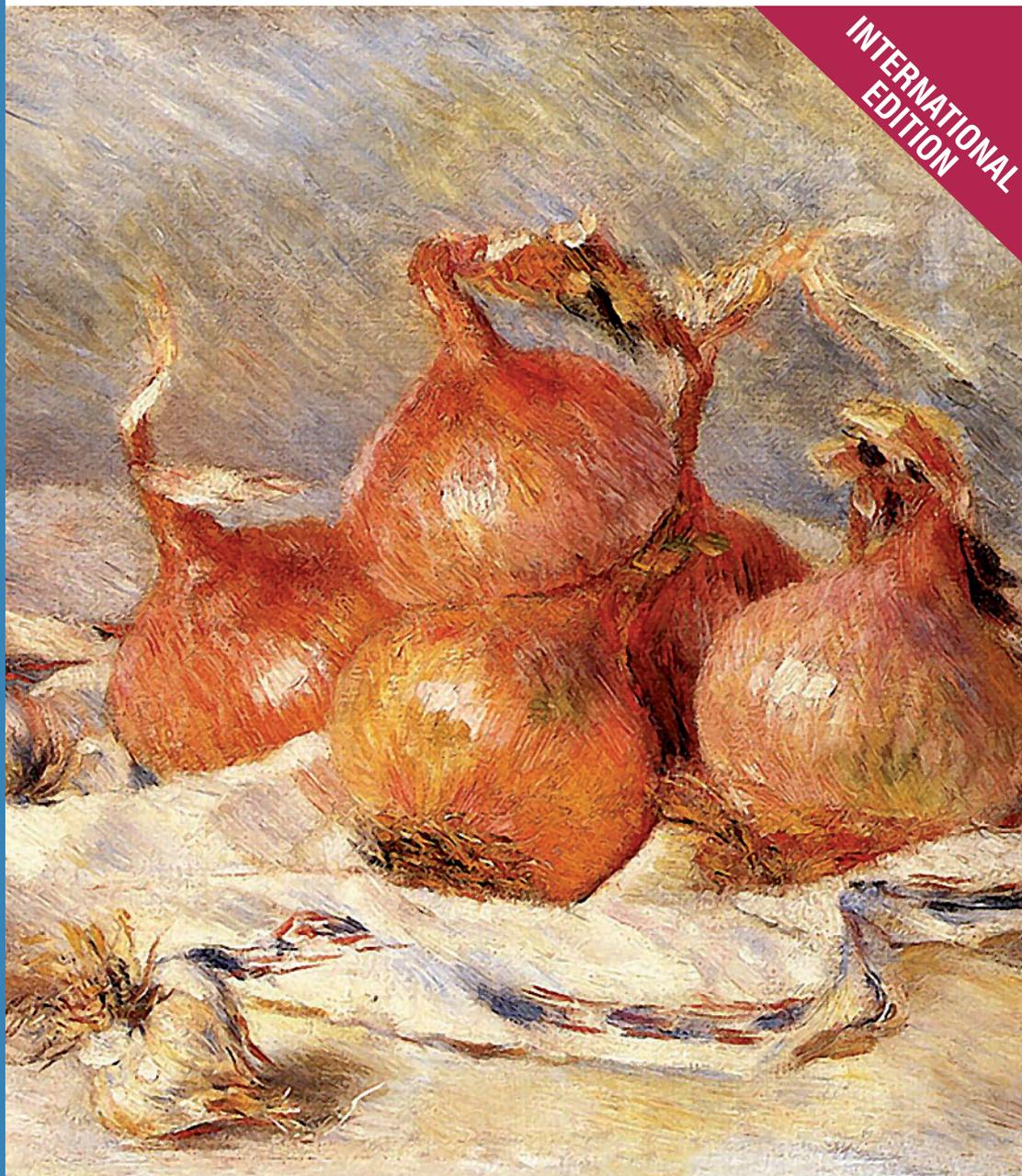


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WHIT MASSIMO ALBERINI AND VINCENZO BUONASSISI.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



FOCUS

2 Carbonara:
the imposter is served!
(Paolo Petroni)

7 An indispensable
and precious resource
(Nicola Barbera)

9 Call them emotions,
if you like
(Roberto Dottarelli)

CULTURE AND RESEARCH

3 Dining with Voltaire
(Giuseppe Benelli)

5 If fish could talk...
(Alfredo Pelle)



On the cover: Graphic reproduction of a detail
from the painting "Still life with onions" (1881) by
Auguste Renoir. Clark Art Institute, USA

Carbonara: the imposter is served!

