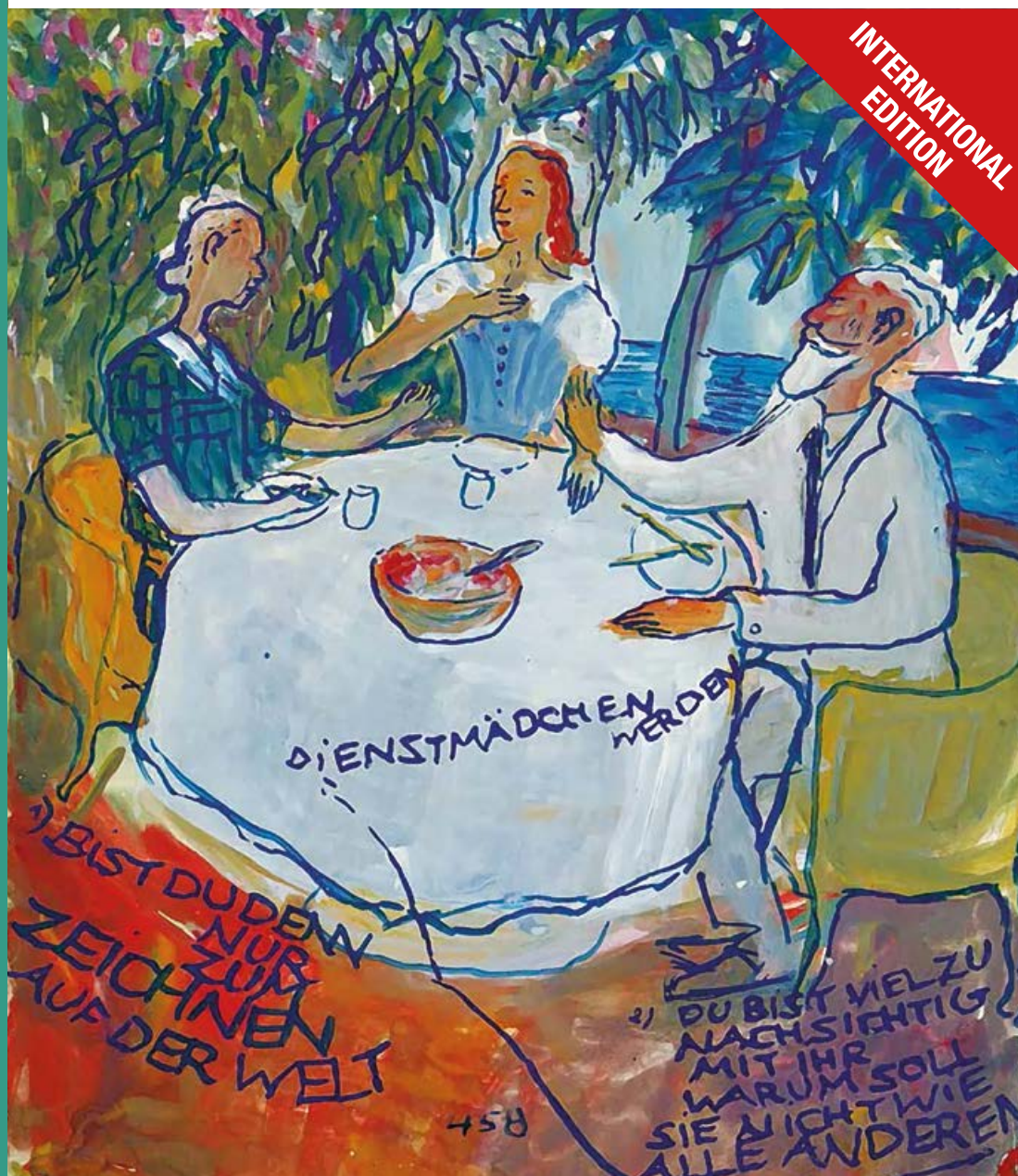


CIVILTÀ DELLA TAVOLA

ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA



ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
ISTITUZIONE CULTURALE DELLA REPUBBLICA ITALIANA
FONDATA NEL 1953 DA ORIO VERGANI

www.accademia1953.it

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

JANUARY 2024 / N. 366

EDITOR IN CHIEF
PAOLO PETRONI

COPY EDITOR
SILVIA DE LORENZO

LAYOUT
SIMONA MONGIÙ

TRANSLATOR
ANTONIA FRASER FUJINAGA

THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ARTICLES BY
ALESSANDRO ABBONDANTI,
MORELLO PECCHIOLI,
PAOLO PETRONI,
GIANCARLO SARAN.

