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On the cover: Graphic reproduction of a detail
from the painting "Still Life" (1910) by Henri
Rousseau. From a private collection in Switzerland.

The duty of the Academician to safeguard quality food

Each one of us can intervene to orient consumption according to the norms of good taste and correct production, thanks to the great influence of the Academy, which is highly qualified and spread across many countries of the world.

BY PAOLO PETRONI
President of the Academy

Not a day goes by that newspapers do not report dramatic news about frauds in the alimentary field, primarily concerning oil and cheese. Many tears are shed about the huge quantity of false Italian products (Italian sounding) sold overseas. True, there are many problems which have large impacts both of an economic nature and that are detrimental to the image of our country's products. Many agencies exist, or should exist, devoted to eliminating this negative phenomenon; something indeed is accomplished. Very often, however, in an absurd turn, further and greater damage is caused to our products that are viewed, particularly in foreign countries, with growing suspicion. To be sure, the Italian Academy of Cuisine is not one of the agencies charged with overseeing and eliminating fraud and mischief. On the other hand, we must acknowledge the fact that we are a great and highly qualified force, spread around many countries of the world. All Academicians, with their families and friends, should get involved, each one for his own part and as much as possible, to orient consumption according to the norms of good taste and correct production, based upon the contents of our Code of Ethics. There are plenty of examples: let us start with eggs! Always reject those produced from chicken farming (code 3 on the label), buy only those coming from natural settings, or better still from cage free or organic farms. Not only that, but the Academician, with the Academy's card in hand, should suggest that the shop owner or supermarket manager offer the latter types of eggs whenever possible. One should also avoid the needless consumption of suckling calf; always

elect to buy tuna in olive oil and not in seed oil. Pay attention to the price of extra virgin olive oil when it seems too low. Choose your mozzarella by reading the label carefully. Avoid salami dusted with flour to simulate natural mold. Favor rice produced in Italy. In a restaurant, do not accept ingredients forbidden by law (sea dates, small birds and protected game). This gets a bit complicated in other countries but at times you run into frauds that are so evident that only a fool can ignore them. In sum, the hard truth is that in many cases our production is definitely insufficient to satisfy the demand of the global market. It also happens that sometimes the actual national products may not be of acceptable quality. Beyond clear falsifications, our sly producers send their worst products overseas in the belief that those consumers know nothing about quality. We can accomplish a lot if we become aware of the strength of the Academy. In a recent newsletter, we brought to light the offer of an incredible "Italian" hamburger by McDonald's in the Arab Emirates. The Delegation of Dubai came into play with wisdom and tact and the local owners understood the

problem and stopped that promotion. Some time ago, following the suggestion of an Academician, a well known restaurant chain replaced preserved milk with fresh pasteurized milk and a supermarket chain took eggs produced in stock farming off the shelves. Academicians must take an active and integral part in the selection of products, not just for their own consumption and that of family and friends, but also, within the limits of correctness, in dealing with food distributors and the restaurant business.





Bread and water

A dish that is poor and penitential, made nobler today by famous chefs under the name of “pancotto” (cooked bread).

BY MARIA GIUSEPPINA MUZZARELLI
“Franco Marengi” Study Center

A meal made with bread and water had its baptism in the Christian alimentary culture for dealing with sin. When the penance became repetitive, a great conquest at the end of the 6th century, any time a sin was committed the sinner could ask for pardon and reconciliation from the priest who would mete out the most opportune penance commensurate with the sin committed. Such penance would involve days, weeks, months or even years of consuming only bread and water (not continuously). Which leads us to believe that the Christian religion embraced a body of faithful of less than solid virtue, ready to confess their sins and to pay a price for them, consisting of alimentary deprivation: in fact, though, the sinners ate something different from bread and water.