An appalling french recipe tries to trump our symbolic dish.

BY PAOLO PETRONI
President of the Academy

Unquestionably, the event of the month was the recipe of the so-called “French style *carbonara*”, the invention that caused a torrent of indignation. The horrible recipe, as it appeared on the website *Demotivateur*, showed a pot filled with minced onion, cubed *pancetta* and butterfly pasta, all of it covered with water and boiled, followed by cream, flaked parmesan, parsley and, finally, the yolk of a raw egg on top. At the end of the video, the logo of the pasta producer Barilla appears. It is superfluous to mention that the recipe does not even deserve a comment on account of its disgusting nature. It must be added, however, that the apparent sponsor, Barilla, distanced itself from such a disgraceful dish. The Parma pasta maker quickly put on its website the correct preparation of *carbonara*. The case went viral on the social media and it was widely covered by all newspapers and many television programs. The episode allowed for a penetrating discussion of problems linked to the Italian dish that is the most popular in the world, right after pizza. It is the most talked about case and Roman restaurants are justifiably the masters of the dish, although it must be acknowledged that they too make some mistakes. *Carbonara* has a short history. It appeared at the close of WWII; before then, no culinary text contains any mention of it. Typical dishes were the *gricia*, *amatriciana*, *cacio* cheese and pepper, *cacio* cheese and egg. In fact, *carbonara* is nothing more than *gricia* with the addition of an egg, or *cacio* cheese and egg with the addition of streaky bacon or *pancetta*; it certainly does not enjoy a specific reference. It entails a certain freedom in preparing it, within the scope of good taste.

Let us leave aside the fantasy driven theories about its origin (coal sellers, shepherds, bacon and powdered eggs American style and so forth); we will never know the truth. Instead, let us examine the debates that still remain. Streaky bacon or *pancetta*? Today’s experts favor streaky bacon. However, the majority of restaurants use flat *pancetta* and many foodies prefer it as well, since it is less fat and oppres-



sive. Normal or smoked *pancetta*? Normal, but the smoked kind is also good while the cubed *pancetta* packing that is found in supermarkets carry the label “smoked” and “ideal for *carbonara*”. Should it be sautéed with oil or without oil? The present trend is for sautéing without oil but in past ti-

mes everybody used a little oil or even a little fat. Should the eggs be whole or should only the yoke be used? Again, the experts say just the yoke, while in truth many use the white as well or mix up the eggs and the yokes. Should cheese be *pecorino romano*? Many use half *pecorino* and half parmesan. Is any crushed garlic necessary? Today the answer is negative but in the past it was called for, just like the recipe of the Academy did. Let us not even talk about cream. Instead, let us talk about black pepper that must be ground on the spot. What type of pasta? Surely not the butterflies, but thick spaghetti are preferred. In Rome, all talk is about *rigatoni* and half sleeves.

Now, for preparation: some people put the pasta in the sautéed streaky bacon and then add the eggs mixed with *pecorino*. Others put the pasta in the beaten eggs and then add the bacon. There is also a strange recipe that must be mentioned, coming from Gualtiero Marchesi, who mixes pasta with the eggs and then adds raw olive oil and finally, the sautéed streaky bacon. All is basically done with three ingredients while preparations have varied through times until today (one should read the version by Anna Gosetti della Salda in *Italian Regional Recipes*). It is what is commonly called “a creeping innovation”, that is small variations that in the end change the dish, making it more conforming to present tastes and fashions (the trend is toward making it “creamy”, as in the case of cheese and pepper as well). A rustic dish - simple, fast, *trattoria*-like - becomes the object of learned discussions, a “cult” dish, as they say. In practical terms, it is quite rare to find a properly prepared *carbonara* in restaurants. A wise Academician should do extensive testing and ultimately will find the most satisfying solution. That is the right recipe.