PHOTO CREDITS
ADOBE STOCK.



PUBLISHER
ACCADEMIA ITALIANA DELLA CUCINA
VIA NAPO TORRIANI 31 - 20124 MILANO
TEL. 02 66987018 - FAX 02 66987008
PRESIDENTE@ACCADEMIA1953.IT
SEGRETERIA@ACCADEMIA1953.IT
REDAZIONE@ACCADEMIA1953.IT
WWW.ACCADEMIA1953.IT



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

REGULATIONS REGARDING PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

The Italian Academy of Cuisine, in its capacity as data controller, hereby informs its members that their personal data are handled with respect for the principles of integrity, lawfulness and transparency as well as protection of privacy and members' rights, to implement the management of the member-association relationship as delineated by the Association's Statute and By-laws, and for any related purposes where applicable. The processing is carried out by authorised parties, in paper and computerised form, in compliance with the provisions of the aforementioned EU regulations and current national legislation. To view all the information provided under EU regulations, and in particular to learn what members' rights are, please visit the Association's website.



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



On the cover: Graphic elaboration of *Charlotte with her grandparents in the garden at Villefranche-sur-mer* (1940-1942) by Charlotte Salomon; Joods Historisch Museum (Jewish Historical Museum), Amsterdam

Focus of the President

2 Food waste is a serious problem, but consumers are far from being the worst offenders
(Paolo Petroni)



Territories • Tourism • Folklore

3 Experience tourism
(Giancarlo Saran)



Cuisine • Products • Food Technology

5 *Pasta e fagioli*: the beloved bean and pasta soup
(Morello Pecchioli)



7 Black garlic
(Alessandro Abbondanti)





Food waste is a serious problem, *but consumers are far from being the worst offenders*

The food industry and large-scale distributors conduct lengthy studies to attract customers.

Article 6 of the Academy's 70th Anniversary Manifesto starts by declaring that nature and our planet should be respected through sustainable activities and that we must prioritise the seasonality of produce. It then explicitly states: **"The Academy opposes food waste"**. This topic is more current than ever, discussed by politicians and all manner of organisations including world-spanning ones, and there's no shortage of television programmes and newspaper or magazine articles on the subject. Amid the chorus decrying the situation as abysmal, Italy emerges as the worst European food waster. Italy's Ministry of Education and Merit has even proclaimed **5 February 2024 as the "National Day Against Food Waste"**. Food waste brings to mind images of half-eaten food in family dustbins, but many statistics flashily and misleadingly merge data from the entire food chain, including waste occurring before final purchase due to inadequate agricultural practices and substandard processing and storage.

We should consider waste in fields, warehouses and shops, not just homes

According to several sources, with some variation, **domestic waste accounts for about 70%** of total food waste. That may be so, but what is wasted in fields during harvest and storage and what retail facilities waste seems far superior. By perusing expiry dates on fresh foods in supermarkets one can readily notice that many expire on the same day or very soon. Whither are they bound? The dustbin, obviously. What of the 75 daily grammes of wasted food per capita? Multiplied by numbers of days and people, those 75 grammes yield fearsomely high figures. The power of statistics! But as **Mark Twain** warned, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics". The new *Waste Watcher* survey tells us that in 2022, people **wasted 75 grammes of food each day**, especially **fruit, vegetables, bread, and cheese** (an apple, an onion, a small piece of bread). The average Italian family consists of 2.3 people;

by Paolo Petroni
President of the Accademia



35% of families contain one person, and 27%, two. Yet supermarkets increasingly offer XXL packages or '3 for 2' deals.

*The rules of commerce are immutable:
buy more, spend less*

The rules of commerce are immutable: buy more, spend less. One-portion packages are as rare as they are expensive. Several methods of avoiding domestic food waste have been suggested, the best-known being: don't shop while hungry; make frequent small purchases rather than a large weekly shop; stick to a shopping list of necessary purchases; resist special offers, often dependent on quantity; and pay close attention to expiry dates, as the greatest discounts are often for imminently expiring food. Excellent, rational advice; but what do the food and large-scale distribution industries think of them, given their painstaking research about optimal shelf placement to tempt customers with utterly unnecessary products often rendered irresistible by familiarity? If we all become hypervigilant and buy less, will the food economy benefit? Food waste is indubitably an important problem, but before blaming consumers, who certainly don't enjoy discarding food, we should consider the many other sinners preceding them.



