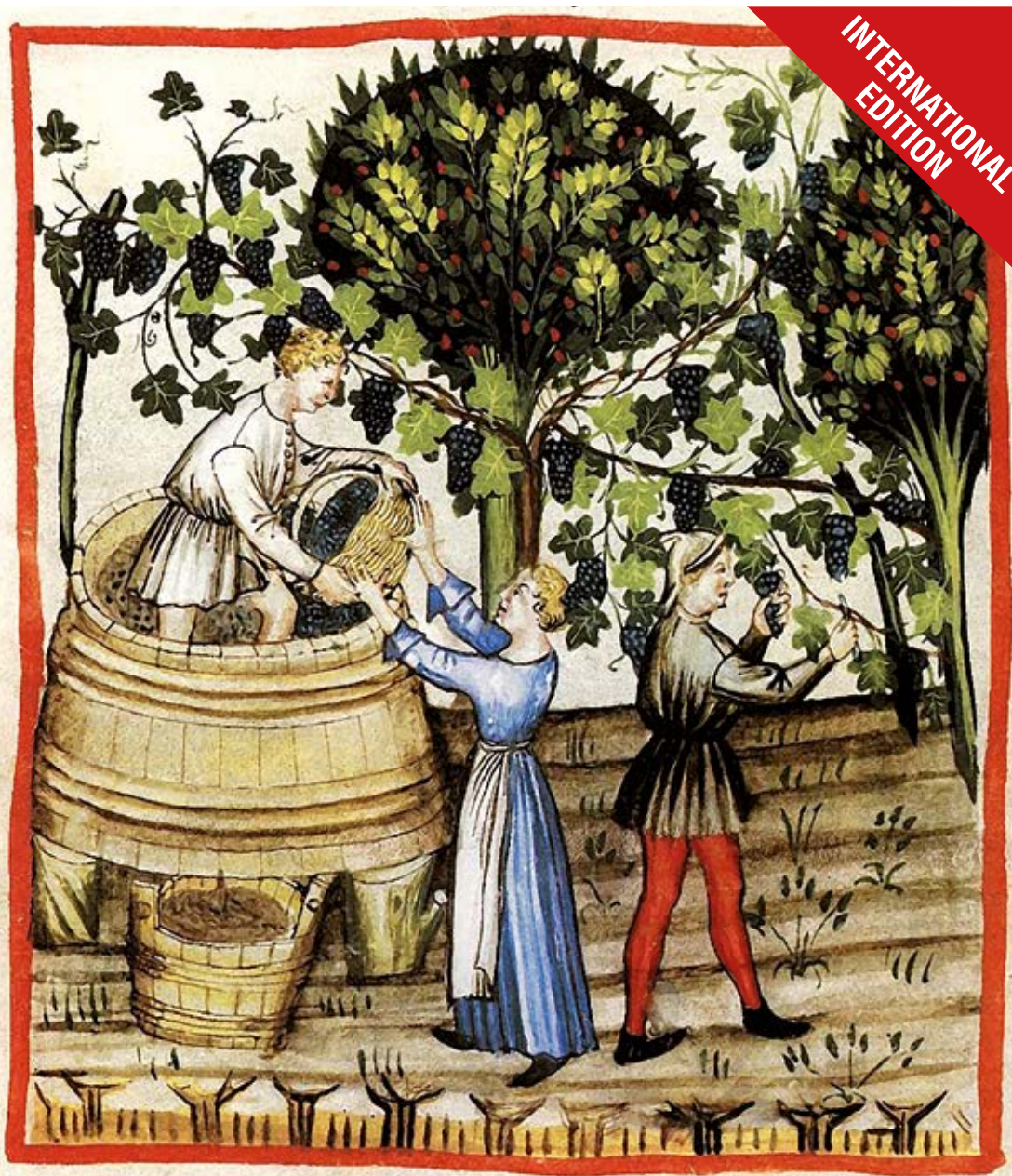


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On the cover: Graphic elaboration of the illustration depicting *The Grape Harvest* from the manual *Tacuinum Sanitatis* (14th century), Vienna, Austrian National Library.

Where is our chicken pepper stew?

Restaurants' enormous repertoire frequently neglects traditional dishes.