Dining with Voltaire

The great Enlightenment philosopher defined himself as “the grand innkeeper of Europe”.

BY GIUSEPPE BENELLI

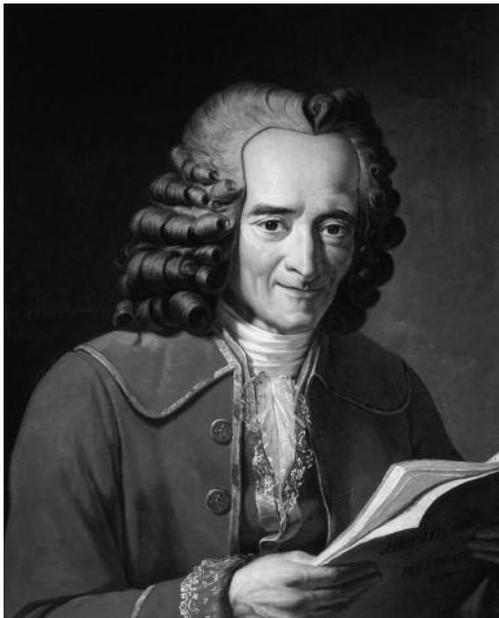
*Academician, Lunigiana Delegation
“Franco Marengli” Study Center*

The fondest desire of the great minds of the Enlightenment was to visit the town of Ferney, just a few kilometers from the western shore of the Geneva lake in the remotest corner of southeastern France, to have an opportunity to meet Voltaire. The patriarch of Ferney appeared to be the very symbol of the Enlightenment and the incarnation of critical reason, spirit of tolerance, faith in progress and science and the defense of human rights. In 1755, Voltaire established himself in Geneva, which he loved for its tolerant atmosphere. He remained there until he became displeased with “Genevian Protestantism” that often led him to flee from the Swiss guards. He resolved the issue in 1758 when he acquired a

large property in Ferney and Tournay in France: It was comprised of a block of 25 estates on the Swiss border, and there he built an elegant castle right on the border itself, so that his home was situated in France but his garden lay in Switzerland. Thus his escape was assured: all he had to do to avoid the cops was move into the garden through the back door, or remain in the house, depending on who was after him at the moment and which way the wind was blowing. It was a wind that was often stormy, and he fanned the flames with his struggle against “infamy”.

James Boswel, who had visited Voltaire in December of 1774, wrote: “he has about fifty people in his castle; his servants marry and have children, and he





is very involved in the village that has grown up around the castle". At his own expense, he transformed the small town that surrounded the castle into an artisanal center filled with mills and clockmakers that rivaled Geneva. From a town containing about 40 homes (150-200 people), by the time of Voltaire's death in 1778 the population of Ferney had grown to more than 800. Both the powerful and the unknown, and men of letters and aristocrats all made the pilgrimage to the little town to meet the patriarch of the Enlightenment. The incessant influx of visitors made Voltaire, in his own words, "the innkeeper of Europe". A great conversationalist, curious, attentive and occasionally theatrical, Voltaire realized at his banquets what the *Siècle de Louis XIV* called "the spirit of society" of the French culture of the times, where conversation constituted "one of life's greatest pleasures". Voltaire enjoyed bringing various personalities together around the table, and described in detail the order of service, the dishes and wines, always emphasizing their auspiciousness and luxury. Yet the convivial meal was rarely an end in itself: rather it was a place for serene discussion and the free circulation of ideas and tolerance. By this time rich and famous, Voltaire constantly maintained a sumptuous ta-

ble. In a letter dated October 18, 1760, D'Alembert wrote: "your home is becoming like the London Stock Exchange: the Jesuit and the Jansenist, the Catholic and the Socinian, the convulsionary and the encyclopedist are all embracing one another with affection, happier than anyone else".