After many centuries this type of penance was revived and the fight against the consumption of meat and the search for delicacies became part of a process toward the shaping of a western mentality that instituted different customs for lay and religious people as for men and women. The potent and vigorous layman was carnivorous and big eater. Both men and women however were beholden to a restrictive diet when they fell into sin. Bread and water were also looked upon as a basic alimentary regime, just a shade beyond survival, as applied in the prisons of yesteryear. These are elements, however, of not just high symbolic significance but also of extraordinary flexibility in the kitchen. Several foods present in the culinary cultures and practices of the West and the East are also composed of bread





and water. In particular, I would like to expand on *panada* - that is bread and water - not just to relate it to penance but to the attempt that lasted centuries to transform the essential, truly the little available, into something that was tasty and desirable, and certainly not a penance at all. It was not a very easy task, yet it was not impossible. The bread soup, otherwise known as *pancotto* or *acquacotta*, was just the food prescribed to sick and convalescent people, to women who had recently given birth, to toothless old men, and to babies who had no teeth. It was appropriate during Lent (at the end of which the pot where it was cooked was broken into pieces on Holy Saturday as a gesture of liberation), during holy eves and in case of a "*fiorretto*" or vow; it was always linked with the concept of giving something up. Notwithstanding that, some variations were allowed to overcome the regime of penance. With a meat broth and grated parmesan, or with oil and tomato, it became a good dish indeed. With rosemary, basil, scallion, garlic and a bit of lard it became quite tasty. Another variation was bread dunked into wine or coffee. There are quite a few territorial varia-



tions of *pancotto*, both Italian and regional. In his book on the cuisine of Romagna, Graziano Pozzetto mentions a few of them: the *pancotto* of the Savio valley, the one of Fusignano and the soup of Savignano on the Rubicon river. Starting with the Sixties, the years of the economic boom, there was no more talk about this food. And then suddenly it became an item on the menus of renowned restaurants.

In the great book of recipes by Gualtiero Marchesi one finds suggestions as to how to prepare *pancotto* with cinnamon and 320 grams of stale bread, meat broth, extra virgin olive oil, cinnamon and *grana* cheese, as well as *pancotto* with garlic, with olive oil and eggs.

An interesting recipe for an elaborate *pancotto* based, obviously, on stale bread,

onions, potatoes, *broccoletti*, celery rabe, eggs and *cacio* cheese is offered by a well known chef from Abruzzo, Niko Romito, in his book *Scarpe in Tavola* (Shoes on the Table), where the recipes are associated with extravagant shoes as part of a solidarity project supported by the popular shoe producer Stuart Weitzman. Romito's recipe for *pancotto* contains quite a few ingredients; this dish holds its own against other ones created by the

chef from Rivisondoli. This elaborate *pancotto* has become quite fashionable. In brief, it consists of the separation between bread and broth with other elements that are meant to enrich it: vegetables, sweetbreads and other products. At the bottom, however, you always have bread and water, no longer associated with penance but rather as a way to return value to essential elements and foods, and also as a token of research and innovation and even of a weird complication that in certain cases can produce a paradoxical outcome: to transform a food that was born poor into an elaborate and sophisticated dish, a sleight of hand that can be looked upon as a sin to be punished with bread and water.

MARIA GIUSEPPINA MUZZARELLI

ECUMENICAL DINNER 2016

The Ecumenical Convivial Dinner that finds all Academicians in Italy and around the world gathered around the same virtual table will be held on October 20, 2016 at 8:30 pm, with the theme "The cuisine of Reuse. Against Waste, the Family Tradition Offers Leftovers with Gusto and Imagination".



This theme was chosen by the "Franco Marengi" Study Center and approved by the President's Council, with the purpose of retrieving, within the traditional cuisine, those preparations that while originating from partially used food-stuff go on to create new recipes and diverse tastes.

The Delegates will take great care that the Ecumenical Dinner will be accompanied by an appropriate report of cultural character to illustrate the important theme of the convivial whose menu will offer and honor the chosen food.



From the wine cellar to the table

Knowing how to drink: the fundamentals of wine tasting and the correct pairings with food.