BY PAOLO PETRONI

President of the Academy

The Italian 'food mill' grinds incessantly and becomes ever more bloated - by about 40% in the past five years in several cities invaded by tourism. To cite a few examples: in Florence there are over 1,600 restaurants and in Naples more than 2,400! In Milan one can scarcely walk along the Navigli canals due to the mind-boggling density of restaurants. The downside is that three quarters of these enterprises close within their first five years because of excessive supply, improvised organisation and insufficient professionalism. The restaurant business has changed radically over the last decade. Alongside the now-beleaguered classic restaurants, there are pizza parlours (of which 90% are abysmal), sandwich bars, bistros, wine bars, taverns and a more recent invasion of 'street food', 'home restaurants' and food delivery - almost all calibrated for younger customers, the demographic most likely to eat and drink out, thereby keeping such enterprises alive. Adults, especially the elderly, eat out rarely, and then mostly limit themselves to the group meals of associations to which they belong. A restaurateur will often host an Academy dinner, even with stunning success, without subsequently seeing any Academy members back in the restaurant. Once things were different: people with

a reasonable income could afford to eat out; young people squeaked by with sparse dinner parties at home and modest meals in pizza parlours. Times have changed, most advantageously for the 343 so-called 'starred' restaurants, where a new type of clientele, chiefly from companies and luxury tourism, allows an average revenue above 700,000 Euros (and around 1.5 million Euros for three-star restaurants). Then there are such outsiders as the Cerea family of "Da Vittorio", a restaurant in Brusaporto, pulling in approximately 15 million Euros (much of it from catering); the brothers Raffaele and Massimiliano Alajmo topping 11 million; Carlo Cracco with 7.5 million; Antonino Cannavacciuolo with 5.3 million; and Massimo Bottura with 4.9 million Euros. But in this burgeoning variety demonstrating the vitality of our food offerings, many of our most authentic traditional dishes are disconcertingly absent: formerly common dishes including *pollo alla cacciatora* ('hunter's chicken' with wine and vegetables), chicken stew with peppers, *risi e bisi* (rice and peas), Venetian liver, *vitello tonnato* (veal with tuna-caper sauce - the authentic, not the processed version), *saltimbocca alla romana* (veal, ham and sage rolls cooked in wine), *piccione alla ghiotta* (wine-roasted pigeon - well done, not rare), *parmigiana di melanzane* (aubergine parmesan casserole), mixed vegetable stew (green beans, courgettes, potatoes and beets), Russian salad, beef braised in Chianti or Barolo wine, and much more. A world allowed to vanish because it is dismissed as too old, too grandmotherly; a world which doesn't allow chefs to shine and be featured in food guides, which doesn't satisfy newly recruited cooks fresh from internships with A-list chefs but able only to replicate the specific protocols that they've learnt by rote through enervating repetition. Unfamiliar with the basics of genuine cuisine, they consider a splendid plate of *tagliatelle* with meat sauce to be beneath a modern young chef wishing to charge over 100 Euros per head. Such haughtiness and arrogance are costing us dearly. We have reached the saturation point.





Cookbots? No thanks

Preparing food for others is an act of love: the automated restaurant, created in the USA, constitutes a cultural genocide.

BY GIGI PADOVANI

Member of the "Franco Marengi" Study Centre



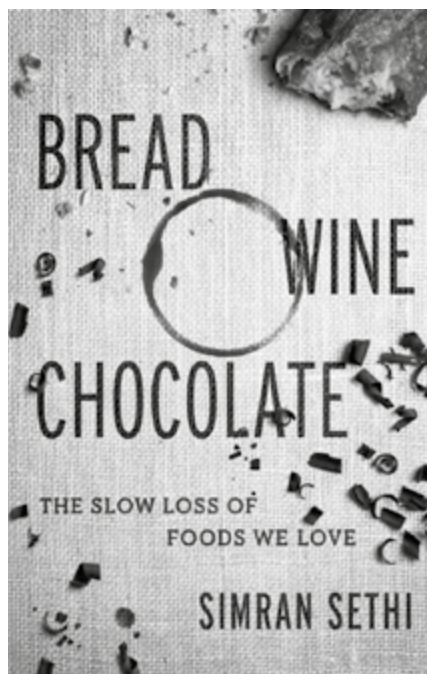
I'm no technophobe. I began working in the newspaper business when lead linotypes were still around (not a thousand years ago but merely in 1975) and now use my computer to write articles and books; I love seeking useful information on the internet and often comment on it through social media. Technology is now widespread even in the kitchen. Years ago I was greatly amused while visiting Ferran Adrià's restaurant El Bulli in Catalonia: he had invented many techniques which are now standard among chefs, from siphon spherification to the use of liquid nitrogen. I am not, therefore, among those who decry the most innovative chefs' use of Roners for low-temperature cooking or substitution of gas cookers with induction cooktops. Otherwise we might as well remain stuck in the era of spit-roasting meat in the fireplace. What ulti-