Experience tourism

by Giancarlo Saran
Treviso Academician

Customers loyal to a certain food often eagerly return to its homeland.

It is to Dante and Petrarch that Italy owes its definition of 'Bel Paese' ('Beautiful Country'): a magnetically fascinating land of many beauties, which in the Romantic era attracted **Wolfgang von Goethe** and his epigones, as vividly narrated in his *Italian Journey*, from the Alps to the Cyclopean Islands by way of Venice, Florentia and Parthenope, between Capri and Vesuvius. **The first travel guide** in the modern sense was issued by a French publisher in 1841, authored by a certain **Valery**, *nom de plume* of **Antoine Claude Pasquin**. Besides instructing those retracing Goethe's footsteps about such practicalities as finding a chemist or bookshop, it also recounts, town by town, details of dishes, recipes and foodstuffs.

The first Italian travel guides to be published

Italian culinary patriotism redeemed itself ninety years later, taking off like a *paso doble*. In 1931, the first guide curated by the **Touring Club Italiano** began recommending "how to discover the most local of specialities". Often reporting on products and recipes by hearsay, without knowing their exact provenance and history, it was more a census, however detailed, than a practical guide to finding such 'specialities' and enjoying them at their best. **In the same year, the ENIT** (Italy's National Tourist Board) published the *Carta delle principali specialità gastronomiche delle regioni italiane* (*Map of the principal culinary specialities of Italy's regions*), a representation of Italy's 'boot' covered in a dizzying array of culinary indications. This heritage was more systematically promoted after the war, thanks to such

ambassadors as **Mario Soldati**, with his unforgettable *Viaggio nella valle del Po* (*Voyage through the Po River Valley*), or **Gino Veronelli**; meanwhile, in 1953 the visionaries **Orio Vergani** and **Dino Villani**, alongside other worthy companions, had founded the **Italian Academy of Cuisine**: a cuisine whose excellence would eventually propel it to the heights it deserved.

There is the risk of destinations being chosen because they are 'just a click away'

Italy has the most certified (PDO, PGI etc) products in Europe, and that number constantly grows, from 194 in 2009 to 315 in 2021: a 60% jump, with a 5% annual increase on average. **Some call this the 'PDO Economy'**, and its importance is considerable and potentially rising. Furthermore, **Italy leads the world in UNESCO sites: 59. Despite this**, in economic terms **we hold fifth place** with 65 million tourists: the third in Europe, after France which leads with 89 million visitors and Spain with 84. Next are the USA with 79, and the emerging destination of China with 66. **Carefully considering projected figures** in this crucial sector for our country's economic development, **by attentively analysing the current situation we could interestingly recast food tourism as 'experience tourism': an ideal synergy of cultural and culinary components**, as we have raw materials that cannot be replicated with artificial intelligence. This is all the more timely at a historical moment when **digital communication is occupying ever greater space** than traditional communication



modes, especially but not only among the young. There is the objective risk of destinations being chosen because they are 'just a click away', each becoming like one of many stamps collected voraciously with a haste which permits no reflection (or digestion). **Quality could thus be replaced, as the deciding factor, by rootless marketing** that superficially jumps from place to place as passing trends dictate.

Products invite consumers to discover them in their original environments

Clearly, an entirely different paradigm would benefit Italy, with its vast heritage gained through history, traditions and products. Hence the **strategy of 'experience tourism'**, whereby **potential tourists becomes temporary residents of those lands which curiosity moves them to discover**. This **marketing path runs in reverse**: the product does not go to meet the consumer, as for example in large-scale distribution; rather, **the product invites the consumer to discover it *in situ*** alongside the milieu of places and people that render it distinctive and perhaps unique. **Let us revisit the spirit of tourism as quest**, which **tickles all five senses**, not only taste and smell.