BY NICOLA BARBERA

Academician, Milan Duomo Delegation



We must start by noting that wine, more than merely a beverage, is a food to be savored in little sips. In order to evaluate a good wine, one must understand the typology of the land where the grape was produced, the methods used in the vineyard and how well maintained was the cellar where the bottles were kept. Given that this information is not always readily at hand, we must examine that which is almost always available to everyone. We can begin with the color, which is characteristic of every wine, then the odor of the grape employed (there are pleasant odors but also unpleasant ones owing to mold or degeneration of the cork), and third the perfume, or scent (*bouquet*) that develops during wine making and ageing. After this preliminary visual-olfactory analysis we can go on to taste the wine, keeping a small quantity of it in the mouth in

order to try to perceive the “taste sensations”. A wine can be: *semi-dry* (slightly sweet), *dry* (with no sugars, evidence of a complete fermentation), *astringent*

(bitter owing to a high tannin level), *warm* (high alcohol and glycerol content), with an *aftertaste* (base flavor that has different overtones, for example berries), *cool* (high acidity) *soft*, *mellow*, *round*, *savory*, etc. In general, a wine (reds more so than whites) should slightly set your teeth on edge; the tip and sides of the tongue, whose function is to taste

salt, should not perceive any taste; the palate and the back of the tongue should detect the full flavor of the wine, especially the aftertaste. At this point we are in a position to evaluate the qualitative level of the wine, but two additional pieces of information are important: the temperature at which the wine is served and the correct pairing with the food served. Normally white wine should be consumed cool, at cellar temperature, 10-12 degrees C (50-54 degrees F); an ice-cold wine is a heresy that perhaps has been perpetrated by the diffusion of enormous closet-like refrigerators and uninformed hosts. Sparkling wines are the exception, to be served at 6-8 degrees C (43-46 degrees F) after having been chilled in an ice bucket. Red wines should be drunk at room temperature, or “*chamber*” i.e. 18-22 degrees C (64-72 degrees F). Highly aged and valuable wines should

be allowed to “breathe” in order to oxygenate them, by being uncorked and decanted several hours before the meal. An old wine should have a “shirt” - the characteristic veil clinging to the inside of the bottle. Sometimes old bottles that have been forgotten in the cellar may develop a Marsala or Madeira-like flavor. In that case they should be discarded.

It is obvious that competence in understanding wine must be achieved through study (specific reading or *sommelier* classes) and personal experience. Both require passion, time and dedication considering the fact that there are more than 700 important Italian wines (about 450 varieties of indigenous species of grape) and about 120,000 “labels” (of bottled wine). In ancient times, the reputation of our wines was such that the Greeks also called Magna Grecia “*Enotria*” - the land of wine.

The most important information that should be contained in the bottle’s label are: the name of the producer, which if well known can already be a sign of reliability and quality; the name of the wine; the species of grape used, which does not always coincide with the wine’s name; year of harvest and that of bottling; area of production, from which we can deduce the type of terrain. Limy soil - as important as other factors - gives wines a higher alcohol content. Volcanic soil produces full-bodied wines while siliceous soil produces delicate ones. On average, white wines have an alcohol content of between 11 and 13.5 percent. Red wines between 12 and 14.5 percent. Sweet wines made from raisins (*passiti*) can be 16 percent and



sparkling wines between 6 and 8 percent. Sometimes the label may indicate the number of bottles produced and recommend food pairings.

Italian legislation regulates superior wines by the following categories Doc (*Denominazione di origine controllata*, or Designation of Origin) and Docg (*Denominazione di origine controllata e garantita*, or Guaranteed Designation of Origin) that establish the conditions that must be respected during production in order to guarantee the anticipated level of quality. Marsala was the first Italian wine to achieve Doc status in 1931. Today there are more than 260 Doc wines and the number is increasing. Forty-three wines have received the Docg designation, reserved for wines that are aged for at least five years and are recognized as particularly important. In Italy 60 percent of wines consumed are reds, 28 percent white and less than 10 percent are rosés. Fifty percent of the population prefers dry wines, 25 percent sparkling wines and 24 percent sweet wines. Wine can truly be considered the intellectual part of a meal since, as mentioned above, one must not only have knowledge of the wine but must also know how to select the appropriate wine to be paired with each dish. This can even extend to a recipe, evaluating its individual or predominant ingredients and selecting wines that complement their characteristics. In other words, when pairing food and wine neither of the two components should overshadow the other, but rather both should complement each other harmoniously. Pairings can be established: *by tradition*, that is, a regional dish served with a wine from the same region, or *by contrast* - say, an "oily" dish with a wine with high alcohol content; a "fatty" dish with a wine of high acidity that produces a sensation of freshness ("washes the mouth").