His niece, Madame Denis, who was 18 years younger than Voltaire, was in charge of organizing life within the castle and entertaining visitors. When he was 56, her uncle became her tutor and her lover. Voltaire began an extremely intimate correspondence with her, sometimes very sentimental and often deliciously indecent, filled with lamentations and requests

for "consolation". He deemed her to be a spirited and incisive woman, and an actress of great talent, while his friends found her insipid and loud-mouthed, unattractive and mediocre. Madame Denis was quite fat and her physical aspect was the opposite of her uncle, who was skin and bones.

The accounting books of the castle, maintained by Voltaire's secretary, revealed the abundance and quality of the food served at the Patriarch's table. The chef "*Bonne sauce* (good sauce), assisted by a pastry chef and female cook" was one of the castle's highest paid domestics. Among the most frequently mentioned foods, meat occupied the top position, and wild game was a favorite. Voltaire loved to eat good meat and he made sure that his guests also appreciated it: "Oh my dear friend, how delicious this wild turkey is, but how much work to digest it! My cook and my pharmacist are killing me". Fish seldom appears in the report because the castle had two "carp ponds" but there are frequent references to lake trout and whitefish; some sea fish are also mentioned in spite of the difficulty in transporting them. Little fruit was acquired other than that furnished by the park's gardens and orchards throughout the various seasons: cherries, strawberries, raspberries, chestnuts,

figs and oranges. Lemons were used in large quantities to prepare sauces. Cheese held an important place in the pantry: Gruyere, individual cheese forms called "*tomme*" produced in the Savoy region and the Dauphinate, "Roquefort" and parmigiano. Acquisitions of pastries and sweets were equally important. Sugar appeared in twelfth place on the list of foods, demonstrating the importance of desserts, sweets, and other treats.

During the final years of Voltaire's life many of his visitors described him as "gaunt, livid, cadaverous" with sharp piercing eyes. He was anguished by the problem of tooth loss, both because of the consequent difficulty in chewing as well as in reciting his comedies. Voltaire ate very little, primarily eggs, vegetables and lentils. He drank even less, no more than a glass of Burgundy with dinner. He wrote to his niece Denis in Italian (the language of love) that he could no longer digest anything and he felt "close to death". "I have been very ill, but I hope to recover my health with you. I will see you today, and today I will find the only consolation that can sweeten the bitterness of my life. Nature, which granted me the tenderest of hearts, forgot to give me a stomach. I cannot digest but I can love". In order to keep up with the frenzied pace of work he imposed on himself even in old age, he drank liters of coffee and chocolate, and allowed himself to be tempted by a few sweets. It seems that he would consume a dozen cups of chocolate by noon because he thought it not only delicious but also that it was nutritious and stimulated the mind. With keenness and irony, the passion for knowledge and a feeling of pity for human weaknesses, food became for Voltaire, not only a tool with which to dismantle old prejudices or new resistance, but also to forge new links. In this way he found the " " or master key to the heart of his guests: food as pleasure for the body, medicine for the soul and a sensual thaumaturgy to cure stupidity.

GIUSEPPE BENELLI



If fish could talk...

If water is the original substance from which everything originates, as Thales claims, the creatures that live within it must be respected because fishing resources are not renewable.

BY ALFREDO PELLE

Academician, Vicenza Delegation
President of the "Franco Marenghi" Study Center



One of the greatest challenges of our times is to plan and maintain sustainable communities so that their lifestyles, economies and technologies will not interfere with nature and its ability to sustain life. First of all, we must become knowledgeable of the "ecological plan" that we should support in order to program the technologies. This forces us to look into the ways that nature uses to sustain life, into how the eco-systems perform, into the steps that are called for to sustain the process that experts define as "metabolism". To grasp this evolution, the knowledge of food is fundamental; by learning about its foundations we can begin to understand those of life.

There is no question that water is fundamental for metabolism. The ancient philosophers and scientists drew a close connection between water and life.