Several studies have gained insights into the various types of food and wine tourists. There's the **gastronaut**, who is principally food-curious and therefore discovers delicious little niches, according less importance to the purely touristic aspects of a location. There's the **food trotter**, who views culinary treasures as the main point of a trip while also maintaining an interest in a territory's other resources. An intriguing example is the **Italian Food Bloggers' Association (A.I.F.B.)**, the brainchild of **Anna Maria Pellegrino**, who envisioned a federation of aspiring digital Goethes of the third millennium. Around 160 routes have been elaborated over time in various parts of our peninsula where territory



and food blend ideally: while the taste buds lead the way, the eyes take in the 360-degree views, feeding our wonder and curiosity.

The gradual evolution of the tourist

This inspires reflections on the gradual evolution of the tourist; **Erica Croce** and **Giovanni Perri** have thoughtfully created a 'pyramid' illustrating the **food and wine tourist's main features**. They **are curious about gaining direct contact with food production processes**, perceived as a pleasant means of understanding another cultural identity, on a par with works of art. Their cultural knowledge allows them to choose thoughtfully. **Though sceptical of tour operators**, they **demand much of the locations visited**. Those areas therefore need ambassadors who can present them to their best advantage, starting with residents, who must be aware and proud of what history and their homeland have gifted them. Here, multiple strategies might work together. **Company marketing** might arrange tastings as the final stop of a food production tour. **Storytelling** can unite disparate sensibilities under a **common purpose**. **Nurturing loyalty to products, and therefore territories**, can foster the desire to return.

Mara Manente, former director of the CISET (International Centre of Studies

on the Tourism Economy) **in Venice**, has demonstrated that mostly "on the first visit, **food** is an addendum to curiosity about art, landscapes and local history, but **becomes the primary motivation for those deciding to return**". These data are readily available in the Veneto, Italy's foremost region for tourism, which accounts for 10% of regional revenue and "could reach 20%". There is a plethora of possible scenarios in which representatives of government, production and hospitality could beneficially collaborate, since "**future tourism will be ever more experiential**" because it **can rely on its unique, non-replicable identity** more than other forms of tourism. Italy can count on **a hundred or so food museums** including extraordinary little niches, for example, the Sulmona sugared almond museum, or the historic Amarelli liquorice museum in Rossano Calabro.

For the closing credits, **two inevitable literary quotes testify to the indissoluble bond between food and culture** which characterises our 'Bel Paese'. Here is **Italo Calvino** who, in *Palomar*, narrates how "behind every cheese there's a pasture of a different green, under a different sky". And here is **Cesare Pavese**, from the Langhe region of Piedmont, who, in *La Luna e i falò* (*The Moon and the Bonfires*), perceives how Nebbiolo and Barbaresco wines come to life because "heat here, rather than descending from the sky, seeps from below, from the earth, from the ground between the vines".

Giancarlo Saran



Pasta e fagioli: the beloved bean and pasta soup

by **Morello Pecchioli**

Honorary Academician for Verona

*A humble, plebeian
peasant soup
that everyone loves.*

Pasta e fagioli was born in the Middle Ages. It has peasant origins, but developed as a vegetarian (hence potentially Lenten) soup in convent kitchens. **Giulio Cesare Croce**, a writer living between the 16th and 17th centuries, placed it in the mouth of his character Bertoldo, a clever clodhopper from the mountains near Verona, whom the Longobard king **Alboin**, amused by his intelligence and wit, welcomed into his Veronese court, offering him such sumptuous foods that poor Bertoldo... died as a result. The epitaph on his tomb revealed that "In this dark, tenebrous tomb lies a peasant so rough in features that he was more bear than man, but of such high and noble intellect that he

amazed nature and the world; while he lived, he was known as Bertoldo. Beloved by the king, he died in ghastly pain for lack of turnip greens, pasta and beans". Bertoldo died, in other words, of nostalgia, dreaming of his homeland's humble, delicious fare.

*The custom of combining pasta
with beans was fortified
by the arrival of American beans*

The custom of combining pasta with beans became more prevalent after the arrival of beans from the Americas. It was the Italian **Catherine de' Medici** who exported it to France after marrying the French king **Henry II**. In her dowry, alongside jewels and artworks, the provident youngster had also included quite a few bags of beans. Many writers and artists besides Giulio Cesare Croce have testified **that this popular soup is an**

inspiring muse. **Bartolomeo Scappi**, an Italian cook and writer of the 16th century, praised the health benefits of beans, helpful to the spleen and kidneys but also masculine carnal vigour. His contemporary, the Bolognese painter **Annibale Carracci**, portrayed a peasant at a table with a bowl of black-eyed peas, a spoonful of which he is intent on bringing to his mouth. The oeuvre is called *Il mangiafagioli* (*The Bean Eater*). **Alongside tripe, pasta e fagioli is the most nationally iconic dish from Italian popular cuisine.** Each region of Italy boasts a version and claims to be its birthplace. Naturally, every version is the original, the ur-soup, the mother of all soups along the Italic boot.

