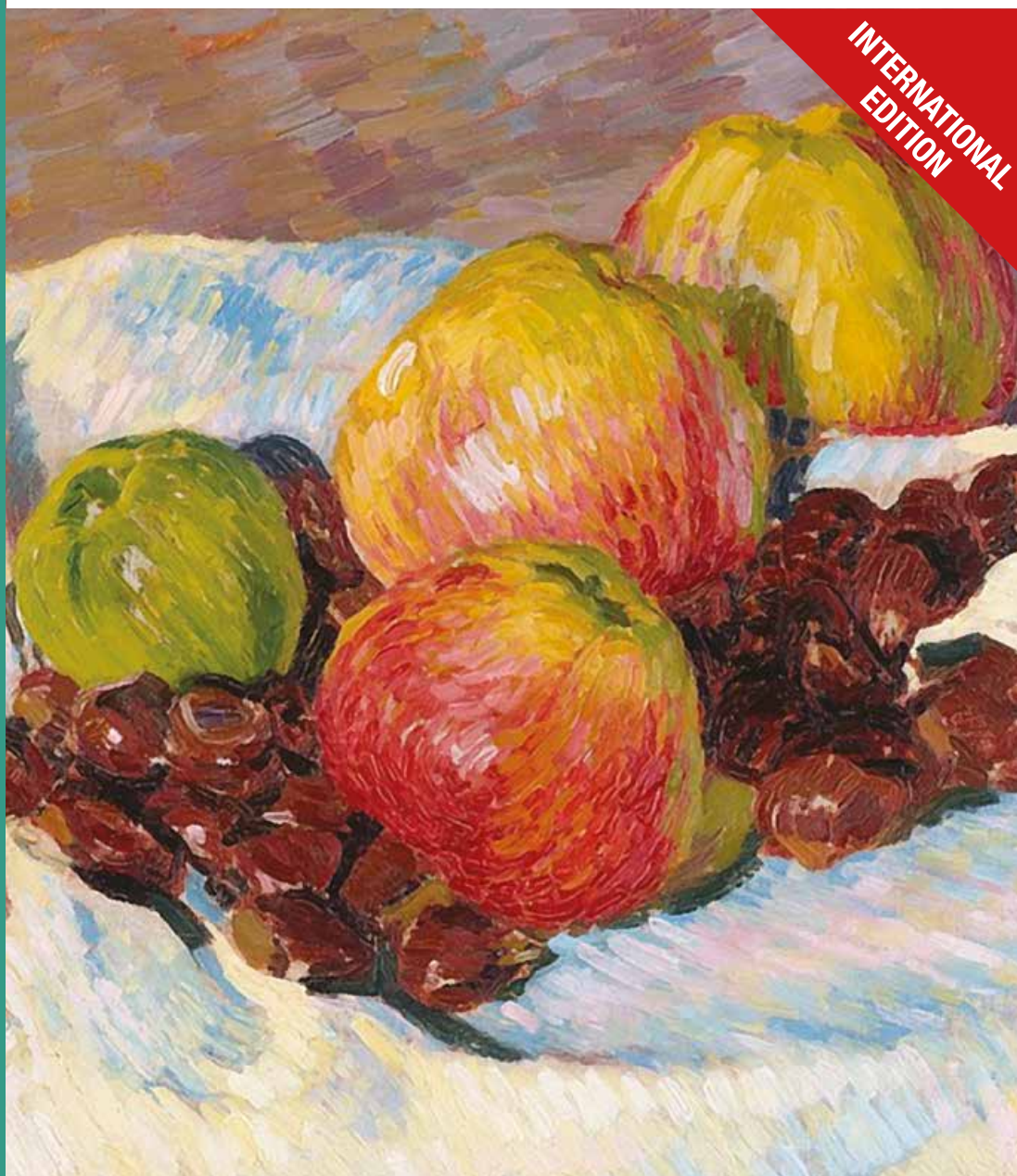


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On the cover: *graphic elaboration of Apples and Chestnuts (1908) by Giovanni Giacometti; private collection*

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The Bari Forum: Delegates and Legates attended, but it was for all Academicians

*Members of one big, lively,
vital, beautiful family.*

During the past month of September, an important educational Forum was held in Bari, dedicated to all the Delegates and Legates of the Italian Academy of Cuisine. This issue of our magazine contains ample photographic evidence thereof and an exhaustive article recounting the meeting's various phases. It was **a fundamentally important event for Academic life**, with 200 Delegates and Legates participating from around the world, in part thanks to the complex organisational and logistical effort brilliantly undertaken by an efficient incoming tourism agency in Bari and the fantastic support of our Secretariat in Milan, also represented in person.