Thales stated that since we consider the entire universe as a living thing, water is the original substance from whence all was made. Leonardo da Vinci called water "the extension and the nourishment of all living bodies". The fish is mute but it does communicate a lot. Let us see why. The inhabitants of water are named according to their color: we are familiar with "white fish", belonging to the most valued species that is served at home or in the restaurant as if it were a great gift; and then the "blue" fish that in spite of all efforts to make it important retains a less than appreciated status. It is true, however, that there are many lovers of a nice grill of sardines and mackerels or a fish fry of anchovies to die for. I count myself among that number but I recognize that those fish species are classified as "poor" as if a social distinction could be applied to fish!

And even though since the most remote ancient times fish has provided a rich nourishing food to those people who lived on the sea, it must be added as well that following its great popular appeal with Greeks and Romans, fish consumption was still quite high in the Middle Ages. Religious beliefs praised its eating quality on meatless days, during Lent and vigils. It should also be recalled that the first Christians celebrated the fish as a symbol of Christ on the strength of the fact that its Greek name *ichthús* contained the initials of the expression Jesus Christ Son of God the Savior and of the prominence that it had in the iconography of the first Christian era, including its link with the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fish. At those times, the use of freshwater fish was widespread since this kind of fishing required less investment and elementary technologies.



Many centuries later, the Maritime Republics, and Venice in particular, treasured its high nutritional content. The government of the *Serenissima* Republic of Venice practiced a strict surveillance over the fish market in Rialto and meted out heavy penalties to those who tried to sell fish that was not fresh. Later on, fish consumption began to diminish opening up to the use of meats that were looked upon as a richer food and thus appropriate

to the tables of the wealthy and powerful. No less important was the difficulty of reducing the time that passed between fishing and bringing the fish to the kitchen in order to prevent the deterioration of that food. This problem does not exist any longer on account of the distribution of fresh and refrigerated fish and the ability to choose a product that was not available in olden times.

What is our relationship with fish? There is no doubt that the situation is improving. Every Italian eats about fifty pounds of fish each year. This represents an increase, too little however if one relates overall consumption to the thousand of miles of coastline at our disposal. Furthermore, which is the type of fish that we prefer? Just 10 percent of the fish that we eat comes from the Mediterranean. The preponderant quantity comes from aquaculture, the Atlantic or the Pacific. The truth is that the *Mare Nostrum*, "our sea", is short of fish, a true miser in this respect. Twenty years ago, Braudel wrote that "the waters of the Mediterranean are poor and produce just a third of the fish that is harvested in Norway". He went on to define the Mediterranean "a sparing alimentary source".

In truth, there are many species of comestible fish, over 25,000 to be precise, but only a few hundred are utilized for culinary purposes. In the world of fishing work is spread over various fronts: the production of fish raised in



sea waters - the gilthead primarily - is increasing as a consequence of efforts to cut down fishing by nets that are causing disastrous forays and the destruction of fishing grounds. Some fishing can reach down to depths of 1,800 feet. Some success has been reached in Italy with methods for raising turbot. Since this species does not tolerate temperatures above 16 degrees Celsius, it was impossible to cultivate it in the Mediterranean. The solution was to create fish tanks at a depth of 150 feet where the water is always below the limit of temperature. In the last analysis, while the product of fishing is just about stationary, consumption tends to increase. On the other hand, the world's total trade of fish and fishing products has increased drastically reaching huge figures of almost 90 billion dollars per year.

The increased use of fish in the kitchen is due in good part to the fact that our family cooks pay more attention to nutrition and not just to alimentation, picking their foodstuffs based on better principles that reflect the nutritional features. Surely, the development of offerings almost everywhere (from the supermarkets to the shops, to the street vendors selling their products from their pickups driven to town from coastal areas), in addition to the undeniable advantage of frozen or pre-cooked products, have made fish into a product that appears with increasing frequency on our tables. The restaurant business

involving fish, once circumscribed to venues adjacent to the sea (even today the strange credence holds that fresh fish can surely be found in coastal areas) follows the discovery that fish is an indispensable product on the menu, which accounts for the increasing demand.

The flip side of the story is that fresh water fish has practically disappeared from our tables with the only exception of fish coming from ponds utilized for growing trout.