*Its various methods
of preparation*

Some make it vegetarian; others add pork rinds. Some add onion, some garlic; some cook it **with extra-virgin olive oil, and others with lard or butter.** Some add tomato; others leave it 'white', meaning sans tomato. Some start with a sauté, while others aver that it must be boiled for a long, long time in earthenware vessels.

There is disagreement over the type of pasta. Some prefer broken spaghetti; others, short pasta. No, *maltagliati* are the answer. Balderdash! One must use fresh, home-made pasta. In Piacenza they use *pisarei*: little flour and breadcrumb gnocchi; in Reggio they use *pastarasa*, made of breadcrumbs, flour, parmesan and nutmeg and grated into a *bròda* (broth) of *borlotti* beans. In Naples it is imperative to use mixed pasta; in Puglia, *cavatelli*; in Abruzzo, *cazzari-*



elli; in Lazio, rough-cut fresh pasta; in Calabria, *lagane*; elsewhere, *ditalini* or *cannolicchi*.

Likewise, there are clashes over the type of bean. In the Veneto, people praise the *bellunese* bean from Lamon; Ligurians, butter beans; others, *borlotti*, *cannellini* or lima beans, of Andean origin. Purists maintain that connoisseurs use only black-eyed beans because they are autochthonous, existing in Italy since Roman times (*vilem phaseolum*, 'vile beans', Virgil called them), while all other beans arrived in our kitchens after contact with the Americas.

Montanelli and Alberini fight over the addition of raw oil

From one catfight to the next, we even find accusations of heresy, excommunications and challenges to a duel. **Indro Montanelli** and **Massimo Alberini** nearly reached that stage. Here is what happened. Travelling between Milan and Cortina, Montanelli stopped in Verona where he invited his friend and colleague **Cesare Marchi** for a meal at the 12 Apostoli restaurant, presided over by its owner and cook **Giorgio Gioco**. Greetings, salacious wit, friendly teasing and bonhomie flourished between the good old chums. Until, that is, the moment when Gioco served them both his acclaimed *pasta e fagioli*. At that point, a sudden tempest struck. "Montanelli, being a good Tuscan", recounted the great Veronese cook who passed away a few years ago, "traced a cross of oil over his *pasta e fagioli*, and Marchi, *more veneto* [in the Venetian manner], covered it in a snowy mantle of *grana* cheese. Indro [Montanelli] turned savage and called him a villain: *pasta e fagioli* must be sanctified only with extra-virgin olive oil". The journalist Massimo Alberini, a profound connoisseur of Italian cuisine, later came to Marchi's defence: "*Dear Montanelli, you boast of having intervened against a culinary crime by forbidding your collaborator to sprinkle parmesan over his pasta e fagioli. What a typical example of*

Tuscan truculence! For you, raw oil in the dish; for us, lard, pig fat, sometimes ham leftovers, cooked for a long time in the pot. Such ingredients make the invasion of raw oil undesirable and absurd, even if the oil is Tuscan!".

Far less would have sufficed to inflame the rage of the journalist from Fucecchio. He replied by return of post: "*Dear Alberini, every so often I'm startled awake by dreams that I've become a dictator. But a dictator I shall never be. Luckily, because if I were, you would by now be hanging off some Venetian lamppost for conceptual fraud and outrage against decency! I adore Venice, but when I hear someone claiming that pasta e fagioli is eaten with cheese and that - give me strength! - our oil is something to be ashamed of, my hand reaches for a holster, though pistol have I none!*".