As a general rule, red wines are usually paired with meats, sharp cheeses, hard pastas, risotto with mushrooms, pasta dishes with meat sauces and even fish dishes that have a tomato base. White wines pair well with simple fish dishes with little seasoning, crustaceans and

white meats. Rosés can be paired with antipasti, fried dishes and hearty soups. Sweet wines (*amabili*, *passiti* and *muffati* or *Botrytis*) are recommended with all kinds of desserts.

And now for some details and curiosities. In many places with a hot climate such as Apulia, Sardinia and Sicily in Italy, and southern France and Greece, the vines are kept bushy and grow low to the ground, or *albero basso*, without supports so that their shadow protects the ground from excessive evaporation. The return is low: just a few kilos per plant, but with a high sugar content. In more moderate and humid regions the vines are left to develop naturally, supported by frameworks made of poles and wires or even leaning against row of trees like elms, maples and mulberry so that they are easily harvested. In addition to constant care, the vines require pruning: a "dry" pruning in winter and a "green" one during their growth period. Wine became commonly consumed during the 18th century. Although it was fairly inexpensive the quality was often low; this was when the first inns outside the city walls began to be established, because the wines did not pay excise taxes because they did not enter the city. Until the Second World War, Prosecco (originally from Prosecco near Trieste) was not a sparkling wine, but a still wine. But for a variety of reasons the "*barbatelle*" or small one-year-old plants that had already been grafted were transplanted to the Treviso region, more precisely in the areas of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene where they began to be converted into sparkling wines with the *charmat* or *Martinotti* methods. This included a second fermentation in large autoclaves. Today that area is the classic producer of Prosecco.

The ancient Romans sometimes would ferment their wines in buried amphorae. This technique was successfully replicated by an important producer from Oslavia near Gorizia. He would steep Ribolla Gialla grapes for 6 to 7 months in buried terracotta amphorae before bottling the wine. Another "original" idea came from a Canadian vintner from an area near Niagara Falls. He

produced an "ice wine" by letting the grapes mature on the vine through October, protected only by netting. When the temperature drops below -10 degrees C (14 degrees F) in December and January the frozen bunches of grapes are picked by hand. This very small harvest - less than 10 percent of the normal harvest - produces a unique dessert wine that is naturally sweet and intense. During the period when the grapes wilt they develop *Botrytis cinerea* that produces a kind of "noble mold" that grows inside the grape, not outside like other molds. The northernmost produced wine in the world is made in Olkiluoto in central Finland and it is made possible because the vines are sprayed with tepid water. A word about *vino novello*, or "early wine", not to be confused with *vino nuovo* or "new wine". Technically novello is not a true wine; it was launched by the French in 1934 for commercial reasons, and is sold beginning on November 6 each year (*Beaujolais nouveau*). It is a beverage with a short shelf life (just a few months) that is obtained through a vinification process known as "carbonic steeping". It has a fruity *bouquet*, low tannin level and is blended with other new or young wines. *Novello* wines were recently launched in Italy as well, and are distributed two weeks early than their French counterpart. If excessive consumption of wine can lead to addiction (alcoholism) and have damaging effects on the liver, its moderate consumption (two glasses a day with meals) can have very beneficial health properties, particularly red wine. When consumed on a full stomach it promotes digestion, is a cardio tonic, vascular dilator that aids in blood circulation, improves kidney function and produces a rapidly absorbed caloric charge. Red wines also contain a certain amount of iron. I will end with the words of Mario Soldati who affirmed in his 1969 book *Vino al vino* (Let Wine be Wine): "Any old wine drunk in the company of friends is better than a fine wine drunk alone. Let's call a spade a spade: wine without friends is worth nothing".

NICOLA BARBERA



The rule of doing without

Today we can say that the human collective is regulated and subdivided according to what it eats or better yet, to what it does without.