mately matters is that the food be good and its flavours be enhanced. In the US, however, things have now gone too far. On Madison Avenue in Manhattan, and in San Francisco and Washington, the Eatsa chain has opened fully automated restaurants, frequently mentioned in the news. I visited New York before the first robo-lunch was available in the Big Apple, this past May, following its experimental introduction in California. When I return to the USA, where food culture is expanding considerably, I'll probably only go to these restaurants to observe and experience the headiness of this cultural genocide. Based on internet videos I've gleaned that such pseudo-restaurants resemble apothecaries or morgues, with iPads mounted on wooden pillars for ordering food and many display cases with pre-made food (made by whom - by other machines,

presumably). Nobody greets customers; there are no humans: neither cooks nor waiters nor cashiers. Automation is complete, with a choice of strictly vegetarian foods including guacamole, quinoa, mango and guava.

Is this the culinary future which awaits us? Already during the Expo 2015 in Milan we had to endure discussions of insects as food, the likely protein diet of the future. But robot-managed restaurants are a step too far, I'd say. After all, for millennia food preparation has been an act of love, since the victuals prepared - generally by women, whether mothers or child-minders, long before the almost exclusively male celebrity chefs - end up in someone else's body, becoming flesh and blood and providing the energy to sustain life.

Not only that. As the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss taught in his *The Raw and the Cooked*, when humans began cooking, they engaged in a cultural act; hence cooking marks an episode of crucial growth in the history of civilisation. In their book *Life is Meals*, the famous American food-writing couple James and Kay Salter observed: "The meal is the essential act of life". They remind us that it is not only a daily habit but also the secret of a lasting marriage, an etiquette school, and even a prelude to love. Indeed, each significant moment in our lives is marked by food, by shared eating or drinking: whether it be a wedding, a funeral, a christening or a religious holiday - recall how many Italian sweets are linked to patron saints and religious festivals - the occasion inevitably has a signature dish. What emotion can a cookbot give us? What



happy memories? My childhood Christmases were characterised by my grandmother's frantic preparation of Piedmontese ravioli over several days: roasting the beef, preparing the veal stew and rice, pan-frying vegetables, producing meat sauce and hand-made pasta cut with a fluted wheel... Must all this perforce disappear?

We know that in the next fifteen years machines will probably take over a third of jobs away from humans.

Everyone is wondering if this second technological revolution, after the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, will make us happier, increasing our leisure time to dedicate to our favourite activities, or instead plunge millions of unemployed workers into destitution. Paradoxically, we'll surely have more time to cook, discover ingre-

dients, and seek the most appealing specialities from food artisans. As highlighted by the Indian-American author Simran Sethi in her book *Bread, Chocolate and Wine*, many 'endangered' flavours are disappearing due to reduced biodiversity. Eatsa's automated restaurants constitute a vehicle of this attack on the pleasure of taste, being even worse than fast-food establishments which have at least been attempting to adapt their menus to locally sourced produce in recent years.

I cannot imagine an *amatriciana* prepared by a machine, a digital pizza or an automatic *tiramisù*, to cite a few proudly Italian recipes. Rather than robots, future jobs will go to farmers and cooks (preferably female), that we might love ourselves and eat better.

GIGI PADOVANI

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MAGAZINE

Academicians' contributions to the magazine are not only welcome, but essential. However Academicians should keep in mind some important guidelines so that their contributions, which are the fruit of their passion and dedication, are expeditiously published.

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

● **Article length:** it is important that articles are between 3,500 and 7,000 characters (including spaces); this is the best way to avoid cuts that are bothersome for both the editors and those submitting the texts. All computers should be able to provide character counts.

● Each issue of the magazine is printed one month ahead of the cover date so that it can be delivered to the Academicians by that date. Those submissions that are time sensitive should be sent in ample time.

● **"From the Delegations" Section:** In order to facilitate reading, please **limit articles to a maximum of 2,500 characters including spaces**.

● Please remember that in the "From the Delegations" section as well as elsewhere, **descriptions of meetings held outside the territory of the Delegation or in the homes of Academicians, unless they are associated with an important event, will not be published**. Also, **please do not include a list of dishes and wines**. Such listing should appear on the appropriate rating form regarding convivial meetings.