The opinion of Pellegrino Artusi and that of Aldo Fabrizi

As we have seen, passionate dedication to "**poor man's meat**", as **Pellegrino Artusi** called bean soup, can incite gastronomic holy wars. But it also unleashes something else. With considerable tact, Artusi underlines how beans are a healthy, nutritious, affordable food, which quells hunger pangs for a while, but... "and here too there's a 'but', and you've grasped it already. To defend yourselves, in part, **choose thin-skinned beans**; black-eyed peas are less guilty of that sin than others". A sin that the French call 'the pauper-puffer'. On the virtues and flaws of *pasta e fagioli*, the actor, passionate foodie and poet of the Roman dialect **Aldo Fabrizi wrote a sonnet** wherein he praised it as "Fabulous! Phenomenal! The sublime, divine songstress!" pointing out that it is both filling and a source of "personal music". **The fragrance of pasta e fagioli pervades Italian cinema**, from **Mario Monicelli** to **E.B. Clucher**, from *I soliti ignoti* (*Persons Unknown*) to *Lo chiamavano Trinità* (*They Call Me Trinità*). In a memorable scene of the first film, the miscre-



ants breach a wall to reach a safe, but find a kitchen, so they take solace by devouring an entire pot of *pasta e fagioli*. It's a humble, plebeian, peasant soup, yet hugely satisfying and beloved by all.

In Verona the soup must be very dense

Besides Montanelli and Marchi, **Vincenzo Buonassisi**, **Ruggero Orlando**, **Dino Buzzati**, **Gianni Brera** and a few crowned heads fed by Giorgio Gioco were also crazy about that soup. Gioco loved recounting an episode from his captivity in Germany. "A friend from Verona was with me. He was also called Giorgio. One day I found him in floods of tears: he couldn't stop crying. Attempting to comfort him, I asked the reason for his grief. 'I'm thinking of my mother and the *pasta e fagioli* that she made me. It was so dense that the spoon stood upright in it'. There: that's how *pasta e fagioli* should be". Perhaps this *pasta e fagioli* that keeps us on our toes is the reason why **an alliance named 'Pasta e Fagioli & Champagne'** has arisen in Verona. Why this combination? Its President, **Mariella Ruberti**, replies: "A poor food with a rich wine; what could be better? We use the traditional Veronese recipe: *maltagliati* or broken *tagliatelle*; *borlotti* beans, ideally from Lamon; pork rinds; celery, carrot, onion and a sprig of rosemary; PDO extra-virgin Valpolicella olive oil; and *grana* cheese. Cooking must be very slow. Several hours are necessary to produce a substantial, *fissa* as we say in dialect, *pasta e fagioli*, capable of holding a spoon upright".

Morello Pecchioli



Black garlic

by **Alessandro Abbondanti**
Firenze Pitti Academician

Through a fermentation process, the bulbs become sweet and culinarily very versatile.

Garlic is a perennial flowering plant of the Amaryllis family. Its botanic name, *Allium sativum*, possibly derives from the Celtic root *all*, meaning 'pungent', perhaps through Proto-Indo-European *ālu*, 'bitter plant', plus the Latin word *sativum* which means 'cultivated'. It seems to have been cultivated since at least ancient Egyptian times

(3000 BC): indeed, perfectly preserved garlic bulbs have been found **in the tomb of Tutankhamun**. Furthermore, a medical document from approximately 1550 BC, the Ebers Papyrus, describes the use of garlic both to promote general well-being and as a defence against insects and parasites. Subsequent sources from ancient Greece (**Hippocrates**, 4th century BC) and the palace of Knossos on Crete corroborate its use.

The therapeutic properties of garlic

In Roman times, both **Dioscorides**, a surgeon under the emperor Nero (first century AD), and especially **Pliny the**

Elder in his *Naturalis Historia*, described various uses of garlic including as **protection against infection**. Moving down the centuries, I shall limit myself to citing the Schola Medica Salernitana (9th-13th centuries AD) which recommended its use for respiratory ailments, and **Louis Pasteur** (19th century) who demonstrated its antiseptic effect against *Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli*.

It seems that in China, garlic was already used around 2000 years BC both in cooking and in traditional medicine. Likewise in India, Ayurvedic medicine (5th century BC) recommended it for treating arthritis, heart diseases, infections and asthenia. Garlic's many properties have been used in **phytotherapy** to reduce arterial pressure, lower cholesterol and treat respiratory inflammations. Garlic has been recommended as an antifungal, antibacterial, antiviral, antioxidant and anti-ageing remedy (Ravi Varshey, MJ Budoff and J. Nuts, *Garlic and Heart Disease*, 2016). Its use in primary and secondary prophylaxis of atherosclerosis, hypertension and high cholesterol is well established.