Carp, chub, catfish and pike can scarcely be found. Something may still be found in some restaurants specializing in lake cuisine but not in significant quantity. And for the future?

A shout of alarm is coming from the oceans and rivers: some fish species are endangered. The fish reserves are not renewable, and cannot be reconstructed forever. Industrial fishing is not without fault because of undifferentiated overfishing.

Talking about water, of any kind, is tantamount of talking about men and their behavior on land. All problems relevant to the health of the fish and their survival do not originate internally in waters but are the consequence of whatever happens on land and human patterns of behavior. One can only hope that man may become ever more responsible for his "well being" in the future by respecting the world of those silent providers of good and countless health qualities. Such is the world that occupies 70 percent of the Earth's surface. Mankind should understand that the "regeneration of resources" applies as well to the population of our waters and must become a responsible factor. We should go back to "sustainability" by creating marine sanctuaries, by establishing and respecting harvesting quotas and not countenancing guilty tolerance... It must be accomplished quickly because "he who sleeps does not catch fish!"

ALFREDO PELLE



An indispensable and precious resource

Water would seem to be an inexhaustible resource, but today we realize that is not the case.

BY NICOLA BARBERA

Academician, Milan Duomo Delegation

As Saint Francis wrote in his *Fiorretti*, water “is very useful, precious and humble”. It is extraordinary that one of animal and vegetable life’s principal elements, indispensable for all forms of life on our planet, should be defined in terms of characteristics it does not possess (other than transparency): colorless, odorless, tasteless. As we shall see, this is not always the case. It is said that the origin of life on our terrestrial globe began in a “puddle” of warm water: the so-called “primordial stew”. In 1954 two American Nobel prize winners tried to reproduce these circumstances by combining water, a simple gas, such as methane (the simplest of hydrocarbons) and ammonia (composed of nitrogen and hydrogen and water soluble) in a spherical container and subjecting it to electric impulses (to simulate lightning). The result was the creation of some organic compounds (amino acids) that could be considered the “building blocks” of protein, a fun-

damental element of cell formation and therefore of the first forms of life.

In Greek philosophy, Thales of Mileto (624-545 B.C.), founder of the Ionic School and considered one of the seven wise men of antiquity, declared that water, together with air, earth and fire, was one of the four elements that make up the universe. It was only in the second half of the 1700s that Lavoisier, one of the founders of modern chemistry, succeeded in identifying water as a chemical compound (molecule) made up of two volumes (atoms) of hydrogen and one of oxygen (H_2O = hydrogen oxide), and in separating them by a process of hydrolysis.

Water is also a sacred symbol: in Christian baptism, it frees us from original sin; in the ritual baths of Judaism and Islam it has the power to purify, as it also does in Buddhism for those who bathe in the Ganges river (considered sacred because from it sprang from the tresses of Shiva). For the Aztecs water represented fertility





because they believed it was the seed of Tlaloc, god of storms. In addition, the development of Indo-European civilizations all were centered around the great rivers: the Nile, the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Ganges.

Water is a major component of nature and it covers over 70% of the surface of the Earth (thus the “dry land” accounts for less than 30%). The volume of the Earth’s water is almost two billion cubic kilometers. Water constitutes almost 65% of the weight of the human body, with notable differences among the various organs. Water constitutes 80% of the weight of a newborn baby. Unfortunately, however, fresh water only represents 2.5% of the total, and what is more, two-thirds of that is concentrated in the glaciers of the polar ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland. Thus it is our principal natural reserve of fresh water, but it is very difficult to obtain. Seawater, the most important and “complete” mineral water that exists, is not drinkable owing to its extremely high sodium chloride content, with an average concentration of about 35 grams per liter (compared with 25-30 mg per liter of potable water). Furthermore, seawater can only be utilized through a complicated and costly process of desalination.