A climate of friendship and sharing

This event, however, does not only concern the Delegates and Legates present in Bari: indeed, the information received and the climate of friendship and sharing that surrounded us during those days will surely have **important effects on individual Delegations' and Legations' future activities**.

Numerous first-time Delegates were present; they had no idea what the Academy truly is: **an enormous family united by one and the same love for Italian cuisine**. Personally meeting the Council and Advisory Board members and their colleagues added another layer to their ability to guide their own Academicians.

The meeting's programme was arranged into two large categories. The first phase focussed on topics within our own Association: our Council members recalled and emphasised **the most important and sensitive aspects of our activities in**



by Paolo Petroni

President of the Accademia



Italy and abroad, while our tax consultant set out some features of Delegation management. The second part, instead, was dedicated to **food culture in general**, with high-profile speakers addressing topics from new culinary technologies to the importance of social media and informations about restaurants. The meeting concluded with an impassioned speech on **Artificial Intelligence in culinary matters** given by **Paola Pisano**, our former Minister for Technological Innovation, and a painstaking analysis of Italian cuisine's identikit masterfully presented by **Marino Niola** and **Elisabetta Moro**, both full professors of anthropology and brilliant journalists and authors. There was also a screening of a short film created by our Ministry of Culture on the occasion of our UNESCO candidature. It was the video of a song with lyrics by **Mogol**, performed by **Al Bano**, called "Vai Italia" ("Let's Go, Italy").

*Academicians from around the world
attended virtually*

All meeting materials are available on our website, so even Delegates and Legates who could not participate can view them. I chose to dedicate this Focus to the Bari meeting because I am certain that, through our Delegates and Legates, **it will have a positive and relevant influence on the Academy's future as a whole**. Our nearly 8,000 Academicians throughout the world were not all physically present, but we felt them among us in spirit through their representatives. Our final auspicious toast goes to all Academicians: members of one big, lively, vital, beautiful family.



Giorgio Armani: *dining in style*

by **Giuseppe Benelli**
Lunigiana Academician

*He conquered the world
not only through
fashion but also food.*

Farewell to **Giorgio Armani**: the fashion king is gone at 91, leaving an epoch-making legacy of style and innovation. The great stylist conquered the world not only through fashion but food as well, transforming it into a manifesto for 'Made in Italy' ai-

ming to spread the Italian spirit worldwide. He was an architect of taste; his rapport with food is an exceptional aesthetic autobiography. In an interview with *Harper's Bazaar* in 2015, he declared: **"I love simple Italian dishes:** mozzarella with tomato, prosciutto and canteloupe, winter soups. For Christmas I still prepare my family's traditional *tortelli alla piacentina*." The chef **Antonio D'Angelo** specifies: "Mr Armani prefers a little filling in abundant pasta. He likes the 'bite' at the edges of each *tortello*, so the outer dough sheets must measure 7x7 cm, with no more than a gramme and a half of filling." Mere details for some, but the difference lies in the details. The stylist loved repeating: "Rigour is my main aesthetic standard. I would like to eliminate the superfluous forever."

*His empire also encompassed
the food and restaurant sector*

Armani saw style as a way of life, and **sophisticated simplicity as a sign of elegance in every field**; and food, one of daily life's most important elements, was inevitably part of this worldview. Elegance is the inner capacity to discern and judiciously select what is right, beautiful and harmonious. His famous definition: "Style is elegance, not extravagance. Elegance is not being noticed, but being remembered." Armani gave a voice to Italian aesthetics, offering it to the world with the discretion of one who need not shout to be heard. He constructed a veritable empire which also encompassed the food and restaurant sector, with a global presence far transcending mere fashion. **In the 1990s he opened the first Armani Restaurants and Emporio Armani Caffè**, in Milan and then Paris, Tokyo, New York. In 1988 Armani said of the Emporio Armani Caffè in Paris: "It occurred to me then that a place to enjoy a break while shopping or an apéritif after work might be helpful. **Its format must clearly be understated and pleasant**, easily fitting into different cities. But that project reflected a far greater vision: to articulate the Armani style in every sector. Cafés and restaurants appeared a logical extension and at the same time an interesting gamble which, over time, has borne fruit." **Maddalena Fossati Dondero** writes: "...served in such an elegant ambiance, tomato spaghetti were a balm for the heart as well as a pleasure for the palate".