● **Rating forms for convivial meetings:** should be sent to the Secretariat (segreteria@accademia1953.it). It is also important to limit remarks in the "notes and comments" section of the form to **800 characters** (maximum 1,000) spaces included in order to avoid cuts. Rating forms that reach the Secretariat more than 30 days after the event will be discarded.

● We also request that you not submit reports on convivial meetings held **outside the territory of the Delegation**, or that take place in the **homes of Academicians**, or are otherwise not held in restaurants or public venues, as they will not be published.



Carême and the feel for opportunity

The eminent cook linked some of his greatest recipes to the major figures of his day.

BY CLAUDIO NOVELLI
Napoli-Capri Academician



All great chefs, or at least those whose names appeared in contemporary chronicles or have even gone down in history, have had the acuity to link some of their best recipes to the important personages of their time. In the years between the fall of the Bastille and St. Helena, the rising stars and celebrities of the moment were the foremost generals and marshals of France. Wars were not yet fought in camouflage fatigues; the public imagination was rife with plumes and feathered helmets. Europe roiled with revolutionary tremors; Napoleon was promoted from first consul to emperor, and the Congress of Vienna, for better or for worse, ensured a century of peace in Europe. Not even the great Carême could resist the lure of the uniform: he began with Vauban, Fabert and the Dukes of Noail-

les, all marshals of France, honoured with a *grosse pièce* of beef; Gaston de Foix-Nemours, whose untimely demise was due to a judicious pike blow during the battle of Ravenna, was remembered with a more delicate veal sirloin.

To Louis-Gabriel Suchet, a general and then a marshal of France awarded the title of 'Duke of Albufera', he dedicated his "Chicken Albufera", accompanied by an "Albufera sauce" to outdo Dunand and his skimpy Chicken Marengo. Not yet satisfied, he proceeded to massacre ducks with York ham and Malaga wine (Albufera is in the Spanish region of Valencia) to produce "Duck Albufera", subsequently braving the envy of Napoleon and, more frighteningly, Wellington with a "Loin Albufera" capable of challenging the most cast-iron stomachs. But even Suchet had to yield to the great Russian general Pyotr Ivanovich Bagration, prince and scion of one of the world's most ancient dynasties, to whom Napoleon paid homage by publicly declaring that "there are no good Russian generals, other than Bagration". And Carême likewise honoured him and his lineage through a series of Bagration-themed recipes: finally peace reigned, and alongside a meat soup, one could enjoy a fish soup, eggs, a salad and even some dainty little timbales.

What could one dedicate to an admiral, in this case Guy-Victor Duperré, victor of the battle of Grand Port (Mauritius), whose name figures on the Arc de Triomphe, if not a *grosse pièce* of salmon and another of salmon trout? Both were accompanied by skewered garnishes and the complicated potage tortue, a

so-called 'turtle soup' fortunately bereft of actual turtle, whose absence is however compensated for by a wealth of ingredients including sole fillets, veal sweetbreads, truffles and Espagnole sauce.

To Henri de Rigny, another admiral though with a marked propensity for deploying marines, he dedicated a delicate creamed freshwater shrimp soup (of course, dedicating a freshwater shrimp recipe to a man of the sea appears rather flippant).

The Polish general Józef Chłopicki was placated with a Rossoli, namely a rice potage with added beet juice as an allusion to the general's profession. To the brilliant and merciless Masséna he dedicated a sharp-fanged pike, also with skewered garnishes; while the valiant and impulsive Desaix, who fell at the battle of Marengo, was remembered with a *grosse pièce* of boiled beef. Marshal MacDonald, who had earned glory at the battle of Wagram, was honoured not with mussel soup as his victory title of Duke of Taranto might have suggested, but with yet another *grosse pièce*, this time of veal fillet. Served rare, of course.

After 1815, even Carême hung up his sabre. He spent a few months at the court of the Prince of Wales. At the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, the Tsar got his own back by hiring him temporarily and briefly taking him to St. Petersburg. Having finally realised that the world had changed and the era of splendid uniforms was definitely over, he opted for a leisurely return to Paris as chef to the Rothschilds, who spared no expense.



A *buen retiro* in Uruguay

There is a small patch of Italy in the world's southernmost regions, where Italian cuisine is venerated.