Before the Industrial Revolution water seemed to be an inexhaustible resource. Then came “progress”, with its undeniable benefits on quality of life, but which led to increasing pollution of our running water and underground water tables. This crisis was exacerbated by a concurrent population explosion. Finally today, a growing awareness of the importance of protecting the environment and the promulgation of appropriate laws and various controls is beginning to stem the impoverishment of this “blue gold” (the thicker the ice the more it holds onto red light waves, thus appearing blue).

Italy is rich in potable water: our water table contains 85% and surface water accounts for 15%. Altogether we have available more than 400 cubic meters per inhabitant - ten times that of the southern Mediterranean countries. And



yet we waste far too much. One form of waste is that often pointed out by vegetarians: it takes 15,000 liters of water to produce 1 kilogram of beef; and 4,000 liters for the same amount of chicken. In comparison, only 700 liters are necessary to produce a kilo of apples and 500 liters for oranges.

To help raise awareness about preserving this precious resource, starting in 1993 we began celebrating World Water Day on March 22.

We should recall that one person in six does not have regular or sufficient access to water, and potable water is unavailable to 11% of the world’s population. It is odd that the tap water in our homes is considered potable, according to established standards, but apparently not “drinkable” given the widespread consumption of bottled mineral water that is deemed to be “safer”. However it costs a great deal more and bears its own ecological problems related to its production, transport, and the disposal of containers. Fortunately, after the vertiginous growth in recent years that has led Italy to be Europe’s largest, and the world’s third largest, consumer of bottled water with over 190 liters per person per year, we are finally seeing a slight inversion of the tendency (-0.5%) owing to the increased used of home water purification systems.

Italy has an abundance of mineral waters, and they vary in type and quality: all bottled mineral water in Italy must meet the qualitative and quantitative requirements imposed by the Ministry of Public Health. The information must be provided on the label, especially the salinity (the amount of inorganic minerals

that remain after boiling a liter of water at 180 degrees C until completely evaporated). According to this parameter, mineral waters are classified as: minimal mineral content (salinity below 50 mg per liter) with a light flavor; low mineral content (salinity between 51 and 500 mg per liter) with a delicate flavor appropriate for all tastes; moderate mineral content (salinity between 501 and 1,500 mg per liter) with a full taste; and high mineral content (salinity over 1,500 mg per liter) with specific taste properties. Water is unquestionably the healthiest beverage we have, and as it is closely associated with our wellbeing it is also fundamentally important in cuisine because we use water to begin to modify foods. Water is one of the principal ingredients, directly or indirectly, in every recipe.

Although the sensorial nuances of water are not comparable to those of wine, a new profession is emerging: the water taster, who understands and can distinguish one kind of water from another. From the taste they can determine what kind of rock the water originated from (lime, clay, etc.) and can suggest the best pairings with different dishes. The hydro-sommelier, or water sommelier is a profession that is more widespread abroad (where one can even find water bars) than in Italy. However we do have an Association of Mineral Water Tasters (ADAM) whose members are able to evaluate the unique characteristics of dozens of labels/brands and determine which pairs best with certain foods. In fact, like a wine list, a “water list” is now common in many restaurants. They provide expert advice on the type of glass, the best pairing with the selected dish and temperature at which the water should be served (for still water, about 10 degrees C; for sparkling water, about 7 degrees C).

I think this is an excellent development for all of us, not just the teetotalers, because water is important for proper digestion, and it is advisable to drink a half liter of water during meals, particularly between courses.

NICOLA BARBERA



Call them emotions, if you like

Our opinions on consumer goods are often influenced by several emotional factors.

BY ROBERTO DOTTARELLI

Academician, Rome Castelli Delegation

It is a common belief that instincts are prevalent in other animal species while in a man rational behavior may succeed in controlling the instinctive component and guide our actions in an effective fashion. In trying not to start a train of thought that is full of platitudes, I will limit myself to taking a stand by avoiding misunderstandings and ambiguities.

Homo Sapiens is surely endowed with an intelligence that manifests itself, for example, in his attitude toward analyzing all that surrounds him and his ability to describe the emerging knowledge so that it may be shared with other individuals of his species.