Various types according to colour

Throughout the world there are several garlic types, classified by colour: **white, red and pink**. In Italy **16 garlic varieties are cultivated**, including PGI Piacenza garlic (the 'king of garlic'); PDO Voghiera garlic, typical of Emilia; PDO Polesine garlic; white Neapolitan garlic; pink early-harvest (*primaticcio*; north-central Italy) or Nicastro (Calabria) garlic; Vessalico (Liguria) garlic; and the various red garlics of Sulmona (Abruzzo), Nubia (near Trapani), Maremma (coastal Tuscany) and Proceno (Lazio).



Black garlic may be defined as a variant of the aforementioned subtypes, as it is obtained by **fermenting their bulbs**. They are left for about a month in a temperature-controlled (60-90°C) environment with humidity maintained at 80-90%. Subsequently, another six weeks of oxidation time are necessary, during which the cloves will assume the typical 'pitch-black' hue caused essentially by the action of antioxidant **melanoidins**, and become soft or gummy in texture. The organoleptic properties of such garlic are peculiar: **it is notably sweet, without pungency**, with a diffuse, persistent, particularly pleasant aftertaste often reminiscent of liquorice and sometimes even prunes or balsamic vinegar. The drop in **allicin**, the organosulphur compound responsible for the typical garlic smell, explains the loss of intense flavour and odour and the persistent bad-breath effect. **This garlic transformation process appears to have been discovered in Korea in 2004**, spreading to neighbouring countries and later the rest of the world.

A niche product rich in antioxidants and minerals

Black garlic is defined as a **superfood** thanks to its chemical and biochemical qualities, which are far more potent than those of common garlic. Firstly, black garlic has a higher concentration of antioxidants (alkaloids, bioflavonoids) and is rich in minerals (for example, it has 80mg of phosphorus against the 40mg in the same quantity of white garlic, and 36.66mg of calcium against the 5mg in white garlic). Its **health benefits** also include a greater **cholesterol-reducing capacity** through the action of s-allyl-cystein, which inhibits cholesterol synthesis through a mechanism similar to that of statins; **immune stimulation**, as it seems to improve immune defences against viruses and bacteria; **antioxidant action** which makes it practically into a natural anti-ageing remedy; glucose metabolism improvement, reducing the



need for sugars; **energising action**; and **anti-tumour properties** apparently caused by its phenols which inhibit cell growth and stimulate apoptosis (cell death) in various tumour cells (J.F. Kerr, 1972). Finally, it is indicated **against stress, anxiety**, insomnia, respiratory tract ailments and intestinal parasites, and is an antithrombotic (antiaggregant). It also seems to have a mildly diuretic effect.

There are no absolute contraindications regarding garlic, though it is **advised against** in cases of ulcers or acute or sub-acute gastritis.

Today black garlic **is produced in every Italian region**; particularly worth mentioning is **Emilia-Romagna**, where an annual **garlic festival** is held in Voghiera, in the province of Ferrara. **Voghiera black garlic** may be the best-known; it has PDO status and its producers have formed a consortium. Another production area is Polesine, where **PDO Polesine garlic** is produced in the Vittorio Veneto area. In Abruzzo there is **Marsica black garlic**; Liguria has the **black garlic from Vessalico** or Pieve di Tecco, in the Imperia area; Cilento (Salerno province, Campania) **has the black garlic of Caraglio**.

Black garlic remains rather commercially elusive, being still a 'niche product' little known by the public at large. It is predominantly found in specialised shops and, of course, on the internet. It is sold as whole bulbs or peeled cloves, or powdered, or as a spreadable cream. Liquid extracts thereof can also be found.

Culinary uses of 'kiss-worthy' garlic

Black garlic is vastly versatile in the kitchen, as its uses partly overlap with those of ordinary garlic; unlike it, however, this fermented garlic may also be used raw, for example spread on toast, because it will never cause halitosis or digestive problems, making it 'kiss-worthy'. In brief, it can be used in a plethora of meat, fish or vegetable recipes, or to enrich sauces, vegetable creams and purées, or mashed potatoes. It is best-known as a component of **rice or pasta dishes**. However, it can intriguingly be **used in bread, mixed with various flours**, or pastries, especially combined with dark chocolate.

Alessandro Abbondanti