BY FELICE MODICA
Val di Noto Delegate

Free-range chicken: the elegance of simplicity



Wild duck



In Sarandí Grande, located in the Florida region of Uruguay, there is an *estancia*, or farm, called *Los Gurises*, meaning ‘The Boys’ in Spanish. Its owner-operators are Luigi, from the banks of Lake Garda in the province of Brescia, and Eva, from Bratislava, married a lifetime ago and by now enthusiasts of all things Italian. *Los Gurises* is 180 km from Montevideo, and its owners, formerly livestock breeders and traders, have transformed this paradise of several thousand hectares into a splendid hunting and luxury agricultural tourism estate, using superlative local ingredients to offer tastefully and intelligently recreated northern Italian traditional foods. The pair arrived in South America in search of a *buen retiro* - a ‘good retreat’ for their retirement. However, some people are born entrepreneurs, and Luigi did not need long to invent a new and enjoyable form of employment alongside his wife, a splendid lady unable to sit around twiddling her thumbs. He was a livestock

breeder and trader worldwide. Before that he was a master cheese-maker learning from his father who made wheels of parmesan and taleggio cheese. Arriving in Uruguay, he bought *Los Gurises*, in the countryside of Sarandí Grande de Portamento de Florida, having fallen in love with it. The meat here is of unsurpassed quality: free-range livestock, tender and low in cholesterol, and the best milk, thanks to the marvellous pastures of the pampas. No less crucially, there is excellent game here. It was of course no simple task to combine all this abundance in a single idyllic setting, but Luigi, Eva and Laura (the assistant manager of the estate) have pulled it off. It started with cheese (including asiago, taleggio, and even parmesan), for private use only - and with stunning success. Next came an extensive orchard containing various fruits, followed by a vegetable garden. Produce initially destined for family use became too abundant. The two indefatigable workers gradually

created the perfect agricultural tourism setting, where everything (or nearly so) comes from the vast estate's own lands and is transformed into refined victuals. The *estancia* was updated and enlarged, and now accommodates ten or so guests (and their dogs, if they wish) in rooms with all the mod cons. Hunters aiming to indulge their passion here can abandon all hope of slimming down. They will find abundant game, well-trained hounds, unobtrusive hunting guides, and also a cuisine which they will be powerless to resist. It all begins with a breakfast involving a dozen or more jams and a wide array of tarts and cakes. Lunch is a luxurious, ever-changing, unpredictable marvel. Indeed, like Paganini, Eva never repeats a performance, while always bringing the best out of the excellent local ingredients. Her creations are a delight for the palate and for the eye. Even a simple broth made from truly free-range poultry is enough to make us wax lyrical.

Being subsequently presented with hand-made *pappardelle* pasta with duck or hare sauce, duck liver pâté with partridge breast, or partridge escabeche is enough to move one to tears. And then hare fillet on a bed of caramelised citrus fruits, a supremely delicate wild boar ham, beef stew, flame-grilled veal, spit-roasted turtle doves, or the delicious charcuterie prepared by sausage-makers imported specially from Italy...

All things considered, whoever visits Uruguay and loves good Italian food would be sadly mistaken in failing to make their way here.



The *cinta senese* pig: a recovered heritage breed

Considered an irreplaceable resource for millennia due to the high quality of its flesh, it risked extinction following the Second World War.

BY ETTORE FALVO

Valdichiana-Valdorcina Sud Academician

The European pig was domesticated in the 5th century BC; it then spread in multiple variants throughout several Neolithic cultures in Europe.

In the lands around Siena, a specific breed was developed and established, becoming so firmly associated with its territory as to earn the name *cinta senese* or 'Sienese belted'. Its distinctive characteristics are its markedly rustic nature, its frugal eating habits, and most notably, a light-hued stripe from shoulder to abdomen, interrupting its dark grey coat in the manner of a belt. Its flesh is of extraordinary quality.

It originated in the wooded hills of Montagnola Senese between the Merse and Elsa river valleys north of Siena. It then

spread all over the Sienese territory, in Val di Chiana and Val d'Orcia, and subsequently also in Mugello and Valdarno to the north and Maremma to the south. In 1940 it was identified as the main Tuscan pig breed.

Some mediaeval depictions portray it as hirsute and vigorous, with notable tusks, half-way between a wild and a tame pig. Its innate features made it ideal for free-range forest life, but ancient sources also describe it as well domesticated and mention its presence even in cities. A Sienese chronicle from 1300 reports that a sow and four piglets (*troiam et quattuor porcellos*) were let out to pasture in Piazza del Campo, the city's main square, to clear up the debris which had fallen off the market stalls.