Giorgio Armani at the Locanda del Falco

That menu contained the best of Italy's essence, and in 2018, under the guidance of the Sicilian chef **Massimo Tringali**, the Paris Emporium received a prestigious Michelin star, maintaining it for eight consecutive years.

From 2000 onwards, there was a sequence of openings and successes worldwide. In 2002 Milan witnessed a new Japanese restaurant appearing in the shadow of its cathedral's Madonnina statue. The chef **Nobuyuki Matsuhisa**, whose name can be shortened into the more familiar Nobu, was already a culinary star, and was the very person who proposed the opening of Armani New York. From 2007 – when the Armani Ristorante, now led by **Bruno Hiruma**, opened on the tenth floor of the Ginza Tower in Tokyo – until now, 26 Armani dining venues have been opened worldwide: from Milan to Dubai, from the Croisette in Cannes by way of Osaka to New York, with its Armani/Ristorante in the elegant Armani building on Madison Avenue; in 2025 the Armani/Caffè Beijing opened in China. The final project was **the acquisition of the historic Capannina in Forte dei Marmi**, where in the 1960s Armani met his friend and then business partner **Sergio Galeotti**, to revivify it and give it a high-end restaurant.

For him, food, like fashion, meant elegance, quality and enjoyment

For Giorgio Armani, food was no afterthought but a true extension of his aesthetic philosophy. Food, like fashion, meant elegance, quality and enjoyment. It meant offering deliberately crafting an experience in every detail, from restaurant design to the finished dish. **Beauty must reside in the quality of ingredients and the sobriety of preparation**, all governed by precision in proportions and harmony of combinations. In a world wherein star-studded cuisine makes a dish into a spectacle, Armani **stayed faithful to the idea that**



food needs restraint, not excess. This idea was inspired by **the culinary traditions of Piacenza**, renewed through many variants. Besides *tortelli* there are also *caniff*, potato croquettes with melted Vacche Rosse parmesan cheese, which has the earthy aroma of truffles and the pungent essence of roasted lemons; white wine *scaloppina*; and *tiramisù savoiardo*, a masterpiece of the pastry chef **Beppe Allegretta**.

2002 saw the establishment of **Armani/Dolci**, the brand's decadent side, with chocolates, pralines, *panettone* and other sweet delights, presented in elegant packaging evoking the fabrics and colours of his fashion collections. Always on the lookout for talents to cultivate his other projects, from 2019 Armani entrusted his entire chocolate production to the masterful artisan **Guido Gobino**. Armani demonstrated that authentic luxury is perceived in attention to detail and the rediscovery of roots. His restaurants are refined but never ostentatious; his menus exalt raw materials without overpowering them, offering an experience that nourishes body and soul equally. Crafted with the same rigour as his clothing, they incorporate minimalist design, prized materials and a sophisticated but never overdone feel. Because Armani taught us that

fashion is not just garments, but also vision, identity, culture. All in all, the style which linked Armani to food is woven of coherence and the search for perfection. For him, a luxury experience was not complete without a meal reflecting the same excellence as his brand.

In Rivalta he savoured recipes which tasted like family Sundays

Gathering his loved ones around the table was one of the few things able to distract him from work. The Antica Locanda del Falco in Rivalta, **in the countryside near Piacenza where he was born and raised, was a familiar refuge for the stylist over forty years.** Every weekend, when he could, he had lunch there: his preferred spot was a bench near the bar, where his mother **Maria Raimondi** often joined him. Piping-hot *anolini* in capon broth, *tortelli* filled with ricotta and spinach and seasoned with butter and sage, *pisarei e fasò* (small gnocchi with beans) which tasted of Sundays with the family: **these dishes were not just food, but memories.** A cuisine with peasant roots able to renew itself without losing its soul.