BY ELISABETTA COCITO
*Academician, Turin Delegation
"Franco Marengi" Study Center"*

Complex societies have always been regulated by laws and established upon the observance of codified rules. In this brief essay I would like to discuss what I defined in the headline "the rule of doing without", that - I will explain - seems to guide or at least profoundly influence present social behavior. I am referring to the university of diets, to the alimentary regimes that not only shape our nutritional choices but tend to place us into a lifestyle, to catalogue us and to differentiate us in accordance with the chosen rule. In the Christian tradition, a rule is that ensemble of norms and behaviors

that inform individual life towards reaching spiritual perfection. If any religious order has its rule, be it Benedictine, Franciscan, Augustinian and so forth, differing from the other ones in terms of purposes and behaviors, we could state that the collective is regulated and subdivided according to what it eats or better yet, according to what it can do without. The rule of "doing without", of course.

In a society obsessed with image, where the presence and the physical appearance are fundamental, the body has become the mirror of the soul, or perhaps the substitute for the very soul to which one must devote the utmost





attention to prolong life and above all, to nurture wellbeing by maintaining an attractive look. To choose the ideal, virtuous nutritional format becomes peremptory. Choosing a diet becomes a philosophy, a religion, an ideology that is tantamount to identification. The important thing is doing without: without gluten, milk, meat, carbohydrates, sugars. In embracing an alimentary style, one enters a community where all profess the same faith and exclude those who do not belong. Some of the choices are based not just on motives that are esthetical but also ethical: a diet without meat, vegetarian, or vegan even more so, rests upon an approach to life that respects animals that are looked upon as similar to us instead of potential food, just like Pythagoras stressed in his writings. The exclusion of certain foods may be caused also by allergies or claimed cases of intolerance. In such cases it is imperative to do without certain components of alimentation and to replace them with other more appropriate ones. This happens in the case of allergies associated with gluten or lactose that can be quite harmful to health if they are not discovered in time. The

curious fact is that many people embrace gluten and lactose free diets in the belief that a "healthier" alimentation that will make them "purer": a sort of modern asceticism. This outlook leads to the choice of excluding products based on corn and replacing them with foods prepared with so-called "ancient grains". These are grains utilized in the past and then abandoned in favor of species that are more resistant and productive. Such old grains were rediscovered with great success with the claim that they maintained their "purity" with the passing of time. Such success is mostly due to the social push toward all that is natural and "original" food, uncontaminated by human intervention, a possibly unconscious interpretation of the term "intervention" as adulteration. Self discipline, health addiction, control of one's body through the elimination of potentially dangerous and contaminant foods and discipline over the demands of the stomach are helpful

GIOVANNI BALLARINI
PAURA DI CIBO
MALATTIA DELL'ANIMA
 ANTROPOLOGIA DI UN DISAGIO SOCIALE



 **DIABASIS**

in reassuring us. It is as if self control enables us to overcome fear of what is "outside" of us and thus out of our dominion, a reality that is unquestionably a source of insecurity of the kind that we have at the present time.

ELISABETTA COCITO

THE FOUNDING IN PARIS OF THE EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF GASTRONOMY ITALY IS A FOUNDING MEMBER

The Charter of the new European Academy of Gastronomy (AEG), an autonomous Division of the International Academy of Gastronomy (AIG), was signed in Paris. A resolution of the European Parliament dated March 12, 2014 recognizes in Article 28 the important contribution of AIG for the protection of European gastronomy. However, the European Commission found it necessary to establish an entity formed exclusively by Associations belonging to the European Community. In short, it was deemed necessary to establish a new structure in order to obtain financing for future national projects.

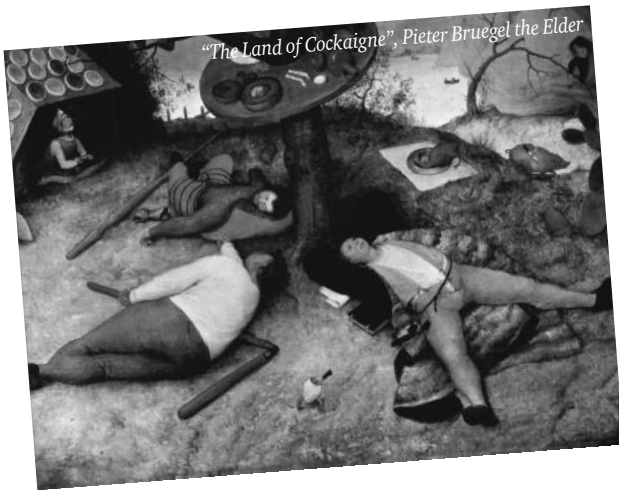
With the presence of the President of the Académie Internationale de la Gastronomie Jacques Mallard, representatives of Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and Poland signed the founding Charter. Italy was represented by the President of the Italian Academy of Cuisine Paolo Petroni, who was named a member of the Board of Directors of AEG. The Spanish representative, Rafael Anson, President of the Real Academia de Gastronomía, was elected President of AEG by unanimous vote, on the strength of his contacts and experience.