The breed's proud and rebellious demeanour earned it the respect of such noble Sieneſe families as the Parigini and the Sergrifi, who dignified it by portraying it on their coats of arms. It was even the target of thefts and raids which went down in history. In 1282, Tacco di Ugolino, from the Guardavalle branch of the Cacciaconti family, lord of Fratta and father of Ghino di Tacco, who later owned the fortress of Radicofani and appeared in Dante's *Purgatory* and a tale in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, was indicted by the mayor of Torrita alongside several of his relatives for stealing two *cinta* pigs, and fined fifty lire. Evidently the lesson didn't stick: though hunted throughout the Republic of Siena, the family continued pillaging, and some years later the adult males of that family were arrested and publicly executed in Piazza del Campo. Ghino and his brother Turino were pardoned because they had not reached their fifteenth year.

As further evidence of the high esteem in which the *cinta senese* was held, let us enumerate some of the breed's many appearances in late mediaeval and Renaissance art.

In the *Allegory of Good Government*, a fresco completed circa 1340 in the City Hall of Siena, Ambrogio Lorenzetti depicted a *cinta* being taken by a peasant into the city where salted meat vendors were found in Via del Porrione. In the Collegiata of San Gimignano, the Florentine Benozzo Gozzoli painted a fresco of St. Anthony with a *cinta* in the mid-15th century. In the Dante Room of the same city's Town Hall, Lippo Memmi, a talented collaborator of Simone Martini, painted a sumptuous *Maestà* (Madonna and Child enthroned) in 1317, including St. Anthony of Egypt accompanied by a *cinta* piglet. The St. Anthony painted by Priamo, older brother of Jacopo della Quercia, in the Oratory of St. Anthony in Volterra presides gravely and imposingly on his majestic seat, while his counterpoint is a small *cinta*, seated on his right, almost like a faithful puppy.



Raised in Tuscany since the Etruscan era and considered an irreplaceable resource for millennia, the *cinta senese* became seriously endangered after the Second World War. In the general frenzy of low-cost overproduction which was establishing itself at the time, breeding standards were also overhauled. The groups of eight or ten *cinta* pigs formerly found on most farms throughout the region disappeared over a few years, replaced by gigantic enclosed livestock pens where hundreds or even thousands of animals were crammed. The rustic, rebellious *cinta* could never have adapted to such circumstances.

This ancient breed, selected over centuries for precisely the opposite living and breeding conditions, was incompatible with such new production criteria. Wrested from the woods and pastures which offered it several hectares a head and confined to a couple of square metres per capita, the *cinta* became fierce and unmanageable. Adults deprived of sufficient space very frequently attacked each other; following their atavistic instinct, sows murdered all but a couple of their farrow. Even the quality of the animals' meat plunged headlong. Condemned to a life of constant suffering, the *cinta* no longer even produced good meat. It was rapidly replaced by northern breeds of much larger, more placid and more fertile white pigs.

In 1986, three males and six females were found in all of Tuscany, all in their original territory of Montagnola Senese, where they fortunately retained deep roots. This was all that remained of a once-great breed. Alarm spread among the more enlightened farmers, of whom some took the matter to heart and engineered a veritable miracle with assistance from two academic institutes. Through a breeding programme pushing the limits of scientific feasibility, considering that only three bloodlines remained, they succeeded in averting the breed's extinction and reversing its endangered status.

As an illustrative comparison, the *cinta*'s good fortune was not shared by the *cappuccia*, a breed of black, long-bodied, swift-footed and rebellious pigs well-suited for the forest but even more resistant to imprisonment than the *cinta*. It originated in the uplands round Arezzo and was once rather common in the Val di Chiana, being also frequently found in the Val d'Orcia. By the time of the 1986 census, it was already fully extinct for years.

In March 2012, the 'cinta senese' classification, restricted to the flesh of certified pigs born, raised and slaughtered in Tuscany in accordance with tradition, obtained 'Protected Designation of Origin' (PDO) recognition. The Quality Consortium for *cinta senese* has published a manual of breed criteria.

Today the *cinta senese* roams fields and forests as in former times. It is bred in almost all Tuscany, whether free-range or semi-free-range with simple shelters and carefully calibrated nutritional supplementation. Its flesh has regained its former excellence, with unique and universally prized aromatic and textural characteristics.

The scientific community has recognised its extraordinary dietary and health-giving properties due to its high levels of omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids.

Fortunately, this tale has a happy ending.

ETTORE FALVO