Giuseppe Benelli



Queen of the South: *melannurca* apples from Campania

by Mario Ascolese

Salerno Academician

*Fruit of memory
and ingenuity.*

In the heart of southern Italy, among the sunny fields of Campania Felix, grows a fruit which, more than any other, represents a bridge between history, culture and health: the apple called *melannurca campana*. It is **not just an**

apple but the fruit of an ancient ritual, of patient dedication, of a food culture that speaks the language of the earth and of time. And like any queen worthy of respect, it has a fascinating story.

An apple rooted in antiquity

The origins of *melannurca* are lost in the mists of time. In his *Naturalis Historia*, **Pliny the Elder** mentions an apple vari-

ety called *orbiculata*, cultivated in southern fields and renowned for its flavour and its digestive properties. Other scholars identify this as the progenitor of today's *melannurca*.

Its name possibly derives from the Latin *malum* (apple) and *Orc(h)us* (a Roman god of the underworld), hence *annurca*, possibly indicating **a fruit 'of the shadows', which matures on the ground, in the shade, according to its unique ripening ritual**. After being picked unripe, the apples are carefully laid on dedicated



melai ('apple places'), strips of ground covered in straw, and frequently turned to ensure even light exposure and thus a uniform colour. Through this rite of passage - both agricultural and symbolic - the *melannurca* is transformed: from a pale, unripe fruit, it becomes a reddish jewel with a firm and superbly fragrant pulp.

From Campania to the world: a concentrate of well-being

Though viscerally bound with Campania, particularly the provinces of **Caserta and Naples, whose volcanic soil and balmy climate favour its growth**, over time the *melannurca* has gradually spread, becoming a symbol of southern fruit agriculture. **In 2006 it obtained PGI recognition** (Protected Geographical Indication), a certification which safeguards not only the product but the millennia of expertise accompanying it. Care surrounding **manual cultivation**, the **absence of treatments after harvesting**, and **varietal selection** has preserved intact the distinctive characteristics which make it unique among all apples worldwide. *Melannurca* is a tiny nutritional miracle. Unlike other apples, it has **a crunchy but not grainy pulp** whose **tart and sweet flavour** stimulates salivation, **facilitating digestion**. It is, however, **in the field of health that its superpowers are revealed**.

Numerous studies - including those conducted by the Pharmacy Department of the Frederick II University in Naples - have demonstrated that its high procyanidin, polyphenol and soluble fibre content acts beneficially on lipids, contributing to



cholesterol reduction and improved levels of HDL cholesterol. *Melannurca* is also rich in B-group, C and other **vitamins**, and **minerals** including potassium and iron, and also improves intestinal function and contrasts oxidation.

Tradition at the table: a symbol to safeguard

In the cuisine of Campania, *melannurca* is both a **dessert in itself** and a **major ingredient in both sweet and savoury recipes**. Its potent but balanced flavour makes it ideal for tarts, jams and strudels, but also more elaborate recipes. The most beloved recipes include ***melannurca* chicken**, wherein the white meat is enriched by the tart sweetness of the fruit, creating **an intriguing flavour contrast with an ancient feel**. Also popular are **fragrant risotti with diced *melannurca***

***nurca* and sweet-and-sour side dishes** with copper-toned Montoro onions and apple vinegar. *Melannurca* also lends itself to surprising modern creations: crunchy oven crisps, limpid and highly antioxidant juices, and even artisanal liqueurs and aromatic beers. **Its versatility** testifies to a tradition which **is constantly renewed through judicious ingenuity**.

In a time when diversity and local identities risk being flattened by globalisation, the *melannurca* represents **a bulwark of biodiversity associated with culture**. It is a fruit which speaks of farmers inheriting ancient gestures, of hands that meticulously care for every detail, of a Campania which stands firm and proudly presents its most authentic treasures. Serving *melannurca* means not only enjoying an excellent product, but also choosing to be part of history. A history made of earth, toil, memory and knowledge: the history of an apple that became legend.

Mario Ascolese



MELANNURCA CHICKEN

Ingredients: 1 free-range chicken weighing about 1.2 kg (in pieces), 4 Campanian *melannurca* PGI apples, 1 coppery onion of Montoro, 1 glass of dry white wine, extra-virgin olive oil, salt, pepper, rosemary and bay leaves (optional).