Cuccagna: the mythical Land of Plenty

A place that has always represented abundance in the collective imagination.

BY HELEN COSTANTINO FIORATTI
Academician, New York Delegation



In the past food represented something very important for the vast majority of the population: for the poor, because they usually went hungry; for the rich as a way to show off at sumptuous banquets. A fantasyland, a rural festival and a game have all shared the name “cuccagna”. The term came from the Provençal word *cocanha*, or *cocagne* in old French. From this we also derive the Gothic word *koka* and the German *Kuche*, and in English, “cake”.

A 13th century poem (published by George Ellis in 1790) speaks of the “Land of Cockaigne”, where the houses are made of sugar, the streets are paved with sweets and the stores give away their wares for free. Also from the 13th century, both the French *Dit de Cocagne* and *Li Fabliou de Coquigne* describe the fabulous country of Cockaigne. In the Third novella of the eighth day

of the *Decameron* Boccaccio mentions *cuccagna* (the land of abundance) as the place “where vines are tied with sausages, where everyone owns a fattened goose as well as a duck; there are mountains of grated Parmigiano cheese, upon which sat people who do nothing other than make *maccheroni* and *ravioli* and cook them in capon broth”.

In Medieval mythology, *cuccagna*, or the Land of

Plenty was a popular fantasy about an imaginary place where food was abundant and cheese fell from the sky like snow, offering relief to a population that suffered from overwork and a scarcity of food.

In the 15th century Alessandro da Siena described this country as a place rich in marvels of the palate and other pleasures. Another description published in Siena in 1581 defines *Cuccagna* as the place where everything is pleasant and life is spent eating and sleeping as one likes, with no work or bosses. A burlesque poem entitled *Of the Lineage and Nobility of Macaroni* refers to the muses in the mountains of Cockaigne as they prepare tasty foods for the gluttonous populace. In 1569 Pieter Bruegel the Elder painted *The Land of Cockaigne* depicting men asleep after hearty and lavish feasting. The painting is housed in the National Picture Gallery of Monaco.

During the second half of the 17th century, in the mock heroic poem *Power Sanmiato*, *Cuccagna* is portrayed as the

home of the delights of taste and of the stomach. In the 18th century *Il Trionfo della Cuccagna* (The Triumph of Cockaigne) by Martino Boiteux of Lucca once again included the themes of abundance and the delights of the palate.

In *Das Märchen vom Schlaraffenland*, the Brothers Grimm recount their version of the land of Cuccagna. And *Ego Sum Abbas Cucaniensis* (*I Am the Abbot of Cockaigne*) is a ballad found in a 13th century manuscript that was included in Carl Orff's (1895-1982) *Carmina Burana*.

In San Quirino, in the province of Pordenone, “*la cuccagna*” is also a popular festival. It takes place during the month of October in celebration of the Madonna of Good Health. During some popular festivals in Naples, a greased pole was set up. At the top were all kinds of delicacies and those who were unable to climb to the top to retrieve them slid back down the pole to the laughter of the crowd.

A famous game created by Giuseppe Maria Mitelli of Bologna was also known as *cuccagna* or *cockaigne*. It had illustrations of the gastronomic specialties of various Italian cities: number 9 was the *cantucci* cookies of Prato, usually dunked in wine; number 11 was a sweet cheese from Genoa; number 15 was the bread of Padua; number 17 was the *torrone* candy of Cremona (the winner was allowed to taste it without biting into it). Naples had broccoli, Piacenza had cheese and Bologna had *mortadella*. A triple 4 won the buffalo *mozzarella* that at that time came from Rome. The final prize, achievable only after a triple 6, was Milanese tripe.