It is such ability that allowed the development of behaviors that facilitated the adaptation of our species to the most diverse environmental conditions. This process is associated with the development of three superior cortical functions that are responsible for the evolutionary refinement of the cognitive activities of the species through the unification of sensorial data and the exclusion of the limbic system (made up by neural structures that are strictly kinked with emotions, particularly in terms of the experience of pleasure, pain or rage) and in particular in the case of immediate sensorial associations (C.D. Laughlin, J. McManus, E.G. D'Aquili: *The Spectrum of Ritual*, N.Y. 1979).

Nonetheless, if this is the half of the glass that is full, it is not necessary to be a neuroscientist to know that our behavioral patterns cannot always be defined as rational to their end.

Someone has written that it is easier to believe than to reason. Since we just mentioned the glass, it is worthy of mention that in January 2008 a story was reported by Daniela Ovada in her blog *Mind and Psyche* that was little publicized in the world of good table except for its connection with our discourse on the cognitive ability of the human species. Antonio Rangel, an economist of Stanford University, together with a team of neurologists, devised a test of twenty volunteers who submitted themselves to a functional magnetic resonance of their brains by tasting wines blindly, knowing only their price. This news item appeared in Dario Bressanini's blog





Science in the Kitchen, where it was reported that those volunteers who were fond of red wines were led to believe that they would taste five varieties of Cabernet Sauvignon. In fact, they were served three wines, all with different prices, one of them twice. "A wine that sold for \$90 was presented twice, once with its real price, and the other time at \$10. Likewise, a wine that sold for \$5 per bottle was presented as if its cost were \$45".

Were the twenty tasters able to detect the deceit? Not a chance: they all told of having liked best the wine with the higher price even though it was the same.

Bressanini reports that "the interesting thing about this study is that for the first time the brain activity was measured. There was no variance in the brain zone responsible for the interpretation of the primary stimuli of taste such as sweetness: that zone of the brain was not "deceived" by price and taste was perceived in the same manner. At a higher cognitive level, however, in the orbital-frontal cortex, which codifies the experiences of pleasure deriving from smell, taste and even listening to music, a higher price

corresponded with a higher blood circulation".

The experiment led us to conclude that our cognitive abilities, so important in the evolution of *Homo Sapiens*, are in fact weak and unprotected in the face of marketing strategies that utilize the formula "higher quality - higher price", to be read from right to left (thank you Bressanini!).

At the same time, one must be conscious of the fact that our judgments on consumer goods are always influenced by numerous "emotional" agents (price, location, our mood, the company and so forth) and that such judgments do not depend solely upon the intrinsic quality of the goods but also upon the elaboration of our brain in light of the absence of many elements that inform our judgment.

If they do indeed escape us, I believe that few of us can claim to be exempt from utilizing from time to time the opinion of some "expert". It is necessary then to cite another study done between 2005 and 2008, and brought up by Bressanini in his blog, conducted by Robert Hodgson who analyzed the "consistency", that is to say the reliability, of a large group of professional

wine tasters (about 135 of them). In each session, each judge received 30 blind tasting items. Some of them, however, were specimens in triple copy poured from the same bottle.

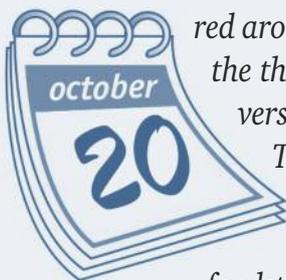
The result was indeed discouraging: only 10 percent of the tasters came up with judgments that were consistent with the various tasting of the same wine while the higher reliability of the judgments (estimated to be 18%) was recorded for wines that received negative ratings. What were the reactions to such results? It appears that the best ones came from the area of wine contests where the discussion focused on how to improve the reliability of the judges. Needless to say, a polemical response came from the world of the media and of people who write and talk about wines, accustomed to giving out points and medals.

Once it has been ascertained that the pleasure of tasting wine is influenced by emotions, I will willingly leave to the "experts" the satisfaction linked with the price and as for myself, I will continue to pay special attention to harmony, passion and sobriety (of the producer).

ROBERTO DOTTARELLI

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 Marenghi" 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 foodstuff 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.