Preparation: wash, core and slice the apples, retaining their skin. In a large pot, fry the finely chopped onion in a drizzle of oil until golden; add the chicken pieces and lightly brown them on all sides. Add the apples, then the wine. Add salt and pepper to taste, then rosemary and bay leaves as desired; cover and cook on a low flame for about 40 minutes, adding water sparingly if necessary. Serve hot, with the slightly reduced cooking liquid and the apple slices soft but intact.

We recommend pairing the dish with a young Aglianico wine with vivacious tannins, or a fruity Campanian rosé, to bring out the contrast between sweet and sour.



Two eggs are all you need

by Morello Pecchioli

Honorary Academician for Verona

Omelettes are always delicious and accessible, even at short notice.

The understated, humble, delicious, ancient *frittata* (omelette) provides all that is needed for a good meal: it is tasty and always available ever since chickens have laid eggs, that is, since the beginning of Creation. It occupies third place in the order of avian evolution: first came the chicken, then the egg, and immediately thereafter, the *frittata*. However, in these ungrateful modern times, crowded with rabble bereft of historic memory and burdened with dulled palates, it is ignominiously relegated to home kitchens, wedged between the 'nothing in the fridge' and the 'couple of eggs' to mix with leftovers.

Restaurant menus ignore it

Restaurant menus, from temples of haute cuisine to rural *trattorie*, ignore it. So do cookbooks – not all, but most. The traditional Italian *frittata* doesn't leave the confines of the home; nor, a fortiori, does it o'erperch the borders of its culinary homeland.

But if space hems it in, if geography unjustly imprisons it, time, *au contraire*, proclaims its gastronomic virtues. History attests to its ancient excellence and recognises its delicious merits, thanks to which it has placated generations of palates, nourishing and satisfying the populace of every Italic lineage and every tribe which, *pedibus calcantibus*, has roamed the length and breadth of our *Buon Paese*: our land of delights.

The Italian term *frittata* derives from

the Latin verb *frigere*: to fry, roast, grill. Its past participle yields *frictum*: 'that which is fried'. The Romans, whose musical classical tongue was far more precise than our modern descendant thereof, called the omelette *ovorum intrita*, meaning 'egg paste'. What varieties of *ovorum intrita* delighted Roman palates? This is revealed by **Marcus Gavius Apicius**, a gastronomer of the Eternal City, in his *De re coquinaria* (*On Culinary Matters*): with roses, or asparagus (particularly loved by **Augustus**), or milk, elderflowers, or lettuce.

The omelette, or more precisely the *frixorium* (frying pan), marched throughout the lands of the Caesars among the *impedimenta* (luggage) of Roman legionaries. In Constantinople, high, fluffy *sphoungato* omelettes were on Byzantine court menus.

Frittata of the thousand faces

The cuisine of Pavia retains the traditional **frog omelette** apparently dating to the times of the Longobard king **Alboin**. And so, century upon century, generation after generation, through millions upon millions of eggs, the omelette has reached the third millennium.

But what of the word 'omelette'? The French omelette is foreign, transalpine; it is aristocratic, born between the Tuileries and the royal palace at Versailles. Our humble *frittata*, instead, belongs to the people. The fragrance of **fortàgia with onions pervades the calli of Venice** as, wrapped in yellow oiled paper, it travels by gondola. The cent of smoked *scamorza* cheese in the **Neapolitan *frittata di maccheroni*** invades the Spanish quarters of the Parthenopean city. The aroma of *grana* cheese with spinach wafts from the **Milanese *fritada*** to infiltrate the





fog over the Navigli canals. The perfumed basil of the **Genoese frità col pesto** infuses the narrow *carruggi* of the Ligurian capital. The bouquet of the **Roman frit-tata alla burina** travels from the Trastevere to the old ghetto before seeping into the Vatican palaces, intertwining with the redolence of incense. Created by peasants, it is worthy of popes. The French omelette is cooked only on one side; the *frittata*, on both, revealing its Italian spirit even in this way: are we Italians not masters of turning the tables, which we call *rivoltare la frittata*: 'flipping the *frittata*'?

