious.

ROBERTO DOTTARELLI

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.**





The “moretto” from Brisighella

A variety of artichoke that can only be found in this area and particularly in the typical gypsum badlands and ravines under intense sun.

BY **DANILO TOZZI**

Academician, Faenza Delegation



Brisighella is a small town in the province of Ravenna a few miles from Faenza. In the gastronomic world, it is known for its olive oil and the *Cynara Scolymus* that is better known as the “*moretto* artichoke”. It is a perennial herbaceous plant that rises out of an underground rhizome with buds that generate various stalks. The rosette-like stalk is very short (about an inch) while the flower stem is robust, cylindrical and meaty, with vertical stripes. The artichoke is simply the bud of the inflorescence that is picked up before it blooms, during the month of May. The petals, or scale leaves, of the *moretto* sharp yellow thorns at their tips. The preferred terrain is siliceous clay, typical in the ravines and gullies that are well exposed to sun. The *moretto* could be justly defined as the true autochthonous plant. It can be found exclusively near the town of

Brisighella and most precisely, in the chalky badlands with high exposure to the sun. This is where it acquires its high organoleptic properties that make it into an inimitable product with an authentic and unmistakable taste. It is a rustic variety upon which no genetic intervention has been attempted, unlike other species that are intensely cultivated in the Mediterranean basin. This situation has allowed the *moretto* to maintain its original characteristics and fragrance over time.

The ecological conditions and cultivation of the artichoke fields must be the traditional ones of the area: the planting order must be such as not to modify the conditions of the flowering bud. The planting must be accomplished by taking out a variable number of shoots (no more than twenty) from the mother plants.

The artichokes are harvested by hand in the spring, preferably in the early morning. The *moretto* of Brisighella must be marketed fresh and should offer these features: the color should be violet with golden highlights; the appearance should be that of a fresh turgid vegetable. When broken, the flowering bud split in a neat not stringy fashion; the thorns should be black and yellow, well shaped and rigid; the taste should give the slight sensation of bitterness that is typical of artichokes that are not selected, with a freshness that is not unlike celery. The *moretto* is eaten cold or lightly boiled, dressed with salt and oil, best with “Brisighello” oil that marries well with it, since both products have a common aromatic base. The “Brisighello” oil allows the

consumer to detect with clarity the scent and the taste of the green artichoke.

Artichokes are important in the diet of anemic people on account of their high iron content, similar to the spinach. They are helpful to people suffering from constipation because of their fiber content thus qualifying as recommended for diets with high residue. They are useful as well to persons suffering from diabetes since they have a very low sugar content; they contain inulin and mannite that are metabolized much more easily than glucose and common sugar. The leaves, which are quite bitter, can be used in decoctions and dyes. They facilitate the secretion of bile by counteracting the stimulating factors that produce bile stones. In fact, artichoke leaves are the basic ingredient for the production of all kinds of bitter liquors. Up to the 1930s they were cut up after the harvest, exsiccated, packed and sent to Germany for the production of bitters.

Many tasty recipes can be found that use the *moretto* artichoke: roasted scallops upon a bed *moretto* crudité and oil of Brisighella; *tagliolini*, calamari and *moretto* pasta *mezzaluna* with *moretto* and “*fossa cheese*”; salad of *moretto* with goat cheese and shaved parmesan; *tagliatelle* in lamb ragout over *moretto* in balsamic vinegar; strudel of *moretto* crepes filled with *moretto* hearts; “*priest hats*” pasta filled with *moretto* and ricotta cheese.

To celebrate this product, during the second and third weekend of the month of May, Brisighella stages the well attended festival of *moretto* artichoke.