Can a *frittata* also be a first course, meaning a pasta dish? Why not? For example, we have one with *maccheroni*. In Naples, spaghetti, almost as revered as **Saint Gennaro**, must never be discarded, even if left over from the previous meal; they are kept in the fridge awaiting elevation as a principal ingredient, alongside eggs, of a delicious *frittata*. We have cited spaghetti and *maccheroni*, but equally acceptable are vermicelli, penne, *chitar-rine*, *bavette*, *troccoli*, *rigatoni*, *sedanini*... any leftover pasta. And if nothing is left over? We cook pasta, and, when it is *al dente*, we drain it and make our *frittata*. A Neapolitan speciality is **frittata di scam-marò**, meaning essentially 'Lenten frit-tata'. It is a humble dish. The days of *scammarò*, or *scammaru*, in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies were those of Lent, when for religious reasons one must abstain from meat and eggs. Then why is it called *frittata*? Because after being boiled until *al dente*, the vermicelli, or spaghetti, were poured into a frying pan already containing anchovies, garlic, raisins, pine nuts, pitted olives and parsley, all fried in oil. This recipe was created by **Ippolito**

Cavalcanti, duke of Buonvicino, in 1837. Considering his fame as a careful gastronomist, the religious leaders of the Bourbon kingdom, piously worried lest the period of penitence preceding Easter be contaminated by carnivorous gluttony, sought his advice. And since perhaps eggs were the only animal ingredient available to commoners, they asked Cavalcanti to remove them from the popular *frittata di maccheroni*.

The futurist frittata, and Petronilla's recipes

Not only pleasing to the palate, the *frittata* also cuts a fine linguistic figure. *La frittata è fatta* ('the omelette is cooked'), we say when an error cannot be rectified. The king of the metaphorical *frittate* (the plural), meaning blunders, was a prince, namely **Philip**, husband of **Elizabeth II**. One of his most egregious faux pas occurred when, during a party, he told a group of deaf-mute children very close to a steel band: "If you're near there, no wonder you are deaf." During a tasting of fine wines in Rome, the prince of gaffes loudly demanded: "Get me a beer. I don't care what kind it is, just get me a beer." The largest *frittata* in the universe was cooked in a single verse an Italian poet, **Giovan Battista Marino**, 400 years ago. Moonstruck, just like **Cher**, the prince of Baroque literature immortalised the winsome satellite thus: "Del padellon del ciel la grande frittata" ('From the sky's prodigious pan, the great *frittata*').

Gabriele D'Annunzio's favourite food was *frittata*. To have its raw material always

available, he kept a large chicken coop at his villa in Gardone. Known as the *Vate* ('ovate', 'prophetic poet'), he favoured an 'aerial' *frittata*; and this floats us right over to the futurist 'formula' (recipe) of the 'aeropainter' **Fillia**, a follower of the Futurist founder **Marinetti** and thus of the culinary current combating pasta, thought to facilitate Italian laziness. The 'formula' is entitled **Promontorio Siciliano** (*Sicilian Promontory*): "Mince tuna, apples, olives and peanuts together. Smear the resulting paste over a cold egg and jam *frittata*." To those brave enough to eat: we salute you, and bon appetit!

We come now to **Petronilla**, the journalist-housewife who made her mark on the history of cuisine and customs during the fascist *ventennio* (twenty years) by publishing, for years, a weekly recipe in the Sunday supplement *Domenica del Corriere*. These recipes were precious, especially in the trying times of the 'iniquitous sanctions' earlier and the war and rationing later, followed by the black market immediately thereafter. It was **Petronilla** who taught bourgeois women domestic self-sufficiency. She addressed them as 'dear friends' and wrote several books to help them. Among them are *200 suggerimenti per questi tempi* (*200 Suggestions for These Times*) and *Ricette di Petronilla per tempi eccezionali* (*Petronilla's Recipes for Exceptional Times*). **Frittate and fritters abound**: with ham and ricotta, spicy meat, spinach, potatoes, or giblets, or stewed in tomato sauce... At the time, *frittata* was a luxury that ration cards permitted only once a week: "Here is how, these days, we can prepare a lovely meal using only egg rations." No eggs? Never fear: Petronilla was a specialist in 'missing ingredient' cuisine. Without eggs, one could use yellow pumpkin paste.

A celebrated manifesto, inviting the people to exercise nutritional restraint, menacingly warned: "By overeating, you steal from the Fatherland". On the groaning bourgeois table, amid heaping platters of every food, shone the delicious round sun of the *frittata*. Amid such poverty, for eaters of bread, *polenta* and thin broths, the *frittata* had its finest hour.

Morello Pecchioli